THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

ST. LUKE.

THE

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR:

on,

ANECDOTES, SIMILES, EMBLEMS, ILLUSTRATIONS, EXPOSITORY, SCIENTIFIC, GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND HOMILETIC, GATHERED FROM A WIDE RANGE OF HOME AND FOREIGN LITERATURE, ON THE VERSES OF THE BIBLE.

BY

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ST. LUKE.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE.

THE WRITER OF THE THIRD GOSPEL.—Of the writer of the third Gospel nothing whatsoever is known, except that he was the faithful friend and companion of St. Paul. I. Scripture notices. Luke is mentioned by name three times in the Epistles of St. Paul, and always with affection (Col. iv. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 11; Philemon 24). From Col. iv. 11, where the companions of Paul, "who are of the circumcision," are distinguished from those afterwards named, we gather that he must have been before his conversion a Gentile. His name is Gentile—Lucanus, shortened into Lucas. These are the only places in which he is mentioned, but there can be not the smallest doubt that frequently in the narrative of the Acts he includes himself amongst the companions in travel of St. Paul, by changing the pronoun to the first person plural (See Acts xvi. xx. xxi.). We gather from the same use of the first person plural that Luke was a fellow-voyager with St. Paul to Rome, and was shipwrecked with him. There is good reason also to suppose that St. Paul alludes to St. Luke in 2 Cor. viii. 18. If an account of our Lord's Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection was then called "the Gospel"—and I do not see why it should not have been so called—then the allusion is most natural and becoming; otherwise it is difficult to understand what St. Paul means by "praise in the Gospel," for his name is not mentioned in any Gospel, nor is his preaching of the Gospel with eloquence ever alluded to, as that of Apollos is. II. Early Fathers. 1. Eusebius. "Luke, who was born at Antioch, and by profession a physician, being for the most part connected with Paul, and familiarly acquainted with the rest of the apostles, has left us two inspired books, the institutes of that spiritual healing art which he obtained from them. One of these is his Gospel, in which he testifies that he has recorded 'as those who were from the beginning eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word delivered unto him,' whom also, he says, he has in all things followed. . . . It is also said, that Paul usually referred to his Gospel, whenever in his Epistles he spoke of some particular Gospel of his own, saying, 'according to my Gospel.'" "In his own Gospel he delivered the certain account of those things that he himself had fully received from his intimacy and stay with Paul, and also his intercourse with the other apostles." 2. Irenæus refers to him frequently by name, as book iii. ch. i.: "Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him." Again, Irenæus, speaking of the sacerdotal aspect of Christ, given by St. Luke, writes, book iii. ch. xi. 8: "But that according to Luke, taking up his priestly character, commenced with Zacharias the priest offering sacrifice to God." 3. Tertullian. "Luke's form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul." 4. Origen, quoted by Eusebius, writes: "And the third, according to Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul, which was written for the converts from the Gentiles." (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) His foreign extraction is confirmed also by the character of his style, which approaches nearer to the standard of classical Greek than that of any other writer of the New Testament, except St. Paul. This feature of his language renders it probable that he was of Greek origin. Some have inferred this also from his Greek name; but it was not

uncommon for Jews, as well as Romans and other foreigners, to assume such names at this period. Whether he was a proselyte to Judaism before his conversion to Christianity or not, is a question on which critics differ. The supposition that he adopted first the Jewish religion, and had done so perhaps in early life, accounts best for his intimate acquaintance with the opinions and customs of the Jews, his knowledge of the Septuagint, and the degree of Hebraistic tendency which shows itself in his style. Of the manner in which he was brought to a knowledge of the Gospel, we have no information. The suggestion of some of the later fathers that he was one of the seventy disciples, is not only without ground, but opposed to his own statement in the introduction of his Gospel, where he distinguishes himself from those who had been personal attendants on the ministry of Christ. Of his history subsequent to the close of the Acts, nothing authentic has been preserved. The traditions which relate to this period are uncertain and contradictory. According to Gregory Nazianzen, whom several later writers follow, he suffered martyrdom; according to others, and those whose testimony has greater weight, he died a natural death. (*H. B. Hacket, D.D.*) Combining the traditional element with the scriptural, the uncertain with the certain, we are able to trace the following dim outline of the Evangelist's life. He was born at Antioch in Syria (Eusebius, Hist. iii. 4); in what condition of life is uncertain. That he was taught the science of medicine does not prove that he was of higher birth than the rest of the disciples; medicine in its earlier and ruder state was sometimes practised even by a slave. The well-known tradition that Luke was also a painter, and of no mean skill, rests on the authority of Nicephorus (ii. 43), of the Menology of the Emperor Basil, drawn up in 980, and of other later writers; but none of them are of historical authority: and the Acts and Epistles are wholly silent upon a point so likely to be mentioned. He was not born a Jew (comp. Col. iv. 11 with ver. 14). The date of his conversion is uncertain. He was not indeed "an eye-witness and minister of the Word from the beginning" (Luke i. 2), or he would have rested his claim as an evangelist upon that ground. Still, he may have been converted by the Lord Himself, some time before His departure; and the statement of Epiphanius and others, that he was one of the seventy disciples, has nothing very improbable in it; whilst that which Theophylact adopts, that he was one of the two who journeyed to Emmaus with the risen Redeemer, has found modern defenders. Tertullian assumes that the conversion of Luke is to be ascribed to Paul; and the balance of probability is on this side. The first ray of historical light falls on the Evangelist when he joins St. Paul at Troas, and shares his journey into Macedonia. . . . He again appears in the company of Paul in the memorable journey to Rome (Acts xxvii. 1). He remained at his side during his first imprisonment (Col. iv. 14; Philem. 24); and if it is supposed that the Second Epistle to Timothy was written during the second imprisonment, then the testimony of that Epistle (iv. 11) shows that he continued faithful to the Apostle to the end of his afflictions. After the death of St. Paul, the acts of his faithful companion are hopelessly obscure to us. . . . It is, as perhaps the Evangelist wishes it to be: we only know him whilst he stands by the side of his beloved Paul; when the master departs, the history of the follower becomes confusion and fable. (*Archbishop Thomson*).

LUKE, THE PHYSICIAN.—A physician indeed, and, like so many physicians, a man of wide sensibility, culture, and intelligence. If an Antiochene, he probably met Paul at Antioch, and seems to have been drawn very close to him about A.D. 52, when the Apostle was recovering from the severe attack of ophthalmia which prostrated him for a time in Galatia. Luke's profession, probably, took him much on board the ships that plied between Troas and Philippi, and all round the

Ægean coast. It was, perhaps, natural that he should sail in the same ship with Paul from Troas to Philippi; but it is soon evident that no chance association bound him to Paul. If he left him, it was not for long, and when he joined him again, some seven years later, it was to share with him shipwreck and imprisonment, and to part with him on earth no more. "Luke, the beloved physician," was doubtless in constant requisition. Paul was always suffering from his eyes—always overworking himself—sometimes prostrated with what we should perhaps call epileptic fits. Indeed, there could be no more suitable companion than a travelling doctor for one whose "outward man was perishing," and who "died daily." His wide acquaintance with men, and the varied experiences of a doctor's life, made Luke peculiarly fit to record the spread of the Gospel (as he does in the Acts) amongst men of different nations. For, Gentile as he was, he was pretty fair to the Jews and in hearty sympathy with the Roman Government, whilst having an intimate acquaintance with the Greeks, especially of Asia Minor. He nowhere mentions himself by name, and seldom even alludes to himself at all. Beneath the modest "we," which occurs in a few chapters of the Acts, the beloved physician is effaced rather than concealed, but the pathos of those few words—dictated by such an one as "Paul, the aged," in prison—"Only Luke is with me," are sufficient to make his name dear and immortal, even if he had not left behind him such a priceless diary as the Acts, and such a prose poem as the Gospel which bears his name. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) St. Luke is eminently the psychologist among the Evangelists. He was, as we know, a physician. Perhaps we may trace this in his tone of speaking of their art—"which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any"—compared with the severer words of St. Mark, "and had suffered many things . . . rather grew worse." We can scarcely doubt that the beautiful saying preserved by him in common with the other Synoptics, "They that are whole," &c., must have been specially affecting to one who had himself been a physician. Certainly we find throughout that symptoms of diseases were more carefully described by one who had been trained to observe them, and who, though he could neither have been a disciple of our Lord, nor an eye-witness, was thus prepared to understand many of the miracles better (See ch. iv. 38, 40; v. 12; vi. 17, 18; ix. 2; xxii. 50, 51). The physician is, perforce, something of a psychologist. This may arise from the mysterious connection between mind and body, and from the opportunities which he possesses of observing the subtler traits of many temperaments in the hours when we are the least able to disguise our real selves. In those hours, when we are so weak and fretful, the physician learns something more than our diseases; he learns our characters. The most delicate psychological skill St. Luke certainly possessed. I might refer you to the perplexity of Herod about our Lord; to the exquisite penetrating satire in those touches preserved by this Evangelist—"He that showed mercy on him," because the lawyer would not pronounce the Samaritan's hated name, and "The Pharisee prayed thus with himself," when there was no prayer; to the delineation of Zaccheus; to Pilate and Herod making friends together; to the disciples believing not for joy and wondering, and returning to Jerusalem with great joy after their Lord had left them. I might refer to the way in which he binds his materials together by an idea, as in the incident about Mary and Martha, which immediately follows the parable of the Good Samaritan, for the purpose of completing the picture of the Christian life; and in the passage at close of chap. ix., where we have three different natures dealt with by Jesus. He loves, too, to tell what women did for Jesus. I need only mention the names of Elizabeth, the Virgin Mother, the woman who was a sinner, Mary Magdalene and others who ministered to Him of their substance, Martha and Mary, the weeping daughters of Jerusalem. Perhaps it may be said, without irreverence, that this psychological

skill finds its highest application in writing of the sacred humanity of our Lord. From St. Luke's Gospel we learn much that is truest and deepest in relation to the Man, Christ Jesus. There is traced the successive development of "the Holy Thing born of Mary," "the fruit of her womb," into the Babe, the Child, the Man (ch. i. 35, 42; ii. 16, 43). There are the statements, which sometimes seem incomprehensible, and sometimes degrading, as applied to one like Him, but which always "requite studious regard with opportune delight." For instance: "When the time was come that He should be received up,"—what can this mean, standing where it does, and speaking of the time before His death? Faith reads the riddle. "*Evangelistæ stylus imitatur sensum Jesu.*" Again, "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground." The academic Shimeis of England, and France, and Germany, may seek for stones to fling at Him, from the dust of the garden. The French man of letters may cross Kedron, and wave out his scented blasphemies, leaving the unwholesome taint of Parisian patchouli under the Olives of Gethsemane. Why that agony, those big drops, that burst of sorrow in which He was withdrawn from His own? Why was He less firm than the martyrs, than Socrates, than the Stoics, than the Indian brave? A man who does not understand love and purity, sacrifice and self-denial, the fearfulness of sin, the holiness of God, the blessedness of communion with the Father to the sinless man, and therefore the fearfulness of its suspension, cannot understand Gethsemane as represented by St. Luke. (*Bishop William Alexander.*)

Date of the Third Gospel.—From Acts i. 1, it is clear that it was written before the Acts, which (see Acts xxviii. 30, 31) must have been completed about the end of the second year of St. Paul's imprisonment, that is, about A.D. 63. How much earlier this "former treatise" may have been written is uncertain. But Dean Alford remarks that the words imply some considerable interval between the two productions. The opinion of the younger Thiersch thus becomes very probable, that it was written at Cæsarea during St. Paul's imprisonment there, A.D. 58-60. The Gospel of St. Matthew was probably written about the same time; and neither Evangelist appears to have used the other, although both made use of that form of oral teaching which the apostles had gradually come to employ. (*Archbishop Thomson.*)

Leading Characteristics of the Third Gospel.—I. St. Luke was a Gentile; hence one leading idea of his Gospel is the rejection of the Jews. This idea breathes sadly through Simeon's Song: "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel," the first hint of opposition from unbelief which occurs in this Gospel. It appears in St. Luke's account of the Baptist's terrible words, not only as in St. Matthew "to the Pharisees and Sadducees," but to "the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers! the axe is laid unto the root of the trees." It pervades the close of our Lord's discourse in the synagogue at Nazareth. It is typified in that final rejection of the Holy One, when He was led to the brow of the Mount of Precipitation, the first prelude of another more tragic and final. It gives solemn pathos to those words of the weeping Saviour: "Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." II. This Gentile Evangelist, possibly writing his Gospel from Rome, the capital of the Gentile world, and impressed with the rejection of the Jews, brings before us the Gospel as the Gospel of Humanity, the Saviour as the Saviour of the world. Born in a stable, under the Roman Emperor, He who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary is the Saviour of all men. His genealogy is brought up to Adam, the head of our Humanity, not to Abraham, the progenitor of the Jewish people. While St. Matthew speaks chiefly of the Twelve as representatives of the twelve

tribes, St. Luke lays more stress upon the sending of the Seventy, that number being the symbol of the nations under the Theocracy. The great episode of the so-called "Journey Report" (Luke ix. 51, xviii. 30) mentions a journey through Samaria to Judæa and Jerusalem. We may note in it tenderness to the Samaritans, in refusing to bring down fire from heaven, and in choosing the Samaritan as the embodiment of charity in that story whose beauty has never been exceeded but by another, "of which Jesus is not the narrator, but the subject." Note, too, that breathing of deathless hope over Tyre and Sidon (ch. x. ver. 13). And, above all, the Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son, which touch upon the exile and the return of God's self-banished children with such tender and tearful love. III. Pauline colouring. 1. Cf. St. Luke's account of the institution of the Holy Communion with that of St. Paul in 1 Cor. xi. 2. The words χάρις and πίστις, so frequently used by St. Luke and St. Paul, are seldom used by other New Testament writers. 3. All readers of St. Paul's Epistles must have been arrested by the contrast drawn in Rom. v. and 1 Cor. xv. between the first man, who is from the earth, of dust, and the Second Man, whose origin is from Heaven. Is not the germ of this great thought in the last clause of the genealogy in Luke iii.: "Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God"? 4. What aspect of the Redeemer's work is most present to St. Paul? What note of the trumpet is it that thrills us most? Forgiveness, pity, grace. "*Non gratia ex operibus, sed opera ex gratia.*" This is throughout a fundamental conception of St. Luke, in those passages which are peculiar to him. All is Christ's gift. So is it with the lower blessings of healing. "Unto many that were blind He *gave* sight." So much more with the higher gift of pardon and peace. Does not this apply to the story of the sinful woman who anointed the feet of Jesus; to the Parables of the love of God the Son in seeking the lost, and of God the Father in going to meet the prodigal, when he is yet a great way off? . . . This Gospel, whose key-note and leading idea is forgiveness; which has, as its own peculiar treasures, the forgiveness of the fallen woman, of the publican, of the crucifiers, of the dying thief, of a world if that world will receive it; comes well from the Gentile Evangelist, the friend of St. Paul the great Doctor of Grace, who wrote his Gospel under St. Paul's guidance and encouragement. (*Bishop William Alexander.*) I. St. Luke must be ranked as the first Christian hymnologist. (See ch. i. 28–33, 46–55, 68–79; ii. 14, 29–32). In these Canticles (Benedictus, Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis) the New Æon is represented not merely as the fulfilment of the Old, but also as a Kingdom of the Spirit; as a spring of life and joy opened to the world; as a mystery, prophesied of indeed because it is eternal, but now in the appointed time revealed to men. II. In this Gospel thanksgiving is also prominent. "The Gospel of the Saviour begins with hymns, and ends with praises; and as the thanksgivings of the meek are accorded in the first chapter, so in the last we listen to the gratitude of the faithful." (See ch. ii. 20; v. 25; vii. 16; xiii. 13; xvii. 15; xviii. 43; xxiii. 47). III. It also gives special prominence to prayer. 1. It alone preserves to us the fact that our Lord prayed on six distinct and memorable occasions—at Baptism, after cleansing the leper, before calling the Twelve, at Transfiguration, on Cross for murderers, and with last breath. 2. St. Luke, too, like St. Paul, insists on the duty of unceasing prayer as taught by Christ; and emphasizes this instruction by alone recording the two parables which encourage us to a persistent energy, a holy importunity, a storming of the kingdom of Heaven by violence in our prayers (ch. xi. 5–13; xviii. 1–8). IV. But the Gospel is marked mainly by its presentation of the Good Tidings in their universality and gratuitousness. In St. Luke, towards every age, towards either sex, towards all nations, towards all professions, towards men of every opinion and every shade of character, our Blessed Lord appears as Christus Consolator; the Good Physician of bodies and of souls; the Gospeller

of the poor; the Brother who loves all His brethren in the great family of man; the unwearied Healer and Ennobler of sick and suffering humanity; the Desire of all nations; the Saviour of the world, who "went about doing good." In accordance with this conception—V. St. Luke reveals especially the sacredness of infancy. He alone tells us of the birth and infancy of the Baptist; the Annunciation; the meeting of Mary and Elisabeth; the songs of the herald Angels; the Circumcision; the Presentation in the Temple; the growth in universal favour and sweet submission. And he alone preserves the one anecdote of the Confirmation of Jesus at twelve years old, which is the solitary flower gathered from the silence of thirty years. VI. He dwells especially on Christ's ministry to the world; that He was to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of His people Israel. VII. St. Luke's is specially the Gospel of Womanhood, and he prominently records the graciousness and tenderness of Christ towards many women. VIII. He seems to delight in all the records which told of the mercy of the Saviour towards the poor, the humble, the despised (ch. ii. 24; vi. 20–25, 30; viii. 2. 3; xii. 16–21, 33; xvi. 13, 19–25; xiv. 12–15). IX. Further, it is specially the Gospel of the outcast—of the Samaritan (ch. ix. 52–56; xvii. 11–19), the publican, the harlot, and the prodigal. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost (xix. 10). See instances in Zaccheus, the Prodigal Son, Mary of Magdala, the woman with the issue of blood, the dying robber. X. Lastly, it is the Gospel of tolerance. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*)

ST. LUKE'S PORTRAIT OF OUR LORD.—A well-known tradition makes St. Luke a painter. This tradition is not very ancient. It is not to be found in any writer before the sixth century. It is the thirteenth century before he appears as the patron saint of painters. . . . The oldest tradition in Justin Martyr would seem to have believed that the Son of Man had literally no form or comeliness. There are two types of the image of the Son of Man in Christendom. In one, He is hard and stern, wan and worn; in the other, He has a soft, fair beauty, with chestnut hair. . . . Whatever His form and features may have been, He must have looked beautiful who said, "And He layeth it on His shoulders." Weary as He was and wan, white with exhaustion and dropped with blood, He must have looked beautiful, who said, "Father, forgive them." So the Evangelist who never painted the form of the Son of Man on canvas, or laid it in rich enamel, has given us the most attractive picture of Him. In St. Matthew, He is Israel's Monarch; in St. Mark, He is the Son of God; in St. John, He is the Everlasting Word made Flesh; in St. Luke (while the title of the Lord, the Lord Jesus, is most frequently found) we are almost tempted to think the emblem of the Man more appropriate than that of the Ox, which yet suits so well the priestly story at the beginning, and the overpowering conviction of the Sacrifice at the end. For in St. Luke, He is pre-eminently the Son of Man; loving, pitying, pardoning a fallen race; anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor; leaving the ninety and nine that He may bear the lost with all the strength and tenderness of that Divine Manhood; dying, and rising again, that repentance and remission may be preached to all. . . . Not written by a painter, this is yet a painter's Gospel. From it come the favourite subjects: The Virgin and Child, Simeon, the Scene with the Doctors in the Temple, the Ascension. (*Bishop William Alexander.*)

AUTHENTICITY OF THE THIRD GOSPEL.—The authenticity of St. Luke's Gospel is well established. There are some allusions, or what seem to be such, to its contents in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers; and Justin Martyr, who died soon after the middle of the second century, quotes from it, and alludes to it several times. In a fragment "On the Resurrection," which is about the same date as the works

of Justin, there is allusion made to three verses out of the last chapter of St. Luke. Hegesippus, contemporary with Justin, has two quotations from this Gospel in the scanty fragments of his writings which have been preserved to us by Eusebius; and it is mentioned in the list of New Testament writings in the Muratorian fragment on the canon, about 170 A.D. The enemies of the faith also have left us evidence of the same kind. Marcion, a heretical teacher, who flourished in the first half of the second century, desired to represent Christianity as utterly unconnected with Judaism. He taught that the Jewish law had its origin from the Demiurge (so he styled the God of the Jews), and that from his influence Christ came to set men free. With these opinions to support, Marcion must reject a large portion of the New Testament, and he accepted only ten Epistles of St. Paul, and such parts of the Gospel of St. Luke as suited with his ideas. The heretical mutilation which he wrought in the Third Gospel has furnished satisfactory testimony to its genuineness and authenticity, and has proved the early recognition of what has been already alluded to—that this Gospel is largely pervaded by the spirit of the "Apostle of the Gentiles."—(*Prof. Lumby.*)

CONTENTS OF THE THIRD GOSPEL.—The Gospel contains—1. A preface (i. 1–4). 2. An account of the time preceding the ministry of Jesus (i. 5 to ii. 52). 3. Several accounts of discourses and acts of our Lord, common to Luke, Matthew, and Mark, related for the most part in their order, and belonging to Capernaum and the neighbourhood (iii. 1 to ix. 50). 4. A collection of similar accounts, referring to a certain journey to Jerusalem, most of them peculiar to Luke (ix. 51 to xviii. 14). 5. An account of the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus, common to Luke with the other Evangelists, except as to some of the accounts of what took place after the resurrection (xviii. 15 to the end). (*Archbishop Thomson.*)

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CHAPTER I.

Vers. 1–4. Forasmuch as many have taken in hand.—*St. Luke's preface* :—These four verses are a preface, and a very valuable preface, because they are a declaration from the author himself of the manner in which we are to regard his work. I. St. Luke gives us to understand that HE HIMSELF WAS NOT AN EYE-WITNESS OF THE EVENTS HE IS ABOUT TO RECORD, but that he had taken pains to inquire, and had a perfect understanding of all the history of the Lord Jesus Christ. II. St. Luke tells us that he had undertaken to write his Gospel BECAUSE MANY HAD UNDERTAKEN TO DO THE SAME THING BEFORE. The question arises whether he means us to understand that he is adding one more to authentic and trustworthy histories already existing, or whether he intended rather to supersede and correct unauthorized and imperfect histories. Possibly neither the one view nor the other is entirely and exclusively true. It may be that St. Luke was aware that authentic histories were already in existence, but he may have known also that other and spurious accounts had been composed, and therefore have been desirous of helping Theophilus to choose the true and reject the false by setting down for his use such an orderly account of the life of Jesus Christ as he himself had been able to collect. III. Again, WHO WAS THEOPHILUS? Some have thought that the name, signifying as it does "one who is dear to God," does not refer to any one particular person; it is probable, however, that Theophilus was a real person, perhaps an important man at Antioch, St. Luke's city, for whose confirmation in the faith St. Luke was induced to write. Quite in keeping with the general scheme of God's government that this should have been so. Works which are instinct with the Spirit of God often go far beyond their immediate aim. The Epistles, which are the precious inheritance of the universal Church, were addressed originally to particular portions of the Church, some of them only to individuals, and the greater number of them were called forth by circumstances which have long passed away. And so we need not be surprised to find that a Gospel addressed to Theophilus has become the possession of all throughout the world who follow his good example. IV. Lastly, let it be noticed that St. Luke did not write to Theophilus with the purpose of giving him his first notions of Christian truth, BUT ONLY OF ESTABLISHING HIM IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THOSE THINGS IN WHICH HE HAD BEEN ALREADY INSTRUCTED OR CATECHIZED. This was almost of necessity the course which would be followed in the time of the apostles; but it is also the course which is generally followed by ourselves now: we do not gain our first notions of Christian truth from Scripture or indeed from any written book; we are instructed and catechized by our fathers and mothers and teachers, and when we come to years of discretion, and are able to think for ourselves, we find from careful study of God's Holy Word that those things which we have learnt as children are indeed the truth of God which is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. (*Bishop Harvey Goodwin.*) *The purpose of the Gospel* :— I. THE INTRODUCTION TO THIS GOSPEL IS THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY FOR THE ACCOUNT OF THE PURPOSE OF ITS COMPOSITION. Theophilus, whoever he was, was already a disciple, and had been instructed in the things which were most surely believed in the Church. He desired to know the certainty of those things. St. Luke believed that it was his vocation to give him what he wanted. If Theo-

philus was an individual, he represented the need of the Church generally. That which was good for him might, if God pleased, be good for ages to come. II. MANY. ST. LUKE SAYS, HAD ATTEMPTED THIS TASK BEFORE HIM. They had taken in hand to set forth A DECLARATION of the things, &c. The declaration had been made already—contained in the preaching of the apostles and their helpers. What was wanted was a continuous narrative of the things which made the substance of the declaration, for it was a declaration of things, not of opinions. The preaching concerned a Person, the narrative must exhibit a Person. Who the "many" were St. Luke does not say. Nor does he pronounce upon the merits or demerits of his predecessors. That was not his calling. There was a better judge than he of the genuine and the spurious. We may safely affirm that he was not afraid if the experiments to produce a life of our Lord were ever so numerous; if some of them were ever so confused and erroneous. He could not believe the word which he preached unless he had confidence that what was true would live, that what was false would be, sooner or later, divided from it. III. The next clause of the introduction has perplexed many, perhaps has given pain to some. WHAT! ARE WE NOT ABOUT TO READ THE STORY OF AN EYE-WITNESS? St. Luke does not claim that character. He has received these records from those who were eye-witnesses. He has examined their reports carefully. He does not say that he ever saw Christ whilst He was walking in Galilee or Judæa. He seems to imply the contrary. Now here is a difference between him and some of the other evangelists, perhaps between him and all the other three. Is it a difference which puts him below them? According to their own judgment and confession, assuredly it is not. They tell us that they did not understand the words and acts of Jesus whilst they were walking with Him, whilst they were eye-witnesses of what He did. They misapprehended the particular words and acts. They misapprehended their relation to each other. They misapprehended the Person who was the Speaker of the words and the Doer of the acts. What they all say—what no one says so frequently as the beloved disciple—is, that the things which they could not understand at first came to them with full power and revelation when they saw Him no more. No doubt to be eye-witnesses of a fact or a person is an honourable distinction, but an eye-witness may glorify himself on that distinction, and attribute a worth to it which no careful student of evidence will concede. There are qualities necessary in an eye-witness besides his eyes. One who possesses these qualities may tell us what they do not tell, may open to us the very sense and purpose of what they do tell. It is so in all cases: if we believe the evangelists—those of them who were eye-witnesses—it is pre-eminently so in this case. IV. WHAT DOES ST. LUKE MEAN BY THE WORD? If the expression occurred in St. John's Gospel it would cause no perplexity. We should assume at once that he was speaking of the Word which was in the beginning and was made flesh. But it has been customary to assume that no other of the evangelists ever fell into this kind of language. I cannot doubt that the apostle who survived to the end of the age was specially appointed to remove confusions which had haunted the readers of the earlier Gospels. But every Jew could read, as well as St. John, that the Word of God had come to Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or Ezekiel. Every Jew who read their prophecies believed they had conversed with this Word as with a living person. The thought, "He with whom we have conversed is that same Person—He has in human flesh revealed Himself to us," was not a strange speculation, the refinement of a later age. It was the simplest way of connecting the old world with their day. It was the great escape from the rabbinical traditions which buried the Divine Person under the mere letter of the books. Formally to assert the force of the prophetical phrase—to make it prominent before all others—was not St. Luke's calling. The King, the Christ, is his subject. If we admit any direction of the minds of those who wrote these books—indeed, any special callings of men in this world at all—we can perceive why the tasks of the different evangelists should be different. We can perceive also why each should inevitably at times adopt forms of speech which appear more characteristic of another. V. "IT SEEMED GOOD TO ME ALSO." Some may cry, "Was he not then taught by the Spirit of God?" I imagine that he who described the Day of Pentecost, and referred the whole existence and work of the Church to the Spirit of God, had quite as awful a feeling of His government over himself as any of us can have. The freedom of his language shows me how strong his feeling was; our sensitiveness and unwillingness to connect the Spirit with the operations of the human intellect, indicate the weakness of ours. We ask for distinctions about the degrees and measures in which the Spirit has been or will be vouchsafed.

The Evangelists make no such distinctions. I think they dared not. VI. The next clause teaches us much on this subject, and would teach us more if it had not been unhappily perverted in our version. What St. Luke says is that it seemed good to him to write, HAVING FOLLOWED OUT ALL THINGS WITH CAREFUL DILIGENCE FROM THEIR SOURCE, just as a man traces the source of a river from its mountain-bed through all its windings. Instead of being absolved from this diligence by the presence of the Divine Spirit, he felt himself obliged by that Spirit to spare no labour, not to omit the most solicitous examination of what he heard, not to give himself credit for understanding it at the first, but to wait for that clear, penetrating light which could distinguish between his own impressions and the truth of things. VII. There is one word more in this preface which I cannot pass by. St. Luke professes to write to Theophilus IN ORDER. The narrative is to be an orderly or continuous one. Can we then discover that order? Clearly it is very different from that of common biographers. I think you will find that what the evangelist traces are the steps by which a King claimed dominion over his subjects; how they were prepared for Him; how He was prepared for going forth among them; how He manifested the powers of His kingdom; how He illustrated the nature of it; what kind of opposition He encountered; what battles He fought; who stood by Him; who deserted Him; how He seemed to be vanquished; how He prevailed at last. The more steadily we keep before ourselves the thought of a Kingdom of Heaven—a kingdom actual in the highest sense, explaining the nature and forces of every kingdom that has existed on the earth, showing what in those kingdoms must abide, what must pass away—the more shall we adhere to the letter of the Gospels, the more shall we enter into their spirit. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *Pulpit Notes*:—1. The reason which Luke gives for writing this Gospel would seem at first sight to be an excellent reason for *not* writing. It is thought by superficial persons to-day that there are already sufficient religious books before the world. What is the error of such reasoning? Forgetfulness of the fact that Christianity presents different aspects to different minds, so that no statement of it can ever exhaust its intellectual and spiritual riches. Every Christian student writes a life of Christ for himself. The facts of Christianity are few and simple, but the truths arising out of them are innumerable and profound. The preaching of the Word can never be the same by any two men who diligently inquire into its meaning for themselves and fearlessly express the results of their investigation. 2. At the time of Luke's writing, the facts of Christianity were not only known as matters of current rumour—they were most surely believed. Not enough that the events of the Christian history be not discredited. They must be received with all faith and love, and become elements of our own spiritual life. When this is realized a new emphasis will characterize the tone of the Church. 3. Noticeable that Luke enters upon his work with the utmost candour and fearlessness. Does not propose to evade anything or skilfully slur over anything. Distinctly says that he will begin at the beginning, and trace the whole history through all its windings, difficulties, and successes. This is precisely what is wanted for our own day, viz., a distinct and complete idea of the ground which is occupied by Christian history. 4. The principle of tradition runs through this prefatory note in a remarkable manner. First of all come the eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word; then come the writers with whom they were immediately associated; then come such men as are represented by the "most excellent Theophilus;" and afterward would come the persons to whom Theophilus communicated the information with which he had been put in trust. Thus one age becomes the debtor of another, and we ourselves are to-day the treasurers of the ages. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The preface to the Gospel*:—I. From this preface to St. Luke's Gospel we learn, first, THAT THERE WERE ALREADY EXISTING IN THE EVANGELIST'S DAY MANY "GOSPELS": "Forasmuch as many have undertaken to draw up a consecutive account concerning those matters which have been fully established among us." Christianity has ever been the grand inspirer of Christendom's literature. Probably more has been written about Jesus Christ, His character and teaching and work, than about all other things put together. For it is not in religious books alone that we see the signs of His presence and sway. We can scarcely take up a volume on any grave subject—ethical, philosophical, historic, biographic, æsthetic—without ever and anon catching at least glimpses of the passing shadow of the Son of Mary. The unconscious tributes of literature to Jesus the Nazarene are surprisingly many and emphatic. And, observe, our evangelist does not censure these attempts at biography. He does not hint that those *memorabilia* are to be rejected. For aught we know, some of these

sketches were as truly inspired as the Gospel of St. Luke himself. What though they have not come down to us? There is reason for believing that some Scriptures—for instance, a letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians—have been lost. But this does not detract from the worth of those we do have. Eternity will not exhaust what memoirs of the Divine Man we do have. II. From this preface to St. Luke's Gospel, we learn, THE SOURCE OF THE GOSPELS: "Even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word." The source and basis, then, of these primitive Gospels was the contemporaneous oral gospel or tradition of the original apostles. Need I add that it is still the only kind of tradition which the Church is at liberty to accept as the authorized gospel and doctrine of Jesus Christ? III. From this preface to St. Luke's Gospel, we learn, THAT INSPIRATION IS COMPATIBLE WITH FREE-WILL: "It seemed good to me also to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus." So far as his own consciousness was concerned, he seems to have set himself to his task spontaneously, and arranged his narrative as seemed to him best. Yet the judgment of the Christian sense from the beginning has been that in thus composing his recital he was Divinely inspired. These facts cast light on the doctrine of inspiration. They show that one may be inspired, and yet act with entire freeness. The sacred writers have often been compared to Æolian harps, played on by the Holy Spirit or Divine Breath of God. The comparison is beautiful and just, so far as it goes. But it does not cover the whole truth; it fails to recognize the human element in inspiration. But let the sacred writers be compared to different musical instruments, for example, a flute, a cornet, a trumpet, an organ, &c., played on, indeed, by one and the same Divine Breath, but giving forth different melodies, according to the character of each distinct instrument; and the comparison becomes more complete and just. The source of the melody is Divine, and common to them all; the character of the melody is human, varying according to the temperament and peculiarity of the writer. IV. From this preface to St. Luke's Gospel we learn THAT OUR EVANGELIST WAS QUALIFIED TO WRITE A GOSPEL: "Having traced the course of all things accurately from the first." His habits of observation as a physician would naturally lead him to scrutinize closely all alleged facts. He at least would know whether the Church of his day was following cunningly devised myths. In short, he exercised the "critical faculty." V. From this preface to St. Luke's Gospel we learn OUR EVANGELIST'S PURPOSE IN WRITING: "That thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed." For knowledge of facts rather than theories was then, as it still is, the need of the times. Such is the preface to the Gospel according to St. Luke. And as St. John's prologue may be taken as the prologue to the Gospel, so St. Luke's preface may be taken as the preface to the Gospels. And this suggests our first concluding thought: The advantage of having several Gospels. And herein is an immense advantage. First, the having several Gospels is a key to the detection of imposture: where the testimony is false, it is perilous to multiply witnesses. Again, the having several Gospels helps us to understand better the myriad-sided Divine Man. And yet the four Gospels are but one Gospel. This is the circumstance which makes it so profitable for us to study the Gospels in synchronous lessons. The habit protects us from partial and unsymmetrical views; for the Gospels, like stones in mosaic, are mutually complemental. Secondly, let us thank God that He prompted His servants to note down, so early in the Christian era, statements of the apostolic testimony; for the rich result is that, instead of uncertain and fickle tradition, we have permanent contemporary records. Lastly, be thou thyself a Theophilus, Friend of God; and the Spirit will write a Gospel to thee also. (*G. D. Boardman.*)

Introductory considerations:—The four evangelists are so called, not in same sense as Eph. iv. 11, but to designate them as evangelical historians. The nature and degree of correspondence between the four furnish a strong proof of the credibility of each and all. I. THE AUTHOR OF THIS GOSPEL UNIVERSALLY ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE LUKE. Companion of St. Paul (Acts xvi. to end; 2 Tim. iv. 11). A physician (Col. iv. 14). Said also to have been a painter, but no more authority than a very late tradition for this statement. If, however, he did not paint the faces of the Virgin and her Son with the colours of the limner, he did what was of much more importance; he, in this book, drew to the life an exquisite portraiture of their character, which continues with us long after the masterpieces of the ancient painters have vanished, and which will continue to the end of time—the antidote of superstition, the guide of the serious inquirer, and the admiration of all good men. II. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THIS GOSPEL. 1. The Church took great care

to distinguish genuine Gospels from spurious. Clear testimony to the universal reception of these four, and only these, as canonical from the beginning. 2. If Luke was one of "the seventy," then was he also miraculously qualified to compose this history; if not, yet both his human and Divine qualifications for the work might be safely rested solely on his being called to preach the Gospel, and to act and write under the eye and approval of St. Paul. 3. Various circumstantial particulars respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, foretold in this Gospel, and nowhere else, have been exactly fulfilled. 4. Mutual dependence and connection of this Gospel and the other three. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *The power of truth*:—St. Luke had no authority to suppress these other Gospels, nor does he reprehend or calumniate them; but he writes the truth simply, and leaves it to outswear falsehood; and so it has done. Moses' rod has devoured the conjurors' rods, and St. Luke's story still retains the majesty of the Maker, and theirs are not. (*Dr. Donne.*) *Luke and Theophilus*:—Luke a physician, like the few; Theophilus a patient, like the many. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *Historical belief in the Divine truth of Christianity*:—1. Its necessity. 2. Its certainty. 3. Its insufficiency when unaccompanied by a living faith. (*Ibid.*) Luke is—1. The predecessor of believing searchers. 2. The condemner of unbelieving searchers of Scripture. (*Ibid.*) *The highest aim which a Christian author can propose to himself*:—1. To correct what is faulty. 2. To strengthen what is weak. 3. To arrange what is confused. (*Ibid.*) *Most excellent Theophilus*:—Civil dignities and honours not destroyed, but ennobled, by citizenship in the kingdom of God. (*Ibid.*) The fear of God makes men truly great and excellent. (*Starke.*) *St. Luke's preface*:—Luke is the only one of the synoptists who begins his Gospel with a preface. His preface is historico-critical, while the introduction of John is historico-doctrinal. The prominent points in this short preface are—1. It cautions us against erroneous or defective statements of facts. 2. It directs us to the apostles as eye-witnesses of the life of Christ. 3. It proves the faithfulness of the evangelist in tracing the facts to the primitive source. 4. It brings out the human side in the origin of the sacred writings. 5. It teaches that "faith cometh by hearing," and that the gospel was first taught by catechetical instruction or oral tradition, but then written down by reliable witnesses for all ages to come. This written Gospel is essentially the same with the preached Gospel of Christ and the apostles, and together with the Epistles is to us the only pure and infallible source of primitive Christianity. (*P. Schaff, D.D.*) *The order in Divine things*:—From faith to knowledge; from knowledge to still firmer faith. (*Van Oosterzee.*) *Other narratives of Christ's life*:—It appears from this that narratives of the actions of Jesus, and of the events connected with His life and ministry, had been written by many individuals before Luke composed his history. This fact proves that the actions ascribed to Jesus had made a great noise in the world, and that a high degree of curiosity had been excited to peruse everything recorded concerning Him. Can we then suppose that Luke refers to these writings or to the other Gospels? We have reason to believe that Matthew's Gospel was originally written in Syro-Chaldaic, which was the language spoken by the Jews in our Saviour's time, and that it was not translated into Greek till some time afterwards. Mark's Gospel was short, and John's was not published till many years had elapsed after the destruction of Jerusalem. But as the evangelist says that *many* had undertaken to record the actions attributed to Jesus, it is evident that he alludes to more than one or two productions. Besides, though not asserted, it is implied, that the writings referred to were either defective or incorrect, for if they contained no errors, nor were marked by great defects, the fact that they were numerous was a reason against adding to their number. We conclude, then, that Luke does not here refer to any of the other Gospels. Who, then, could be the writers of those narratives of which the evangelist did not approve? Were they the friends or the enemies of Christianity? There is no reason for supposing that the Scribes and Pharisees ventured to publish anything in writing against Jesus or His religion. They seem at first to have been satisfied by circulating false reports respecting His Resurrection, and afterwards by endeavouring to overwhelm Christianity by the strong arm of persecution. It is probable, therefore, that the objectionable narratives to which Luke refers were written by the friends of Christianity. But the zeal of friends has frequently been more injurious to the Christian religion than the malice of its enemies. We can easily conceive the pernicious consequences that may have arisen from erroneous statements, exaggerated facts, and fanciful explanations, given by honest but ignorant or ill-informed writers. The most

judicious and effectual remedy was accordingly adopted by St. Luke. It consisted in making a proper selection and accurate statement of the most important facts as procured from the most undoubted authority. This, accordingly, was done; and the consequence has been that all the defective or erroneous accounts of our Saviour which were then circulated have entirely disappeared, as darkness flies at the approach of the morning sun, while the Gospels which contained the only correct history have been duly valued, copied, and preserved. (*Jas. Thomson, D.D.*) *Many workers needed*:—Luke undertook to be very minute and exhaustive in his statement of gospel facts. He was going to do better than many other writers had done. He says so with cool frankness: "Forasmuch . . . . to me also." That is a curious expression. We expected him to say, Forasmuch as many have done this work, there is no need for me to do it. But he makes the very fact that there were other writers, a reason why there should be one more. That was good reasoning; it should prevail in all the lines and departments of Christian life and action. The contrary policy often supersedes it, and brings ministers and churches into great discomfort and enfeeblement. Men will say, You have so many helpers, you have no need of me. They are always more or less dishonest men—not intentionally so; intentional dishonesty is perfectly vulgar and wholly detestable, and nobody lays claim to it; but when men say, There are so many preachers, I need not be one: so many deacons, I need not be another: so many helpers, there is no need of me—they are not conducting a Christian argument, they are with all their graciousness unconsciously jealous and spiteful. Luke reasoned in the right way; he said, Many men are taking up this subject, I will do what I can in it; I think I can beat some of them. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) *The preface the best part of the book*:—Will the book be as good as the preface? I fancy not—when the subject is Jesus Christ. The first sentence is often the best. Why? Because the subject grows. No man can ever prepare his imagination for the glory of that theme. The young preacher feels this; he buckles to with a brave heart, and says he will work honestly all day, and pray most of the night, and produce such discourses as will satisfy his best ambition. He empties his inkhorn, does all he can, and then puts his young hand upon his mouth and says, Unprofitable! I have failed. I had an ambition high as heaven, bright as the unclouded noon; but I have failed! He does not do justice to himself. The Lord does not pronounce that judgment upon him. He says, Thou hast not failed; industry never fails; conscience always succeeds; thou hast won a right bright crown! Cheer thee! It is not the man who has failed; it is the God who has exceeded all ever thought of in prayer, all ever dreamed of in poetry. Still, we expected more from Luke than from the others, and we get more. He does not see some things as Mark saw them. It is fashionable—shall we say, with due mental reservation, pedantic?—to point out that Luke was the observing writer. Mark observed a good many things that Luke never saw, or at least never recorded. Matthew also had his own way of looking at things; and as for St. John, what was he looking at? Apparently at nothing, for his inner eyes were fastened on the soul of Christ. If Luke had sharp eyes, what ears John had! for he heard whisperings of the heart, throbbings and beatings and sighings: and what a gift of expression! for he turned all that he heard into noble, sweet music for the soul's comforting in all the cloudy days of Church time. But Luke says he will set down things "in order"; the others have been good historians, but a little wanting in the power of grouping and classifying; good historians, but poor editors; Luke will break things up into chapters, and verses, and paragraphs, and sections, and he will attend to chronological sequence. We need mechanical men in the Church, people who know when to begin a new paragraph, and to codify laws, and to do a good many useful little things. (*Ibid.*) *Religion a reality*:—In spite of our professions and general convictions, we do not give to the truths of the gospel their full weight as infallible certainties; we do not embrace them as realities. I. IT IS A REALITY THAT GOD IS SUPREME; THE UNIVERSAL SOVEREIGN, AND THAT HE RIGHTFULLY CLAIMS THE LOVE AND THE ENTIRE ALLEGIANCE OF ALL HIS CREATURES. II. IT IS A MOST AWFUL FACT THAT A POSITIVE REBELLION AGAINST THE ETERNAL KING HAS TAKEN PLACE IN THIS WORLD, AND THAT WE ARE ALL DEEPLY INVOLVED IN ITS CONSEQUENCES. III. THE REDEMPTION OF SINNERS, UNDER THE ALARMING CIRCUMSTANCES ABOVE DESCRIBED, BY THE SON OF GOD IS A MOST MERCIFUL FACT ANNOUNCED TO US IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. IV. THAT THE ACCEPTANCE OF THIS GREAT REDEMPTION, ON YOUR PART, MUST BE A REALITY. V. RELIGION IS A REALITY IN ITS GREAT AND HAPPY EFFECTS, WHICH ARE SANCTIFICATION AND SALVATION. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) **To write unto thee in order.**—*In order*:—A work well shaped into an artistic whole;

a history advancing by well-marked steps, and systematically progressive; an inter-connection easily perceptible of causes and effects—these for a Greek mind constituted the best material for carrying conviction. Now it is precisely this kind of evidence which is to be drawn from the third Gospel. And the preamble leads us even to think that such was the deliberate intention of the author. (*Professor Godet.*) If it be said that Luke says that he wrote "in order" (εν τάξει), I answer that there are other orderly arrangements besides those of time and place; and that if a work is a religious memoir, the arrangement would be regulated, though not exclusively, by the reference of the facts to the religious end in view. (*Prebendary Row.*) **Most excellent Theophilus.**—*Most excellent Theophilus*:—The person to whom the Gospel is addressed. The name "Theophilus" signifies a lover, or beloved of God; but it would be very unnatural to suppose, with some, that the word is here used as a feigned name, to signify any Christian. Though this method has been adopted by other writers, it is not agreeable to the practice of the inspired. Theophilus is plainly the same real individual to whom the book of the Acts of the Apostles also is addressed. He is here styled "most excellent." This was an honorary title bestowed on persons high in office, and of nobility, somewhat similar to the title of "excellency" with us. Thus it is given to Felix (Acts xxiii. 26) and to Festus (Acts xxvi. 25). Theophilus, therefore, was not only a Christian, but a nobleman, and probably high in office. Thus, though "not many mighty, not many noble, were called," yet some such were called from the first; and thus some such are still found among the faithful. Such instances are highly important and pleasing. Not but that the soul of the meanest peasant is, in itself, as precious as the soul of the most illustrious nobleman—not but that the salvation of every soul transcends in importance every worldly consideration; but in reference to the probable effect on others, there is an undeniable difference. Every good man may be of some service to the cause of Christ; but when rank, office, wealth, and talent are engaged, God may be considered as Himself putting more powerful means in operation; and when His own blessing is superinduced, the good effects are correspondingly extensive. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *Courtesy*:—From this form of address, used by an inspired writer, may be fairly deduced the lawfulness and propriety, generally speaking, of giving to men the ordinary titles of respect. As to our Lord's teaching His disciples not to be called rabbi, and to call no man father, or master, on earth, Scripture must be interpreted consistently with itself, and that passage, of course, consistently with such as this; and this rule of interpretation leads to the conclusion that Christ forbade, not the use of common terms in common life, but the assumption, on the one hand, and the yielding, on the other, of any human authority in matters of religion which might at all interfere with His own. They err, therefore, who think there is any propriety or religion in assuming a singularity in such things, or in sturdily refusing what are usually considered marks of civility and respect. It is unworthy at once of the Christian and of the man to be guilty of hollow hypocrisy or fawning servility; but it is both dutiful and adorning to be courteous, and to give honour to whom honour is due. (*Ibid.*) *Dedication of books*:—It has been usual with authors to dedicate their works to particular persons, sometimes with the design of securing their patronage, sometimes merely as a mark of respect and affection, and sometimes with a particular view to the benefit of the individuals themselves. The dictates of inspiration needed not, it is true, the support of any human authority; yet it would not have been unworthy of Divine wisdom to have adopted such secondary means. While this dedication is (1) an obvious expression of high regard to Theophilus, it distinctly states that (2) his personal improvement was what Luke greatly desired. Though immediately addressed to Theophilus, this book, like the rest of Scripture, comes, with the stamp of Divine authority, for the edification of all who may peruse it. (*Ibid.*) *Most excellent Theophilus*:—I. HUMAN TITLES HAVE A PECULIAR SIGNIFICANCE WHEN APPLIED TO RELIGIOUS MEN. Many called "excellent"; this "friend of God" was "most excellent." II. RELIGIOUS MEN MAY BE ILLUSTRIOUS, YET LITTLE KNOWN. III. TITLED BELIEVERS FEW IN NUMBER—*one* Theophilus. IV. WELL TO HAVE A GOOD NAME—"Theophilus"; better to deserve it—"most excellent." V. SUCH EXCELLENCE HAS ITS MARKS. 1. Anxious to know things of Christ from beginning. 2. To know their certainty. VI. SUCH EXCELLENCE HAS ITS ADVANTAGES. 1. Approved of God—such friendship is not one-sided. 2. Approval of the highest order of men—Luke. 3. The honour of having an authentic and inspired history of Christ dedicated to him. 4. His name thus rescued from utter oblivion

(*Biblical Museum.*) *Theophilus*:—This name, of Grecian origin, though it is sometimes used by the Jews, leads us to suppose that the noble person who bore it was a Greek. We must add that, in dedicating this work to him, St. Luke was probably not thinking only of the use he would personally make of it. The publication of a book was at that time a much more costly undertaking than it is now, since every copy had to be made by hand. By accepting the manuscript which was dedicated to him, the wealthy Theophilus became what was called the patron or, as we should now say, the sponsor of the book. He undertook to make it known, to have copies made of it, and to circulate these amongst those about him, or who belonged to the same nation as himself. The ancient Judæo-Christian romance, entitled, "The Clementines," of about the year 160, makes Theophilus a man of high position in Antioch, who, after having listened to the preaching of Peter, gave up his palace to be used as a church. (*Professor Godet.*) **The certainty of these things.**—*Certainties*:—Part of the value of this short and simple introduction consists in its quite undesigned manifestation of the true historic character of Christianity. In the good sense Luke was a sceptic first, in order that he might be a rational and strong believer. Anything more truly scientific than his method I cannot imagine. It is the method of every candid historian who wishes to set down only what is genuine and authentic. When he speaks here of "the certainty" of some particular things, he means substantially what the Apostle Paul means when he speaks of "the gospel of God," "the gospel of which he was not ashamed," and of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Is that first "certainty" enough for us still? Everything, we are told, is being tried by this practical test, by what it can do, and by the honest feeling men have to it, and we must not complain if the test is applied even to supernatural religion. We do not complain. It is quite true that we ought to be able by this time to furnish much practical corroboration of the truth and worth of Christianity which did not and could not exist in the apostolic days. I will therefore mention some of the practical and secondary "certainties" which, when duly considered, will tend greatly to confirm and enforce those which are primary and principal. I. IT IS CERTAIN THAT NO STYLE OR TYPE OF HUMAN CHARACTER IS HIGHER THAN THE CHRISTIAN TYPE; THAT NONE IS SO HIGH. Theoretically it ought to be so. Practically it *is* so. II. IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE CHRISTIAN FAITH ENABLES THOSE WHO REALLY HAVE IT TO BEAR THE STRAIN AND PRESSURE OF LIFE—the sorrow, the pain, whatever they may be, as they could not be borne without it; and it is quite certain that we do not know of anything else which has the same upholding and consolatory power. III. IT IS CERTAIN THAT CHRISTIANITY ALONE KEEPS AN OPEN DOOR FOR US OUT OF THIS WORLD INTO ANOTHER AND A BETTER. IV. IT IS CERTAIN THAT, AT THIS MOMENT, THERE IS ONLY ONE RELIGION IN THE WORLD THAT CAN, FROM ITS VERY NATURE, BE EXTENDED TO EVERY PART OF IT; only one religion which, as a matter of fact, is being diffused by those who believe in it and adhere to it, in a spirit of entire impartiality, "among all nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues." Christianity is, as it has ever been, the only really missionary religion in the world. The poor Turk has no missionary in any Christian country. Educated Hindoos come to our universities, but although they can speak our language as well as we ourselves, and although they know that there is entire religious freedom in this country, who among them preaches Hindooism, or seeks a footing for it among the English people? On the other hand, every Christian individual and every Christian community stand committed, in simple fidelity to their Master, and in obedience to the very law of their life, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (*Alexander Raleigh, D.D.*) *The tone of the New Testament on certainty in religion*:—The more closely this tone of certainty is studied the more soul-striking the phenomenon becomes, both in its substance and in its accessories. What led these four evangelists, and these writers of the letters on doctrine and life, to speak one and all in this uniform style of intense belief? Was it the blind certainty of ignorant fools? Was it feigned all through? Were they deceived by appearances? They at least believed what they wrote. They seem utterly regardless of calumny and misrepresentation, like men who know that they are right. They speak with a strength of persuasion and assertion which still moves the world. They teach—1. That man has lost himself by losing the knowledge of his God; and that he can recover himself, with the knowledge of his own nature and eternal destiny, only by recovering the knowledge of his Maker. 2. That God is to be loved through being known in His work of nature and redemption. 3. That certainty is essential for the peace of the soul. 4. That certain

knowledge of God's works and ways is essential to growth in Christian character. 5. That the quality of the moral excellence required by the gospel under such a character is impossible of attainment apart from confidence in the possession of God's love and life eternal. (*Edward White.*) *Importance of a firm religious belief*:—I envy no quality of the mind or intellect in others, be it genius, power, wit, or fancy; but I should prefer a firm religious belief to every other blessing, for it makes life a discipline of goodness; creates new hopes, when all earthly hopes vanish; and throws over the decay, the destruction of existence, the most gorgeous of all lights; awakens life even in death, and from corruption and decay calls up beauty and divinity; makes an instrument of torture and shame the ladder of ascent to Paradise; and, far above all combinations of earthly hopes, calls up the most delightful visions of palms and amaranths, the gardens of the blest, the security of everlasting joys, where the sensualist and the sceptic view only gloom, decay, annihilation, and despair. (*Davy.*) *The Bible really believed*:—The son of Selina, the Countess of Huntingdon, whose zeal in the extension of the gospel is well known, was unhappily an unbeliever, but reverenced his pious and venerable mother. "I wish," said a peer to him, "you would speak to Lady Huntingdon; she has just erected a preaching-place close to my residence." His lordship replied, "Gladly, my lord; but you will do me the favour to inform me what plea to urge, for my mother really believes the Bible." (*Baxendale's Illustrations.*) *The Christian faith is founded on facts*:—It is important from time to time to be reminded that the real claims of the Christian faith, speaking of it in its largest sense, upon our obedience and reverence are founded on facts which hardly any one of any name or fame disputes, and which, in fact, have hardly ever been disputed. (*Dean Stanley.*) *The tone of certainty*:—Apart from criticism as to its cause, this is the most wonderful phenomenon in all literature. If the New Testament is not "the judge that ends the strife, when wit and reason fail," at least it speaks in that tone of absolute and invariable certainty which we should expect to accompany a revelation from the living God. And, as a matter of fact, it is this certainty which armed the martyrs of Christ in the early centuries to confront the direst sufferings in defence of the faith; as it is also this which makes it so exceedingly difficult in our times to overthrow Christianity by a set of mere critical peradventures, which are like brittle glass spears breaking against a shield of diamonds. (*E. White.*) *The witnesses of the gospel facts*:—These first spectators of "the heavenly vision" of "God manifest in the flesh" are themselves gradually raised into transcendent certainty; and then their testimony, and teaching, and life, transfuse that certitude into those who receive their word. That is according to the general law of life. The generations of men are related intellectually and spiritually. There is a vital unity in humanity—what the French call a solidarity. What human nature once really saw, subjected to every test, and was compelled to believe, humanity still sees through the organs and perceptions of its former members. Inheritance in all departments runs through the world. We believe all our national histories because "our fathers have told us." But this is only the first stage of belief. Honest souls can test the traditional and historical by spiritual insight, and then they say—to the all-perceiving and all-reporting humanity—"Now we believe not because of thy saying, for we have seen Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." (*Ibid.*) *Testimonies of experience*:—At night, when a railroad train, having stopped at a station, is about to start again, in order that the conductor may know that everything is as it should be, the brakeman on the last car calls out through the darkness, "All right here!" and the next man takes up the word, "All right here!" and the next echoes, "All right here!" and so it passes along the line, and the train moves on. It does me good to sit here while you speak of the life you are guiding through the world's darkness, and pass the word from one to another, "All right here!" All is right everywhere when the heart is right. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Power of personal testimony*:—Thomas Bilney was an ardent young convert, and longed to do something for his Master. Hugh Latimer was a zealous Roman Catholic priest, who preached against the Reformation. Bilney went to him, and told him that he wished to confess. In the privacy of the confessional, he told him the whole burning story of his conviction, conversion, and new-found happiness. The Spirit helped, and Latimer's heart was probed and changed. From that hour Latimer gave his life to the cause he had before opposed, and sealed his testimony with his blood. *Infidels neglect to examine the Bible*:—Sir Isaac Newton set out in life a

clamorous infidel; but, on a nice examination of the evidences for Christianity, he found reason to change his opinion. When the celebrated Dr. Edmund Halley was talking infidelity before him, Sir Isaac Newton addressed him in these or the like words: "Dr. Halley, I am always glad to hear you when you speak about astronomy, or other parts of the mathematics, because that is a subject you have studied, and well understand; but you should not talk of Christianity, for you have not studied it. I have; and am certain that you know nothing of the matter." This was a just reproof, and one that would be very suitable to be given to half the infidels of the present day, for they often speak of what they have never studied, and what, in fact, they are entirely ignorant of. Dr. Johnson, therefore, well observed that "no honest man could be a Deist, for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs of Christianity." On the name of Hume being mentioned to him, "No, sir," said he, "Hume owned to a clergyman in the Bishopric of Durham that he had never read the New Testament with attention." (*Student's Handbook to Scripture Doctrines.*) *Examination convincing:*—Conspicuous in John Randolph's library was a family Bible. Surrounding it were many books, some for, and others against, its truthfulness as an inspired revelation. One day Mr. Randolph had a clergyman as his guest, and the family Bible became a topic of conversation. The eccentric orator said, "I was raised by a pious mother (God bless her memory!), who taught me the Christian religion in all its requirements. But alas! I grew up an infidel—if not an infidel complete, yet a decided Deist. But when I became a man, in this, as well as in political and all other matters, I resolved to examine for myself, and never to pin my faith to any other man's sleeve. So I bought that Bible; I pored over it; I examined it carefully. I sought and procured those books for and against it; and when my labours were ended, I came to this irresistible conclusion—the Bible is true. It would have been as easy for a mole to have written Sir Isaac Newton's treatise on "Optics," as for uninspired men to have written the Bible." *Christianity courts examination:*—But I am anxious you should never let slip the fact that Christianity itself puts the scales and weights into your hands, and starts you on this universal verifying process. When I was a senior scholar I was dazed and bewildered by a man three times my age seeking to shake my faith in the Gospel by assuring me that the Bible was averse to investigation, shrunk from the full light of day, and could only maintain its ground with those who were prejudiced in its favour. Glad was I to find that Christianity rejoices in all light, welcomes it from every quarter, accepts with thankfulness the aid of all the sciences and arts, and urges us to imitate the Bereans, who did not assent to Paul's words without searching the Scriptures and using the best test they knew, so that they might only believe what was absolutely true, and hold nothing fast except that which was undeniably good. Forget not, then, it is Christianity itself that says, "Prove all things. Examine thoroughly. Get at the core of things. Be not deceived by appearances. Go from facts to principles, from the letter to the spirit. Be not cheated by any alloys. Light the fires of examination, put on your crucible, cast in your metallic ores, and heat the furnace to its hottest, and then take away with you the pure gold of goodness and truth." (*J. Clifford, D.D.*) *The Bible tested:*—The Bible has been tried in the ages of the past by godless men like Voltaire; it has been tried by the best classes like Wilberforce; it has been tried by educators like Alexander; it has been tried by men in every conceivable position, in prosperity and in adversity, and it has stood the test. You need not be afraid to build your hopes upon it for time and for eternity. (*Dr. John Hall.*) *Afraid of being convinced:*—At Cairo, Gobat entertained high hopes of the conversion of a learned Mohammedan teacher, Sheik Ahmed, which were doomed to disappointment. After many interviews, in which he appeared deeply impressed and ready to receive Christ as his Saviour and God, Gobat lost sight of him. Three months later he says, "I met him one day in the street. I asked him why he had not called for so long a time, to which he naïvely replied, 'The last time I was with you I felt that if I went to you again I should be convinced of the truths of Christianity, and be consequently obliged to avow myself a Christian, for which I should have been killed. I therefore resolved to see you no more until my heart should be hardened against your arguments.'" (*Memoirs of Bishop Gobat.*) *Triumph of the Word:*—In the diamond fields of South Africa a diamond was found, celebrated lately under the title of fly-stone; placed under a magnifying glass you see enclosed in all its brilliancy a little fly, with body, wings, and eyes in the most perfect state of preservation. How it came

there no one knows; but no human skill can take it out. So in Holy Scripture the Spirit of God is found in a place from which no power of man can remove it. Infidelity and criticism have now done their utmost, and it is a kind of satisfaction to know that more powerful advocates of infidelity can hardly be found in the future than there have been in the past. All kinds of weapons have been employed, but the result has been triumph for the Word. (*Dr. McEwan.*)

Ver. 5. **A certain priest named Zacharias.**—Mark how immediately the historian betakes himself to the collateral line. Something very suggestive in this. No one life independent of other lives. As every text has its context, so every life has relationships and associations which must in some degree be understood before itself can be made altogether intelligible. Hence we find that biography is much indebted to its background of contemporary and incidental events. The particularity of Luke's statements is noticeable. He does not hurry his reader over names and circumstances which a critical inquirer would like to know something about. On the contrary, he sets down the names of kings, priests, and others, and so gives the critic the utmost opportunity of testing his accuracy by the light of collateral history. (*Dr. Joseph Parker.*) *The priestly descent of the Forerunner*:—Whereas, alike in narrative and apostolic argument, the Lord Himself is "separated" in His lineage from the priestly race (see Heb. vii. 14), it is otherwise with John the Baptist. By father and by mother he was descended in the "priestly" line. This twofold fact seems to me worth accentuating in three elements of it. 1. It strikingly differentiates historically the priesthood of our Lord from the ancient priesthood, which was a thing simply of inheritance by blood. 2. It is to be emphasized in that John the Baptist never claimed that priestly succession that he might have done as the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth. Surely this declinature to enter himself heir to so august an office is extremely noticeable! It was self-chosen, but also Divinely-ordered, seeing that John was to usher in that very kingdom of grace that was destined to unconsecrate and abolish the old order of things. 3. I call attention to it further, because it could scarcely fail that the "blue blood" of the priesthood in John would have its influence in winning him audience and giving him authority with the multitudes who flocked (later) to his imperious summons. (*Dr. Grosart.*) *Priesthood in the days of our Lord*:—As the office was hereditary, the number of the priesthood had become very great in the days of our Lord, so that, according to the Talmud, in addition to those who lived in the country, and came up to take their turn in the temple services, there were no fewer than 24,000 settled in Jerusalem, and half that number in Jericho. This, however, is no doubt an exaggeration. Josephus is more likely correct in estimating the whole number at somewhat over 20,000. But even this was an enormous proportion of clergy to the population of a country like Judæa. They must have been a more familiar sight in the streets of Jerusalem, and in the towns and villages, than the seemingly countless ecclesiastics in the towns and cities of Spain or Italy at this time. (*Dr. Geikie.*) "*Of the course of Abia*":—Abia—Abijah in the Old Testament. When the priests had become numerous, David divided the whole body into twenty-four classes or "courses," which were appointed to do service in weekly rotation, so that each of the courses had to attend at the temple twice in the year for a week each time. Of the twenty-four courses that of Abijah was the eighth. Of the number that went into captivity only four of the courses returned, and that of Abijah was not one of them. But these four were divided into twenty-four, in order to reproduce the former distribution; and, to render the analogy more complete, they received the same names as the original courses. (*Dr. Kitto.*) *The priestly orders*:—The word *ephemeria* means first "a daily ministry" (Heb. *Mishmereth*), and then a class of the priesthood which exercised its functions for a week. Aaron had four sons, but the two elder, Nadab and Abihu, were struck dead for using strange fire in the sanctuary (Lev. x.). From the two remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, had sprung in the days of David twenty-four families, sixteen from the descendants of Eleazar, and eight from those of Ithamar. To these David distributes by lot the order of their service from week to week, each for eight days inclusively from sabbath to sabbath (1 Chron. xxiv. 1–19; 2 Chron. xxxi. 2). After the Babylonish exile only four of the twenty-four courses returned—a striking indication of the truth of the Jewish saying, that those who returned from the exile were but the chaff in comparison of the wheat. The four families of which the representatives returned were those of Jedaiah, Immer, Pashur, and Harim (Ezra ii. 36–39). But the Jews concealed the heavy loss by subdividing these four families into twenty-

four courses, to which they gave the original names, and this is alluded to in Neh. xiii. 30 ("I . . . appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business"). This arrangement continued till the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), at which time, on the ninth of the month Abib (August 5th), we are told by Josephus that the course in waiting was that of Jehoiarib. Reckoning back from this, we find that the course of Abijah went out of office on October 9, B.C. 6. The reader should bear in mind that our received era for the birth of Christ was only fixed by the abbot Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century, and is probably four years wrong. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) There may be succession in a forsaken Church. It remained when Christ was crucified, the Spirit quenched. (*Van Doren.*)

Ver. 6. **Both righteous before God.**—*Observance of God's ordinances*:—By "walking in the ordinances," they walked likewise "in all the commandments of the Lord;" that being the means whereby they did this. (*Bishop Beveridge.*) *Performance of duties*:—God communicates Himself with great variety to His saints, now in this ordinance and now in that, on purpose that He may keep up the esteem of all in our hearts. Take heed, therefore, Christian, that thou neglect not any one duty. How knowest thou but that is the door at which Christ stands, waiting to enter into thy soul (John xx. 24; 2 Thess. iii. 16)? (*W. Gurnall.*) *All God's commands to be observed*:—God's commandments hang together; they are knit and woven together like a fine web, wherein you cannot loosen a single stitch without danger of unravelling the whole. If a man lives in the breach of any one of God's commandments, if he allows himself to indulge in any one sin, none can tell where he will stop. There is no letting any one devil into our souls without the risk of his going and fetching "seven other devils wickeder than himself"; and the purer the house may hitherto have been, the more eager will they be to come and lodge in it. (*A. W. Hare.*) *Unity of Zacharias and Elisabeth*:—They were one in—1. Affection. 2. Interest. 3. Christ. (*Van Doren.*) *A model couple*:—Observe here—1. The sweet harmony of this religious couple in the ways of God; they both walked in the commandments of God. It is a happy match when husband and wife are one, not only in themselves, but in the Lord. 2. The universality of their holiness and obedience: they walked, not in some, but in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord. Such as will approve themselves to be sincerely religious must make conscience of every known duty, and endeavour to obey every precept and command of God. 3. The high commendation which the Holy Spirit of God gives of this their religious course of holiness and obedience: they are pronounced blameless. To live without gross sin is our holiness on earth; to live without any sin will be our happiness in heaven. Many sins may be in him that has true grace; but he that has truth of grace cannot allow himself in any sin. Truth of grace is our perfection on earth; but in heaven we shall have perfection as well as truth. 4. A pattern for their imitation who wait at God's altar, and are employed in and about holy things. All ministers of the gospel ought to be what Zacharias and Elisabeth are here said to be, blameless; that is, very innocent and inoffensive in their daily conversation. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Like stock, like fruit*:—It is not in the power of parents to traduce holiness to their children; it is the blessing of God that feoffs them in the virtues of their parents, as they feoff them in their sins. There is no certainty, but there is a likelihood of a holy generation when the parents are such. Elisabeth was just as well as Zachary, that the forerunner of a Saviour might be holy on both sides. If the stock and the graff be not both good, there is much danger of the fruit. It is a happy match when the husband and the wife are one, not only in themselves, but in God; not more in flesh than in the Spirit. Grace makes no difference of sexes; rather the weaker carries away the more honour because it has had less helps. (*Bishop Hall.*) It may or may not carry benediction with it to be born into a household historically and by hereditary office renowned; but, *cæteris paribus*, it is a beatitude to have both father and mother "righteous" as before God, and "blameless" as before the world. How mournful to very tragedy is falsification of such a godly lineage, words are poor to tell! It is to set the whole home-life to sweetest music to have husband and wife, father and mother, agreed in religious faith and character, as it is to introduce inevitable discords when *both* are not so—when, perchance, children and servants see the husband (father) living "without God," and the wife (mother) bearing an aching heart as she enforcedly goes alone to "the sanctuary," and alone has "prayer" in the household. (*Dr. Grosart.*) *Zacharias and Elisabeth*:—Parentage of great men interesting. Parental influence generally determines intel-

lectual, social, and largely moral standing. Introducing the story of one who was pronounced by the highest authority to have no superior among his predecessors or contemporaries (Matt. xi. 11), the sacred writer detains us a little with the character of his parents. View the text as a beautiful exhibition of personal and family religion. I. A REPRESENTATION OF PERSONAL RELIGION. Their religion was—1. Sincere—"before God." 2. Irreproachable—"blameless" (Phil. ii. 15). 3. Practical —"walking in all," &c. II. A PICTURE AND PLEDGE OF FAMILY RELIGION. What is said of one is said of "both"—a pious pair. Look at this in its bearing upon—1. Their mutual comfort. Christian young men and women, let this be one of the first things at which you look seriously when you begin to contemplate the life-union. 2. Their domestic life. Imagine them at their rural home in the hill-country. Mutual kindness, united prayer, quiet ways of doing good, &c. 3. Their parental duties. Surely their personal piety had something to do with their selection as parents of forerunner. Personal religion the main qualification for training of children. (*John Rawlinson.*) *Characteristics of true righteousness*:—In order to this we must be "justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ," for "the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin, is he whose transgression is forgiven." Another characteristic of the righteous man is that, "in his spirit there is no guile," or, as the Irish boy expressed this, he must be "clane inside." See how David prayed for these blessings (Psa. li. 1, 7, 10). Then those who are righteous have all right principles in them (Gal. v. 22, 23). A king of England once took a Romish fighting-bishop prisoner. The Pope sent a demand, "Set my son free." In reply, the king sent the bishop's helmet and coat of mail, and asked, "Is this thy son's dress?" Those who are righteous before God will also be righteous before men. (*H. R. Burton.*) *Transparent in character*:—In the cathedral of St. Mark, in Venice—a marvellous building, lustrous with an Oriental splendour far beyond description—there are pillars said to have been brought from Solomon's Temple; these are of alabaster, a substance firm and durable as granite, and yet transparent, so that the light glows through them. Behold an emblem of what all true pillars of the Church should be—firm in their faith, and transparent in their character; men of simple mould, ignorant of tortuous and deceptive ways, and yet men of strong will, not readily to be led aside, or bent from their uprightness! A few such alabaster men we know; may the great Master Builder place more of them in His temple! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The blameless pair*:—I. To consider and illustrate the character described in the text; and—II. To present some reasons why all who have entered the marriage state should endeavour to make it their own. 1. The first thing which demands attention in the character of this truly excellent and happy pair is, that they were righteous before God. It is, indeed, very easy to be righteous in our own estimation; nor is it very difficult to be righteous in the estimation of our fellow creatures; but it is by no means equally easy to be righteous in the estimation of God. He is constantly with us; He sees our whole conduct; nay, more, He reads our hearts. To be righteous before Him, then, is to be really, inwardly, and uniformly righteous. It is to be the same persons in every situation, and on all occasions: the same at home and abroad, in solitude and in society. Try yourselves by this rule. Would men think you righteous, did they know you as perfectly as God knows you? 2. Again: this pair walked in all God's commandments and ordinances blameless. It is mentioned as an effect and a proof of their being righteous. These two words, though nearly synonymous, are not perfectly so. The commands of God are His moral precepts, or those precepts which are designed to regulate our temper and conduct on all occasions. By His ordinances are meant those religious rites and institutions which He has directed us to observe. Some pretend to obey God's commands, while they neglect His ordinances. Others visibly observe His ordinances, but neglect His commands. The term walk signifies a course of life. To walk in God's commandments and ordinances, is to have the heart and life constantly regulated by them. It is not to step occasionally into the path of duty, and then take many steps in a different path; but it is to pursue this path with undeviating steadiness and perseverance. This pious pair did not select such commandments as were easy, or reputable, and neglect others. Nor did they observe those only, which they had little temptation to omit; but, to use the language of the psalmist, they had respect to all God's commandments. What is now, under the Christian dispensation, implied in walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, blamelessly? 1. It implies the exercise of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. These are the two first and great commands of the

gospel. Until we begin to perform these duties, we cannot be righteous before God, nor walk in any of His commandments or ordinances; for inspiration hath declared, without faith it is impossible to please Him. 2. Walking in all God's commandments and ordinances blamelessly, implies great diligence in seeking a knowledge of them. No man can regulate his conduct by a rule, with which he is unacquainted. As well might a mariner find his way to a distant port, without ever looking to his chart or compass. That copy of the Old Testament, which Zacharias and Elisabeth possessed, was doubtless worn with frequent use. It must have been their daily counsellor and guide. 3. Walking in all God's commandments and ordinances blamelessly, implies a careful performance of all the duties which husbands and wives owe each other. 4. Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of God blamelessly, implies a careful performance, on the part of parents, of all the parental duties which He has enjoined. 5. Walking in all God's ordinances and commandments blamelessly, implies the maintaining of the worship of God in the family. 6. Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly, implies a suitable concern for the present and future happiness of servants, apprentices, and dependents. 7. Walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly, implies a careful performance of all the duties which we owe our neighbours. 8. Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly, implies a proper use of the temporal good things which are entrusted to our care. Lastly: Walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly, implies a sacred observance of the Sabbath, a diligent attendance on the public worship of God, and a commemoration of Christ at His table. Having thus considered and illustrated the character brought to view in the text, I proceed, as was proposed—II. To state some reasons why all who have entered the marriage state should endeavour to make it their own. 1. God approves, and requires you to possess, such a character. He commands you to be righteous before Him. 2. Consider how much it would promote your present happiness to possess such a character. Where can happiness be found on earth, if not in such a family as has now been described? 3. Permit me to remind you how greatly such a family would honour God and adorn religion. It would, indeed, in such a world as this, be like one of those ever verdant islands, which rise amidst the wide ocean of Arabian sands, and whose constant verdure leads the weary and thirsty traveller to seek for the hidden spring which produces it. It is, perhaps, impossible for an insulated individual to exhibit all the beauty and excellence of Christianity; because much of it consists in the right performance of those relative duties, which he has no opportunity to perform. But in a religious family, a family where both husband and wife are evidently pious, religion may be displayed in all its parts, and in the fulness of its glory and beauty; and one such family will do more to recommend it, and to soften the prejudices of its enemies, than can be effected by the most powerful and persuasive sermon. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Domestic life*:—In this short account there is much to interest and instruct us; "they were both righteous." The priest maintained the sanctity of his character by marrying a daughter of Aaron; a daughter of Aaron's piety as well as of his flesh. The union, cemented by affection, was strengthened by piety. Thrice happy pair! united to God and to each other! who can separate you? what can harm you? Life with all its trials; death with all its terrors; all things shall work together for your good. If congeniality is necessary to happiness in any state, surely in that which is most interesting and important. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" Besides, if the families of God's people are to be the nurseries for the Church, it is indispensable that both parents should be righteous. I. THE PRINCIPLE OF THEIR OBEDIENCE—"They were righteous before God." II. THE RULE OF THEIR OBEDIENCE—"The commandments and ordinances of the Lord." III. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THEIR OBEDIENCE—"Walking in *all* the commandments," &c. Religion, wherever it exists, will leave its own entire impression upon the character; not one feature, but every feature of the "new man" will be developed; the duties to man, as well as those we owe to God, will be conscientiously regarded. IV. THE CONSISTENCY OF THEIR OBEDIENCE. The text adds to the preceding description of their character "blameless;" not sinless. Happy is it for the interests of the Church when a blameless consistency marks its professors, more especially when its professors, like Zacharias and Elisabeth, sustain public and important stations; the priest emphatically should be 'blameless;" if the tongue of slander should attack him, it should meet with no

second accuser. To be thus "blameless" requires a constant dependence upon the grace of God. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

Ver. 7. **And they had no child.**—*Virtue rewarded after long trial:*—Observe here —I. This holy pair, Zacharias and Elisabeth, were fruitful in holy obedience, but barren in children; a fruitful soul and a barren womb are consistent, and often meet together. This religious couple made no less progress in virtue than in age, and yet their virtue did not make their age fruitful. II. Elisabeth was barren in the flower of her age, but much more so in old age. Here was a double obstacle, and consequently a double instance of Divine power in the birth of John the Baptist, showing him to be a prophet very extraordinary, and miraculously sent by God. III. When Almighty God in old time did long delay to give the blessing of children to holy women, He rewarded their expectation with the birth of some eminent and extraordinary person. Thus Sarah, after long barrenness, brought forth an Isaac; Rebecca, a Jacob; Rachel, a Joseph; Hannah, a Samuel; and Elisabeth, St. John Baptist. When God makes His people wait long for a particular mercy, if He sees it good for them, He gives it at last with a double reward for their expectation. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Opposite wonders in the conception of Christ and of John:*—A just soul and a barren womb may well agree together. Among the Jews barrenness was not a defect only, but a reproach; yet, while this good woman was fruitful of holy obedience, she was barren of children; as John, who was miraculously conceived by man, was a fit forerunner of Him that was conceived by the Holy Ghost, so a barren matron was meet to make way for a virgin. (*Bishop Hall.*) Here was desolation without murmuring. Blessings long withheld are more intensely prized. (*W. H. Van Doren, D.D.*) *The society of children:*—We are all brought nearer to Christ through childhood. Dr. Arnold used to say that no one could continue long in a healthy religious state unless his heart was kept tender by mingling with children, or by frequent intercourse with the poor and the suffering. *The grief of being childless:*—But, notwithstanding all the satisfaction and inward peace of innocent and godly lives, in spite of the natural pride they, doubtless, felt in the consideration that must have been shown them, as born of a priestly ancestry, stretching back through fifteen hundred years, and though they must have had round them the comforts of a modest competency, there was a secret grief in the heart of both. Elisabeth had no child, and what this meant to a Hebrew wife it is hard for us to fancy. Rachel's words, "Give me children, or else I die," were the burden of every childless woman's heart in Israel. The birth of a child was the removal of a reproach. Hannah's prayer for a son was that of all Jewish wives in the same position. To have no child was regarded as a heavy punishment from the hand of God. How bitter the thought that his name should perish was for a Jew to bear, was seen in the law which required that a childless widow should be, forthwith, married by a dead husband's brother, that children might be raised up to preserve the memory of the childless man, by being accounted his. Nor was it enough that one brother of a number acted thus: in the imaginary instance given by the Sadducees to our Lord, seven brothers, in succession, took a dead brother's wife, for this object. The birth of a child was therefore a special blessing, as a security that the name of his father "should not be cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place," and that it should not be "put out of Israel." Ancient nations, generally, seem to have had this feeling, and it is still so strong among Orientals, that after the birth of a first-born son, a father and a mother are no longer known by their own names, but as the father and mother of the child. There was, besides, a higher thought of possible relations, however distant, to the great-expected Messiah, by the birth of children; but Zacharias and Elisabeth had reason enough to sorrow at their childless home, even on the humbler ground of natural sentiments. They had grieved over their misfortune, and had made it the burden of many prayers, but years passed, and they had both grown elderly, and yet no child had been vouchsafed them. (*Dr. Geikie.*)

Vers. 8–10. **While he executed the priest's office.**—*The priest's office:*—The duties of the priests were many and various. It was their awful and peculiar honour to "come near the Lord" (Exod. xix. 22). None but they could minister before Him in the Holy place where He manifested His presence: none others could "come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary or the altar." It was death for any one not a priest to usurp these sacred prerogatives. They offered the morning

and evening incense; trimmed the lamps of the golden candlestick, and filled them with oil; kept up the fire on the great altar in front of the Temple; removed the ashes of the sacrifices; took part in the slaying and cutting up of victims, and especially in the sprinkling of their blood, and laid the offerings of all kinds on the altar. They also announced the new moons, which were sacred days like the Sabbaths, by the blowing of trumpets. But this was a small part of their duties. They had to examine all cases of ceremonial uncleanness, especially leprosy, clearing those who were pure, and pronouncing others unclean; to estimate, for commutation, the value of the countless offerings made to the Temple, and to watch the interior of the Temple by night. They were required, moreover, to instruct the people in the niceties of the law, and to give decisions on many points reserved, among us, to magistrates. The priests, in fact, were, within certain limits, the judges and magistrates of the land, though the Sanhedrim, which was the supreme court in later Jewish history, was composed of chief priests, laymen, and scribes, or Rabbis, in apparently equal numbers. (*Ibid.*) *His lot*:—When a course came up to relieve the one that had served the preceding week, the particular services of the priests were determined by lot. Certain services were accounted more honourable than others, and in this way all contention respecting them was avoided. The most honourable of all was that of going into the Holy place to offer incense upon the golden altar. And on the occasion before us this distinguished office devolved upon the aged Zacharias. (*Dr. Kitto.*) *The providence in chance*:—How often it happens that that which falls to our lot by apparent chance, does in reality so fall by the guidance of God's hand! (*Bishop Goodwin.*) *Priestly functions*:—How solemn the service in which Zacharias is now employed! The sacrifice being slain, whose smoke was now ascending to heaven, and every preparation being made in the court, he proceeds to transact for the nation, and particularly for the assembled multitude, whom he leaves behind him. Advancing with slow and solemn step, and with the smoking censer in his hand, towards the sanctuary, he puts aside the outer curtain and disappears from their sight. Imagination follows him in, where, except on pain of destruction, no other mortal could enter. What must be his feelings in going on with the service of the incense! All without is silent as death, and all within is so stilly impressive, that he is almost afraid to draw his breath. No mortal eye beholds his conduct; but the eternal Jehovah, who will be sanctified in them that draw nigh, surrounds him with His more immediate presence. Take heed, Zacharias, to thy demeanour, lest thou be smitten in the greatness of thine iniquity, or lest thy hand, stretched forth rashly, be withered; or lest, through any fault of thine, the Lord deny His blessing to the people. He places on the golden altar the censer with the incense, with whose cloudy perfume the apartment is filled and rendered fragrant, that the Lord may smell a sweet savour. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *Zachariah's prayer heard*:—The answer to Zachariah's prayer was—1. Earnestly desired. 2. Long delayed. 3. Promised in a surprising manner. 4. Incredulously waited for. 5. Gloriously vouchsafed. (*Van Oosterzee.*) *Order in the performance of religious duties*:—Here note—1. That none but a son of Aaron might offer incense to God in the temple; and not every son of Aaron either; nay, not any of them at all seasons. God is a God of order, and hates confusion no less than irreligion. And as under the law of old, so under the gospel now, no man ought to take this honour upon him but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. 2. That there were courses of ministration in the legal services, in which the priests relieved one another weekly. God never purposed to burden any of His servants with devotion, nor is He pleased when His service is made burdensome, either to or by His ministers. 3. That morning and evening, twice a day, the priests offered up their incense to God, that both parts of the day might be consecrated to Him who was the Maker and Giver of their time. This incense offered under the law, represents our prayers offered to God under the gospel. The ejaculatory elevations of our hearts should be perpetual; but if twice a day we do not present God with our solemn invocations, we make the gospel less officious than the law; and can we reasonably think that Almighty God will accept of less now that would content Him then? (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Joint offering of priest and people*:—1. While the incense was burning, the people were praying: while the priest sends up his incense in the temple within, the people send up their prayers in the court without. The incense of the priest and the prayers of the people meet, and go up to heaven together. It is a blessed thing when both minister and people jointly offer up their prayers for each other at the same throne of grace, and mutually strive

together in their supplications, one with, and one for, another. 2. Observe how both priest and people keep their place and station: the priest burns incense in the holy place, and the people offer up their prayers in the outward court. The people might no more go into the Holy place to offer up their prayer, than Zachary might go into the Holy of Holies to burn incense. Whilst the partition-wall stood betwixt Jew and Gentile, there was also a partition betwixt the Jews themselves. But now under the gospel, every man is a priest to God, and may enter the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus. But, Lord! what are we the better for this great and gracious freedom of access to Thee, if we want hearts to prize and improve our privilege from Thee? (*Ibid.*) *Supplication the Church's power*:—At the moment when the effectual work of propitiation and intercession goes forward within the temple—what is seen without? The whole multitude of the people, bending in silent awe, seconding the priestly office and making it in some sense their own, joining their faith to the sacrifice, and lifting their hearts with the rising incense-cloud, are in supplication before God. This can represent nothing else than the power of the united prayers of the Christian congregation, aiding and supporting the official work of the threefold ministry and the holy offices of the Church, in declaring Christ to the world. The question before us, then, thrown open in its broadest form, will be this: Are we using the devotional power of the Church in due proportion to its other powers? If in any of our undertakings we fail, there is very little doubt that we fail because we did not expect enough and ask enough of God—for that expectation is only another name for faith; and that asking is prayer. Men say, "Religion is a thing between a man and his Maker"; and though it is often said to palliate some inexcusable neglect of an open religious confession before men, yet it is profoundly true. There are two parties, and only two. The business of religion, therefore, is to bring offerings to Him, and, in answer to our prayers, to take blessings from Him. This, with the sacred sentiments, affections, and actions which belong to that holy intercourse, is the first business of the Church. So, Christians, we stand, in this sacred and redeemed creation, always at a temple door. No doubt there are mysteries. What temple was ever without its suggestion of mystery? Even a very deep and strong human love has its mysteries. But nevertheless, the Light falls down from the Throne. God is there. The door is swung open. We are near to Him; He is near to us. The Mediator and Intercessor is praying there for us. Our prayers are joined with His. The reconciliation is accomplished. The next step follows irresistibly. Every movement of religious life among us must get its power and direction from the Spirit of God. If you would find the true secret of spiritual success, you need not seek for it in the admirableness of the plan, the shrewdness of the management, the numbers that subscribe, or the eloquence of the advocates. You might better seek it in some very obscure chambers, some out-of-the-way corners, some closets with the doors shut, where men or women, or children in whose breasts God has a Temple of His own—never heard of at the public meetings, poor and simple-hearted and of stammering lips—kneel with their great-hearted and prevailing petitions, not discouraged by the slowness of the answer, trusting not in themselves but only in the Lord Almighty. These are the "multitude praying without." The finest and firmest machinery in the world is so much dead material without these prayers. I suppose most of you have seen some elaborate and costly specimen of mechanism, standing still: every little screw and bolt of the complicated system in its place; every post and bar, flange and transom, secure; every bright lever and arm, wheel and tooth, tempered and tested—the whole a splendid embodiment and trophy of intellectual ingenuity and determination—yet silent and inert as icicles, till some lifted gate or open valve lets in the mysterious motive-power which makes it a sure and mighty servant of a purpose beyond it. So are all our best religious measures, till the breath of the church's prayers joins them to the Spirit from on high. We look into the Bible records of the beginnings and growth of God's kingdom on the earth. On every spot where that kingdom struck root we see a group of men bending in prayer. When the Eastern magi were brought by the star to Bethlehem, all their intellectual strength bowed itself down to a little Child; they taught nothing, proposed nothing—they did not even speak; it was simply an offering; the signification of it was the submission of knowledge to faith. It was worship. From page to page, in the Acts of the Apostles, they are shown to us together looking upward. When an order in the ministry, an apostle, or a missionary, was to be set apart or sent out, special prayer signalized

the ceremony. At the meeting and parting of Christian friends, on their sacred errands, they knelt and prayed. If one of their number was imprisoned, prayer was made for him day and night. The whole fiery heart of the Church of Christ was in instant communication with its ascended Head. And what followed? Why, this was the period when the Church grew before men's eyes with such swiftness that a thousand converts were gathered in the time that it takes us to gather ten. And so the periods of prayer have always been the periods of life. A lingering doubt casts up its faithless suggestion at these words: "Is not the Church constantly praying? Yet where is the fulfilment of the promise?" The answer is found under another word, "the prayers of faith." We may be sure that the measure of the faith is the measure of the power of the prayer, and that the measure of such prayer is, sooner or later, the measure of the blessing we receive. We very often mistake the strength of our desire for the strength of our faith. (*Bishop F. D. Huntingdon.*) *Symbol of united prayer:*—In some of our most familiar illustrated newspapers there were, a little while ago, beautiful pictures of the recently-completed Cologne Cathedral. Looking at it very attentively there came back to mind thoughts and suggestions which are always started by the presence of a large Gothic building; and these have been so long associated with our cathedrals and spired churches, that we have almost ceased to question whether they really embody the essential idea of the Gothic architecture. Surely such a building as we have in mind is the illustration in stone of the idea of "United Prayer." It is a series of points and pinnacles, from the ground to the top of the great spire. Every window is a pointed arch; every buttress goes up to a point; every roof ridge is guided off into little uplifting spires; the great roof itself points up; and the whole building seems to unite in the great spire, which pierces away into the sky, and seems to carry the united cry of the whole building up to God. (*R. Tuck.*) *Remarkable effect of united prayer:*—Well-known are the immediate and lasting effects of the sermon, entitled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," which President Edwards preached at the time of "The Great Awakening." It was believed that the sermon owed much of its success to the earnest petitions of a few believing persons, who spent the whole of the previous night in a prayer-meeting in the vicinity (Enfield). These prayers were made the more earnest by the fear that God, who was blessing other places, would in just indignation pass them by. (*Hervey's "Manual of Revivals."*) *The social feelings in large gatherings:*—If we were all cold units like stones, and could take our places side by side with no sense or consciousness of the presence of another, how chilled the thing would be! If, coming together, each was conscious that on his right or left was an enemy present—a carping critic, a cold atheist—how those who care at all for the thing would be chilled and withered! You all feel that, having a common purpose and a living sympathy, heart blends with heart and mind with mind. Ay, and thus Divine mercy uses and sanctifies one of the mightiest forces of human life. Men never know the fulness of their life and force except in sympathy. They catch the contagion of a prevailing temper. They grow warm by friction with those who are in active movement. They become confident and resolved by reason of the concensus of numbers. The drops that make up the ocean wave become mighty and resistless when united and swayed in one direction. (*J. Aldis.*)

Ver. 11. **An angel of the Lord.**—*Angelic visits:*—The angels will come to us when we are doing the Lord's business—even though that business be routine, and we have become almost weary with its mechanical repetition, yet the radiant messenger can find us in our obscurity, and open before us new and enchanting prospects. Are you impatient for the coming of the angel? Then by so much you are leaving incomplete the work to which you have been Divinely called. It is better to work steadily for the Master than to be waiting fretfully for the vision of angels. (*Dr. Parker.*) *Absence from the sanctuary:*—Suppose Zacharias had not been there. Suppose that his functions had been to him nothing except perfunctory services, and he had absented himself. Might not the great annunciation have been transferred? Instead of Zacharias might not Simeon have been chosen? and instead of Elisabeth, Anna? I pause to put the question, for I wish to arouse your half-day attendants in God's house, to a recognition of how possible it is to miss of a special blessing when we are not in the way, and place, and time of religious duty. I knew of a case wherein an "anxious inquirer" would have heard the sermon that brought deliverance and peace to her five years sooner had

she been in God's house on the day it was originally preached. As it was she walked for five years in gloom, and at last heard it semi-accidentally. (*Dr. Grosart.*) *Intercourse between visible and invisible world*:—The narrative of an angelic visitation does not *bring* us into a supernatural region. We are in one already. The Temple-worship meant nothing if there were not an actual established intercourse between the visible and invisible world. (*F. D. Maurice.*) *Angels present in church*:—I think I see in this passage that a more special blessing attends the prayers offered up by God's ministers at the hours appointed by the Church, and that angels are more particularly present to carry up the sacrifice of prayer and praise then offered by the priest, on which hang (as it were) the supplications of the whole congregation. Consider this, O my soul, and let it be a constant incitement to thee never to forsake the house of thy God, when opportunity offers for thee to join thy prayers with those of all thy fellow-Christians. (*Dean Hook.*) *The angels as observers and witnesses*:—The holy angels of God are observers of our prayers and good actions on earth, and the relaters and remembrancers of them in heaven. Not but that the all-seeing God of Himself knows and takes notice of all the good actions of men, and records them to perpetuity in the most faithful register of His Omniscience; but He would have His holy angels to be conscious of our good actions, not only that they might congratulate our happiness, as fellow-servants and members with us, under Christ, their and our Lord and Head, but also and especially that they might be the witnesses of His righteous judgment at the last day, when His Son shall come in His glory with millions of His holy angels to judge the world. (*Bishop Bull.*) *Seeing the angels*:—According to Holy Scripture, we are surrounded by angels (2 Kings vi. 17; Psa. xxxiv. 7), whom God employs to defend us; but in our ordinary condition we have not the perception necessary to make us aware of their presence. For this we need a peculiar state of receptivity. That was the state of Zacharias at this time. He had been prepared for it by the sanctity of the place, by the solemnity of the service which he was about to fulfil, by his lively sympathy with those who prayed for national deliverance, and finally by the sense of his own domestic trial. (*Prof. Godet.*) *Reality of the spirit world*:—To me the spirit world is tangible. It is not peopled with ghosts and spectres, shadows and outlines of beings, but with persons and forms palpable to the apprehension. Its multitudes are veritable, its society natural, its language audible, its companionship real, its love distinct, its activities energetic, its life intelligent, its glory discernible; its union is not that of sameness, but of variety brought into moral harmony by the great law of love, like notes which, in themselves distinct and different, make, when combined, sweet music. Death will not level and annul those countless differences of mind and heart which make us individual here. Heaven, in all the mode and manner of expression, will abound with personality. There will be choice, and preference, and degree of affinity there. Each intellect will keep its natural bias, each heart its elections. Groups there will be, and circles; faces, known and unknown, will pass us; acquaintance will thrive on intercourse, and love deepen with knowledge; and the great underlying laws of mind and heart prevail and dominate as they do here, save in this, that sin, and all the repellance and antagonisms that it breeds, will be unknown, and holiness supply in perfect measure the opportunity and bond of brotherhood. (*Murray.*) *Character of the angels*:—"The very names assigned to angels," says Dwight, "by their Creator, convey to us ideas pre-eminently pleasing, fitted to captivate the heart and exalt the imagination; ideas which dispel gloom, banish despondency, enliven hope, and awaken sincere and unmingled joy. They are living ones; beings in whom life is inherent and instinctive; who sprang up under the quickening influence of the Sun of Righteousness, beneath the morning of everlasting day; who rose, expanded, and blossomed in the uncreated beam, on the banks of the river of life, and were nourished by the waters of immortality. They are spirits, winged with activity, and formed with power, which no labour wearies and no duration impairs; their faculties always fresh and young, their exertions unceasing and wonderful, and their destination noble and delightful, without example, and without end. They are burning ones, glowing with a pure and serene, with an intense and immortal flame of Divine love; returning, without ceasing, the light and warmth which they have received from the great central Sun of the universe, reflecting with supreme beauty the image of that Divine luminary; and universally glorious, although differing from each other in glory." *The annunciation to Zacharias*:—Ah, friends, if God were as strict to punish us for our distrust of His word as he was

to punish Zacharias for his, how many of us also would He strike dumb! Who knows but that some of the calamities which befall us are really punishments for our own unbelief? This incident of the annunciation to Zacharias is rich in lessons. I will mention but two. First, the ministration of angels. In fact, the Bible from beginning to end is radiant with angels. And as it was in the past, so it is to-day. Angels are still ministers of God, executing His will alike in the physical and in the spiritual world. What though we do not see angels? It does not follow that, because they are invisible, they are therefore, according to our scientific tests, unreal or inoperative. In fact, it is the invisible things which are the most real. Did any human being ever see the Holy Spirit? Yet what Christian doubts His existence? Were our spiritual eyes open, as were the eyes of Elisha's servant at Dothan, doubtless we also would see all around us horses and chariots of fire circling to protect us. Lastly: Hours of worship are hours of angels' annunciation. Not that we may ever expect in this æon of the world to behold visions of angels; for ours it is to have something better than to have glimpses of supernatural figures; ours it is to have the presence of the Holy Spirit Himself.

Ver. 12. **He was troubled.**—*Terrifying effect of supernatural appearances:*—Such has usually been the effect of supernatural appearances, even on good men, as is exemplified in Manoah, David, Paul, and others. 1. Man's weakness is incapable of easily bearing the glory of such appearances. 2. His sinfulness naturally makes him afraid that the heavenly messenger may be sent to him in displeasure. Hence appear the wisdom and goodness of God in employing, as the heralds of gospel salvation, not angels but human beings, whose terror does not make us afraid. If, however, we shall be so wise for ourselves as to receive the gospel, and to take the Lord of angels for our Lord, then we shall be prepared without fear to meet, not one angel, or a few angels, but the whole angelic host, with the Lord at their head—that host from which the ungodly will shrink in dismay, but which the ransomed shall gladly join round about the throne, to the number of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *Angelic glory awakening fear:*—It was partly the suddenness, partly the unexpectedness, and partly the glory of the apparition, that affrighted this good man. Glorious and sudden apparitions do affright even the holiest and best of men. We cannot bear the sight and presence of an angel without consternation and fear, in our frail and sinful state. O happy hour when, mortality and sin being taken out of our natures, we shall not only behold the glorified angels without fear, but the glorious God with delight and love! Lord! let me now see Thee by faith, hereafter by sight. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Sight rather than faith the cause of fear:*—He that had wont to live and serve in the presence of the Master, was now astonished at the presence of the servant; so much difference is there betwixt our faith and our senses that the apprehension of the God of spirits by faith goes down sweetly with us, whereas the sensible apprehension of an angel dismays us. Holy Zachary, that had wont to live by faith, thought he should die, when his sense began to be set on work; it was the weakness of him, that served the altar without horror, to be daunted with the face of his fellow-servant. In vain do we look for such ministers of God as are without infirmities when just Zachary was troubled in his devotions with that wherewith he should have been comforted: it was partly the suddenness and partly the glory of the apparition that affrighted him. (*Bishop Hall.*)

Ver. 13. **But the angel said unto him, Fear not.**—*Human life on earth known in heaven:*—From the speech of Gabriel it is clear that human life, in its beginning, course, purpose, and destiny, is known in heaven before it is manifested on earth. This is not the case with exceptional men only, but with all men. This should throw a joyous solemnity around life. Human life is intended to be the realization of a heavenly plan. Inquire what it is, accept it with all thankfulness or submission, as the case may be, and live in God. John was to be as conspicuous amongst men as a mountain is conspicuous amongst the lowlands. But did not God make the valleys as well as the hills? In great lives we only see the lines of Divine movement and purpose more clearly because of their apparent exaggeration; in humbler lives the lines are all there. This communication made by Gabriel suggests two inquiries. 1. Has every life a guardian angel? 2. Is every life reported in heaven by the angelic watcher? (*Dr. Parker.*) *Light will arise in due time:*—The barrenness necessitated the annunciation. The annunciation transfigured.

the barrenness. Is it not often exactly thus with trying and bitter and "reproach"-bringing experiences of the believer? We are denied what we fain would have; we have what we would fain have been denied. We feel ourselves of those who "walk in the darkness," and have "no light." Well! do we "trust" in the Lord, and "stay ourselves upon God"? If only we do, sooner or later, I am satisfied increasingly, "light will arise." It may not come when we wished it, nor as we wished it, but come it does. (*A. B. Grosart, LL.D.*) Consider the exquisite connexion of the whole, the gradually-attained climax of the Divine message from the lips of the angel from before the throne. The messenger of joy begins with the mention of the accepted prayer, promises a son, gives him a high name, foretells for him a distinguished office. But the greatest tidings are yet to come: the longed-for coming of the Messiah, whose forerunner this child is to be. To quote Pfenninger: "How tenderly interwoven, how intimately connected, the Divine with the human story! It is one of the chief perfections of a drama that all its occurrences should essentially hang together; that none of them should appear extraneous or isolated; and where are these conditions better observed than in the Divine narratives of Holy Writ? The grandest, Divinest story in the world blended at its first most human commencement with the human heart-history of a childless wedded pair, who pray to God for a son." This is certainly true, although the prayer here referred to can hardly have been confined to such a petition. The heavenly message, however, retrospectively includes former prayers, and has three separate clauses—first, the birth of a son to Zacharias; last, the coming of the Lord Himself; and as connecting link between the two, the announcement that this son shall make ready the way of this very Lord. (*Rudolf Stier.*) *The "Fear-nots" of the Bible*:—The "Fear-nots" of the Bible provide an all-sufficient *vade-mecum* for the timid and distressed. There is no apprehension possible to man which has not its complementary reassuring promise in God's Word. (*Anon.*) *Long-offered prayers*:—The prayer of Zacharias was most probably an old prayer, going back many years, ere Elisabeth was old. But apparently unanswered prayers are not disregarded prayers. Old, very old prayers often and often bring down blessings unexpected. (*A. B. Grosart, LL.D.*) The Bible abounds in assurances that all faithful earnest prayer will be heard, cannot but be heard. And Christian experience proves the truth of the Divine assurance. Let us rejoice (1) That we are permitted to pray; (2) That we are commanded to pray; (3) That all true prayer is heard; (4) That with God to hear is to answer and help. Disappointed and weary suppliant, fear not, thy prayer is heard. And to know that it is heard is to know that in God's good way and time it shall be answered. (*Anon.*) *Prayer heard though not immediately answered*:—I can stand in the rooms of my office in New York, and communicate with the men in the fifth story. If I want to speak to the foreman of the printing office, I go and blow the whistle, and talk through the tube. And I know that the message has got up there and that he heard it. I do not see him, and he does not answer back; but I have no doubt that, having received the message, he will attend to my wants. So it seems to me that sometimes we speak to God in heaven, as it were through an invisible medium. He does not answer immediately, but, nevertheless, we know that He is there, and that, even if we do not conceive of Him, He conceives of us; and we send our thought or prayer up, and let it alone, and do not fret or worry about it. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Unanswered prayer accepted*:—Prayers which are not answered at once, nor, perhaps, for a long time afterwards, may nevertheless be accepted. God's people are apt to forget this; and that it is with prayer, to borrow an illustration from commercial transactions, as with a bill, which, though accepted, is often not paid till months or years have elapsed. Our heavenly Father knows best what to give; and also how, and where, and when to give it. Were its answer always to follow prayer, as the peal roars upon the flash, I suspect that we would be as ready in spiritual as we are in earthly matters to look only to secondary causes, and forget God's hand—coming to look upon our prayers as being the cause of the answer, as much as we are in the habit of regarding the flash of lightning, without any reference to God, as the cause of the peal of thunder. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *And thy wife Elisabeth. . . John*:—This promised son is added to a series whose birth has already been miraculously foretold. Isaac, Samson, Samuel. The significant names of both Zacharias [The Lord remembers] and Elisabeth [God of the oath, or covenant] are mentioned by the angel, to point out the rich fulfilment of their prophetic meaning, but the appointed name of this promised son transcends theirs. An era of new and fuller grace begins with him. Later, the name (=the grace of God) receives its special explanation, in that the stern preacher of repentance is

found only to lead from grace to grace. John is the last but one of the seven names [Ishmael, Isaac, Solomon, Josiah, Cyrus, John, Jesus] given by God in Holy Scripture to those still unborn, and the seventh name is Jesus. (*Rudolf Stier.*) *Angelic solicitude*:—1. Observe how apprehensive this good angel was at Zachary's surprising fear, and encourages him against it. The holy angels, though they do not express it in words, yet pity our frailties, and suggest comfort to us. The evil angels, if they might, would kill us with terror; the good angels labour together for our tranquility and cheerfulness. 2. The comfortable words spoken by the angel to Zacharias. God sometimes hears our prayers, and bestows His mercies, when we least expect; yea, when we have given over looking for what we asked. 3. The name which the angel directed Zachary to give his son: John, which signifies gracious; because he was to open the kingdom of grace, and to preach the grace of the gospel through Jesus Christ. The giving of significant names to children has been an ancient and pious practice; names which either carried a remembrance of duty or of mercy in them. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Acceptable prayer defined*:—Prayer is the offering of our sincere desires to God. It involves a sense of our unworthiness and necessities. 1. Penitence (Psa. li. 17). 2. Faith (Heb. xi. 6). 3. Sincerity (Jer. xxix. 13). 4. Fervency (Jas. v. 16). 5. Love (1 Tim. ii. 8). 6. Delight in God (Isa. xxv. 9). 7. Perseverance (Eph. vi. 18). 8. Humble submission to God's will (Micah vii. 7). 9. In the name of Christ (Eph. iii. 12). 10. With confession of our sins (1 John. i. 9). Jewish prayers were chiefly praise and benedictions. Always answered, but in God's sovereign way. (*W. H. Van Doren, D.D.*) *The efficacy of prayer*:—"Then you have not been modified in any way as to the efficacy of prayer?" asked his visitor. Mr. Spurgeon laughed. "Only in my faith growing far stronger and firmer than ever. It is not a matter of faith with me, but of knowledge, and everyday experience. I am constantly witnessing the most unmistakable instances of answers to prayer. My whole life is made up of them. To me they are so familiar as to cease to excite my surprise; but to many they would seem marvellous, no doubt. Why, I could no more doubt the efficacy of prayer than I could disbelieve in the law of gravitation. The one is as much a fact as the other, constantly verified every day of my life. Elijah, by the brook Cherith, as he received his daily rations from the ravens, could hardly be a more likely subject for scepticism than I. Look at my Orphanage. To keep it going entails an annual expenditure of about £10,000. Only £1400 is provided for by endowment. The remaining £8000 comes to me regularly in answer to prayer. I do not know where I shall get it from day to day. I ask God for it, and He sends it. Mr. Müller, of Bristol, does the same on a far larger scale, and his experience is the same as mine." (*Pall Mall Gazette.*) *Prayers answered at last*:—During a long course of years, even to the closing fortnight of his life, in his last sickness, Dr. Judson lamented that all his efforts in behalf of the Jews had been a failure. He was departing from the world saddened with that thought. Then, at last, there came a gleam of light that thrilled his heart with grateful joy. Mrs. Judson was sitting by his side while he was in a state of great languor, with a copy of the *Watchman and Reflector* in her hand. She read to her husband one of Dr. Hague's letters from Constantinople. That letter contained some items of information that filled him with wonder. At a meeting of missionaries at Constantinople, Mr. Schauffler stated that a little book had been published in Germany giving an account of Dr. Judson's life and labours; that it had fallen into the hands of some Jews, and had been the means of their conversion; that a Jew had translated it for a community of Jews on the borders of the Euxine, and that a message had arrived in Constantinople asking that a teacher might be sent to show them the way of life. When Dr. Judson heard this his eyes were filled with tears, a look of almost unearthly solemnity came over him, and, clinging fast to his wife's hand as if to assure himself of being really in the world, he said, "Love, this frightens me, I do not know what to make of it." "To make of what?" said Mrs. Judson. "Why, what you have just been reading, I never was deeply interested in any object, I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything, but it came; at some time—no matter how distant the day—somehow, in some shape, probably the last I should have devised, it came!" What a testimony was that! It lingered on the lips of the dying Judson; it was enbalmed with grateful tears, and is worthy to be transmitted as a legacy to the coming generation. The desire of the righteous shall be granted. Pray and wait. The answer to all true prayer will come. In Judson's case the news of the answer came before he died, but it was answered long before. So we may know of the results of prayers and toils even while we sojourn here; but if not, what

sweet surprises shall await us in the great beyond! (*North-Western Christian Advocate.*)

Ver. 14. **Many shall rejoice at his birth.**—*An ideal child*:—Could some parents foresee how wicked some of their children would become, instead of rejoicing, they would grieve at their birth; they would wish they had never been born. John, however, was to be a great comfort and honour to his parents. And many besides of their acquaintances, and of the people at large, were to rejoice when they should see that the circumstance of his birth, and of his early life, prognosticated that he was to become a public blessing. Four leading particulars are mentioned, on account of which men should rejoice. 1. His eminence in wisdom and piety. "Great in the sight of the Lord." A holy and devoted servant of God, and preacher of righteousness. 2. His unworldliness. A Nazarite (Num. vi.). Not only the ministers, but all the people of God, should abstain from sin, be temperate in all things, superior to earthly pleasures and cares, and a peculiar people in all respects, distinguished from men of the world. 3. His spiritual-mindedness. Conceived in sin like others, yet "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." Argument in favour of infant baptism: born in sin, and capable of regeneration, why should they not be admitted to the sacrament? Happy they who are indeed filled with the Holy Ghost and sanctified from infancy! They never know what it is to have a mind altogether dark, or a heart altogether depraved. They cannot remember the time when there was not in them a prevalent tendency to what is good. 4. His usefulness. Resembling Elijah (*a*) in the bent of his mind; (*b*) in the success of his ministry. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *Prophetic description of the Baptist*:—Here the angel declares to Zachary, what kind of son should be born unto him, even one of eminent endowments, and designed for extraordinary services. The proof of children makes them either the blessings or crosses of their parents. What greater comfort could Zachary desire in a child, than is here promised to him? 1. He hears of a son that should bring joy, to himself and many others; even to all who expected the coming of the Messiah, whose forerunner the Baptist was. 2. That he should be great in the sight of the Lord: that is, a person of great eminence and great usefulness in the Church. A person of great riches and reputation is great in the sight of men; but the man of great ability and usefulness, integrity and serviceableness, is truly great in the sight of the Lord. They are little men in the sight of the Lord, who live in the world to little purpose; who do little service to God, and bring little honour and glory to Him. 3. It is foretold that he should drink neither wine nor strong drink; that is, he should be a very temperate and abstemious person, living after the manner of the Nazarites, though he was not separated by any vow of his own, or his parents, but by the special designation and appointment of God only. It was forbidden the priests under the law to drink either wine or strong drink, upon pain of death, during the time of their ministration (Lev. x. 9). And the ministers of Christ under the gospel are forbidden to be lovers of wine (1 Tim. iii. 3). 4. He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb; that is, he shall be furnished abundantly with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, which shall very early appear to be in him, and upon him. 5. His high and honourable office is declared; that he should go before the Messiah, as His harbinger and forerunner, with the same spirit and zeal and courage against sin, which was found in the old prophet Elias, whom he so nearly resembled. 6. The great success of his ministry is foretold; that he should "turn the hearts of the fathers," &c. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Social joys*:—There is a joy which overflows the domestic goblet, and goes out to make strangers glad. Every life ought to be a social blessing. The religious man always is so—necessarily, because he does not live unto himself. (*Dr. Parker.*) *Useful lives*:—How many I could quote to whose labours we owe the precious discoveries which daily add to our welfare and our comfort! Who has not rejoiced at the birth of him who discovered the art, at once so wonderful, and so easy, of printing. What an agent of progress that man has been, and what treasures of knowledge he has helped to spread all over the world. And which of us, when hurried along at full speed over some of our railways towards those we love, or on a pleasant trip to some beautiful country, has not blessed the memory of Papin, the unlucky inventor of the steam engine, who suffered so much for the sake of science. (*A. Decoppel.*)

Vers. 15, 16. **For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord.**—*True greatness*:—What is greatness? Scarcely two persons among us would give the same reply to

that question. All would admit that it denotes pre-eminence, but each would have his own preference as to the department in which it was to be manifested. Some would associate it with power, some with courage, some with eloquence, and some, perhaps, with wealth; yet each would think of it as conferring an advantage on its possessor, and so putting others at a corresponding disadvantage. The really great man is he whom holiness and love combine to inspire for the service of his generation by the will of God. 1. He who wins this greatness does not attain it at the expense of others. 2. We may win this greatness anywhere. 3. This greatness is satisfying to its possessor. The highest commendation one can earn is this—"He hath done what he could;" and the noblest life-record is that which comes nearest to His of whom it was said that "He went about doing good." That is fame, though no earthly herald may trumpet it abroad, for Christ shall proclaim it on the day of days before the assembled universe. (*Dr. W. M. Taylor.*) *Character of John the Baptist:*—He was no selfish lover of his own soul, too fearful of pollution to touch society, but a magnanimous reformer, great in his love alike of man and of righteousness. He was too much the pupil of Divine freedom and discipline to be the child of any school, the spokesman of any sect. His faith was the fruit of inspiration as opposed to experience. His education made him a preacher who lived as he believed, possessed of the courage to summon men to a like life and faith. (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*) *A strange greatness:*—The child was to be great in the sight of the Lord. According to the verdict of our Lord passed afterwards, he was the greatest of those born of women until His time. Yet what a strange greatness! A poor man, living in the wilderness the life of an anchorite, and at length beheaded by a wicked king, buried by his disciples, and nothing more heard of him! There is another person mentioned in this chapter who was also called great. Herod the king, mentioned in the fifth verse, is commonly known as Herod the Great, but he was not great in the sight of the Lord, only great in the sight of himself and of his court, and of those who admired his skill in adding to his kingdom. Which was the really great man? Which will appear to be great when the magnitude of men is tested by God, and when men are weighed in the righteous balances of God's judgment? (*Bishop Goodwin.*) *In the sight of the Lord:*—We are what we are in God's sight, not what men think us, not what we think ourselves, but what He sees and knows that we are, nothing more, nothing less. (*Dean Church.*) *And shall drink neither wine nor strong drink:*—His drink was water of the river. He lived on locusts and wild honey. Men felt in him that power of mastery which is always granted to perfect self-denial. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *And he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost:*—Take it as a broad fact in nature that there is no such thing as emptiness. If any corner of the world is vacated even for an instant, something else will come in instantaneously to fill up the empty space. So by the constitution of human nature there is no possibility of emptiness in the soul of man. The spiritual nature "abhors a vacuum." If a man will not let good into his life, evil must and will possess it. If he would eject evil from his life, he can only do so by letting good into it. The most striking recognition of the principle occurs in Paul's letter to the Christians at Ephesus. He is taking them to task with reference to certain abuses which had crept into their Church. Prominent among these was drunkenness. "Be not drunk with wine," says the apostle, "but be filled with the Spirit." Wine *versus* the Spirit! The disease was not drunkenness. The drunkenness was a casual episode. The souls of these men had an empty chamber which must be filled. Their legitimate food was God. This was rejected or neglected. But the void remained. That could not be neglected. It must be filled with God or with a substitute. We may choose this substitute for ourselves, but we cannot *not-choose* it, for nature abhors a vacuum. The Ephesians had made their choice—it was wine. This was what Paul saw. To cure it how was he to proceed? He could not enjoin abstinence. The problem was not the drink, but the vacuum. He must make some proposal, therefore, about the vacuum. "Fill yourselves," he says, "with the Spirit of God." There is a valid relation between the stimulus of intoxicants and the stimulus of religion. Either, so far, will carry out the law of filling the vacuum. But merely to adjure a man not to be filled with wine is to command an impossibility. You must give him another stimulus equally absorbing, intenser, richer, and when the sensual passion is high and strong your substitute must be supreme. There is only one thing which will absorb it quite—the more abundant life of God. (*Professor Drummond.*) The choice is not between God and an empty heart. Man is like

a house situated between two winds. On the one side comes the wind from a dreary, bleak desert, laden with fog and disease, blowing across things foul and rotten. The other side of the house fronts the sunlight, and winds that blow from the wide, fresh sea, and over gardens, orchards, and blooming fields. Every one must decide to which side he is going to open. Both doors cannot be shut. You can only get the dismal, fatal door shut by opening wide the door that looks to the sea of eternity, and the sunshine of God. The wind blowing in through this open door keeps that door of ruin shut. (*Dr. Joseph Leckie.*) *And many of the children of Israel, &c.*:—I. To be "children of Israel" not necessarily equivalent to being spiritually "sons of Abraham" (John viii. 39). II. As a historical fact the children of Israel over and over again turned *from* the Lord, and at the beginning of the Baptist's ministry nearly the whole nation had sunk into religious formalism. III. But repentance was still possible to Israel after ages of unfaithfulness. Still they might turn to the Lord their God. John's message was "Repent!" and his preaching produced the effects here foretold (see Luke iii. 7–14). IV. "He shall turn." Recognition of human instrumentality in the doing of the work which only the Spirit of God can do—the production of conviction leading to conversion. (*J. R. Bailey.*) *Goodness is greatness*:—"Nothing can make a man truly great, but being truly good, and a partaker of God's holiness." "A dram of goodness is worth more than all worldly greatness." Wealth, honour, power, may constitute a person great in the estimation of man; but faith, love, and true holiness are necessary to secure for us God's approbation. (*Henry R. Burton.*) *Abstinence and promotion*:—When General Grant was in command of the army before Vicksburg, a number of officers were gathered at his headquarters. One of them invited the party to join in a social glass; all but one accepted. He asked to be excused, saying that he "never drank." The hour passed, and each went his way to his respective command. A few days after this the officer who declined to drink received a note from General Grant to report at headquarters. He obeyed the order, and Grant said to him, "You are the officer, I believe, who remarked the other day that you never drank?" The officer modestly answered that he was. "Then," continued the General, "you are the man I have been looking for to take charge of the Commissary Department, and I order that you be detailed to that duty." He served all through the war in that responsible department, and afterwards, when General Grant became President, the officer who never drank was again in request. The President, needing a man on whom he could rely for some important business, gave him the appointment. (*Christian Chronicle.*) *Abstinence and health*:—Before I became an abstainer I was much subject to fainting fits. I even fainted in the pulpit, and my life was a burden; and when I had made up my mind to abstain my medical man came from London and said, "If you do you will probably die. You want the 'whip' for your constitution." I did not believe him, and I said, "Very well, doctor, then I'll die, and there's an end of it." But I have not died. And when I met that medical man in London three days since I said, "Now, doctor, what do you think of it?" He said, "You beat me altogether. I was never more mistaken in any case in my life. And now let me tell you that if there was no such thing as alcohol I should have to put up my shutters. Nearly all the illnesses that come before me have, in one sense or another, come from that; not always from the personal indulgence of the patients, but because this is hereditary." (*Canon Basil Wilberforce.*) *A great man*:—A man who can be satisfied with nothing less than that which is real and right; who is content to count all things loss for the attainment of a spiritual aim, and to fight for it against all enemies; who deems truth the bread of life and makes its pursuit his daily labour—he is a great man. *Personal influence in conversion*:—Dr. Tyng, speaking of personal influence, mentions a young lady whom no storms of snow or rain ever kept from her class. One after another of her scholars, he says, would come to him, and when he would ask the question, "What has led you to seek a Saviour's love?" they would mention her name, until, he says, "I traced twenty-five, at least, of my young people who were converted through her prayers and labours, and among them that beloved son of mine, at whose bedside I sat for sixteen long hours, wondering why God had taken him and left me behind. This was the character of that girl. Nothing kept her back." *Conversion must be a complete surrender*:—When Henry VIII. had determined

to make himself head of the English Church, he insisted upon it that Convocation should accept his headship without limiting and modifying clauses. He refused to entertain any compromises, and vowed that "he would have no *tantrums*," as he called them. Thus when a sinner parleys with his Saviour he would fain have a little of the honour of his salvation, he would save alive some favourite sin, he would fain amend the humbling terms of grace; but there is no help for it, Jesus will be all in all, and the sinner must be nothing at all. The surrender must be complete, there must be no *tantrums*, but the heart must without reserve submit to the sovereignty of the Redeemer. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Importance of one conversion*:—It is impossible to overrate the importance of the conversion of one soul to Christ, or of the hardening of one heart in sin. . . . An old Puritan doctor writes a book more than two hundred years ago, called "The Bruised Reed," which falls into the hands of Richard Baxter, and leads his penitent spirit to its trust in Christ. Baxter's ministry is like that of a giant in his strength, and when he dies his "Call to the Unconverted" goes preaching on to thousands to whom Baxter himself had never spoken with human tongue. Philip Doddridge, prepared by his pious mother's teaching, hears this piercing "Call," devotes the summer of his life to God, and becomes a "burning and a shining light." Doddridge's "Rise and Progress" fell into the hands of Wilberforce, and led him to thought and to prayer. Wilberforce's "Practical View" cleared the faith and fired the zeal of a clergyman in the sunny South, and he wrote the simple annal of a Methodist girl, which has borne fruit of blessing in every quarter of the globe; for who has not heard of Legh Richmond and "The Dairyman's Daughter"? And then the same book had a ministry in the bleak North, and in a country parish found out a Scottish clergyman who was preaching a gospel which he did not know, and he embraced the fulness of the glad tidings, and came forth a champion for the truth, "furnished in all things and ready," until all Scotland rang with the eloquence of Thomas Chalmers. (*W. M. Punshon, D.D.*) *Character and work of John*:—Much of the wisdom of Providence appears in fitting the instrument to the work. The work appointed to John was to reclaim the nation from its departure from God, to rouse a people sunk in insensibility and impenitence, to preach repentance, to proclaim the approach of the kingdom of heaven, to usher in a higher economy, a new dispensation; and for all this he was admirably qualified. He was endued with the spirit and power of Elias. His spirit was undaunted and unyielding; he rebuked the pride of kings. He was indifferent and insensible alike to the charms of pleasure, the allurement of pomp, the smiles of power, and the frowns of greatness. His whole soul was concentrated in his object. He was superior to the world; its forms and fashions made no impression on his mind, and left no traces. He was austere in his manner, abstemious in his food, rustic in his apparel; he partook of the wildness of the wilderness in which he first made his appearance. (*Robert Hall.*)

Ver. 17. **The hearts of the fathers to the children.**—*Drawing lightning*:—Science tells us that the best defence against lightning in a thunderstorm is found, not in defiance of it, but in a silent discharge of it. Go right towards it fearlessly with a pointed platina wire, and it will follow a fixed law of harmless dispersion. Is there any way by which the power of one of God's curses can be drawn, so as to avert the terrible stroke of Divine wrath? Let us see. This text refers us directly back to the final utterance of the Old Testament. There are four books in the Bible which end with a curse: Malachi, Lamentations, Isaiah, and Ecclesiastes. The Hebrew scribes were always accustomed to repeat the verse just before the last in these cases, so as to close the reading with something besides a malediction. It is not easy to see how that helps the matter in the present instance, for the preceding prediction seems to have been uttered merely to introduce the warning. And perhaps it is just as profitable to believe that the best way to avoid the judgments of God is to guard carefully against deserving them. After the last seer under the ancient dispensation had spoken the words which the evangelist quotes, the heavens were closed for four hundred years. Jehovah had not another message to send. His people had offended him. Justice comes almost fiercely forth, and bars the gate of revelation, because children are despised. And not until four centuries of silence had given time for repentance, would those bolts be withdrawn. Even then it is a little child who advances to turn the massive key. History wanders sadly in confusion among the captivities and Maccabean usurpations. Only an

infant can join the Testaments. Luke is the next man to Malachi. The sternes of all Israel's prophets reappears in the sternest of all heralds to the Church. . . A wild threat, four hundred years old, is suddenly removed in a flash of benedic tion. The curse of Malachi is omitted in Luke—the lightning is drawn. The gospel fulfils the law when it accepts children. God receives the fathers into favour and communion again, when their hearts are turned to their offspring. . . How much are you doing in this day of gospel privilege to bring the hearts of fathers back to their children? Do we need another prophet, with his hairy raiment and his leathern girdle, to come forth from the wilderness? (*C. S Robinson, D.D.*) *The pioneer of the gospel*:—Whereas Matthew and Mark introduced John Baptist to the notice of their readers at the advanced period of his preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and his baptising his followers in Jordan Luke commences with the Baptist's genealogy and birth, and states many particulars relating to his early history, which, though they had been far less remarkable in themselves, would have been interesting in reference to one who afterwards became so conspicuous, but which are peculiarly important as additional evidences of the Divine mission, and additional illustrations of the office both of the Baptist himself, and of that illustrious Deliverer and King before whom he was to proceed as a pioneer to clear the way. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *The prepared people*:—All life is a preparation to meet God. This is the clue of life's labyrinth. Preparations are often confused things. They are times of unsettling, full of noise and disorder, and apparent contradiction; till the end comes, and explains it all So this world—it is made up of strange things, which move above us and within us, and seem to have little purpose and no concert. They range wildly. There are beginnings without endings; and there are endings without beginnings. A great many things do not fit. It is hard to tell what it all means. It is a pleasant thought to remember that your preparation, as it goes on, day by day, is only a reflection of what is going on in the other world. There, too, it is all preparation. The saints and the angels are all busy preparing. The preparations of earth are to meet the preparations of heaven. He has prepared His mercy, and He has prepared His truth. It is a prepared heaven; it is a prepared kingdom; a prepared city; a prepared throne; a prepared seat. And when both preparations are complete—a prepared soul, and a prepared heaven—what perfectness! what love! what rest! what quietness! What and if the Pure should come, and find impurity? What and if the Holy should come and find irreverence? What and if the Spirit come, and find nothing but flesh? What and if Wisdom come, and find ignorance? What and if Love come, and find selfishness and unkindness? First, you must be prepared to know your Lord when He comes. This John taught very expressly. He placed the people in a position that they should know and recognize Christ when He should arrive. You must have read Him in the prophecies—you must have walked with Him in the gospel—you must have sat with Him in all the manifestations of His grace—you must have traced Him in His reflections about the universe—you must have felt His inward dwelling in you by the Holy Ghost. Then He will be no new, strange Christ to you when He comes. And if you would be "prepared for the Lord," you must have a deep sense of sin. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." No one must stand there who has not learnt to stoop very low. Thirdly, you must be exact, faithful, diligent in your daily proper duties—doing whatever you do heartily—a man of large charities—a man of unselfish habits—a man of strict integrity in business—a man of self-government—a man of moderation—a man of content—a man of humility. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." Fourthly, you must be baptized—not with the baptism of water only, but with the baptism of the Spirit; and not with the baptism of water and of the Spirit only, but with the baptism of shame, of scorn, of suffering, of death—"baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." And fifthly, you must be much in the use of the ordinances—loving the shadows till the substance comes. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The spirit and power of the Baptist*:—The spirit and power of Elijah rested upon the Baptist, and the same gift is needed by us now. For, what is the end and purpose of all the religious activity we see abroad and at home, but to turn people's hearts to wisdom, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord? Let us see, then, what was this spirit and power which made the Baptist so successful? And notice, to begin with, it was nothing wonderful, nothing out of

the way. We are expressly told that "John did no miracle." The spirit and power of the Baptist is, therefore, a gift within the reach of every one of us. I. OBSERVE, FIRST, HIS DECISION FOR GOD. No halting between two opinions. The Baptist was not "a reed shaken with the wind," but one who had considered matters well, and comes to a firm decision respecting the salvation of God. II. NOTICE, NEXT, HIS SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD. He lived as much as possible in retirement, communing with his own soul and with God. While in the world, he was never of the world. III. CONSIDER, ONCE MORE, HIS BOLD, CONSISTENT TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH. 1. Before all classes of his countrymen, from the lowest to the highest. 2. In spite of opposition and persecution. Conclusion: Such qualities as these made the Baptist a power for good, and thus was he in the spirit and power of Elias. Are we following in his steps? There must be found in us these same qualities, if our life is to be as grand a moral success as was his. 1. The same decision. Half-heartedness is of no use at all in what concerns the soul. 2. The same unworldliness. Not necessarily separation from the world—that is for the few; but (what is found by many to be a far harder thing) living in the world, doing its duties faithfully and well, and at the same time living the higher life that is hidden with Christ in God, and looking for the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. 3. The same stedfast witnessing to the truth. (1) In heart. (2) In word. (3) In action. An upright and honest life is the best testimony to the spirit and power in which we move, and it will carry us triumphantly over every obstacle and difficulty that we encounter, until we reach the peaceful haven where we would be, and bask in the perpetual sunshine of the presence of God. (*George Low, M.A.*) *The wisdom of the just*:—Let us try the wisdom of the religious choice by the happiness which follows. I. There is a content and satisfaction in the mind, from the very consciousness and remembrance of our having listened to the voice from heaven. II. I next observe, that the gospel brings happinness to every sincere believer, by giving him the blessing of peace in the assurance of pardon. III. The wisdom of the just, however it may be called in question, however reviled, by unconverted or ungodly men, who cannot possibly appreciate or understand it, is manifested through the whole course of the believer's life. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely." "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble:" they are continually encompassed with evil, without ascertaining the cause or the cure. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." IV. But the wisdom of the just is not to be fully known on this side the grave. There will come a day, when it will appear even to the slowest of belief, without a shadow and without a doubt. "When the Lord comes to make up His jewels," the preciousness of those jewels, and the joy of being gathered amongst them, will be perfectly manifest, both to friends and foes; to the one, by their admission into His heavenly kingdom; to the other, by their being cast away. (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *The spirit and power of Elias*, whom John closely resembled in—1. The endowments of his mind. 2. The habits of his life. 3. The exercise of his ministry. (*C. Simeon.*) How, and in what sense, was Malachi's prediction of the Messenger fulfilled in John the Baptist? To this question the New Testament furnishes a singularly full and abundant reply. It really seems as though, not only the mind of the Baptist, but also the minds of all who speak of him, were steeped in the prophecy of Malachi, and saturated with it. There is hardly a word said of or by him which does not take new meaning and force so soon as we read it in the light of Malachi's lamp. In St. Matthew's Gospel (chap. iii.), we have our fullest account of the Baptist's appearance and ministry. We are there told that his first word, his master-word, was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; that is, "Take a new view; get a new mind; think; think back on your habits and ways, and mend them; for the King, long promised to your fathers, is about to appear." This was the very mission which Malachi ascribed to the messenger of the Lord. John's peculiar mode of life, as described in the same chapter, tends to the same conclusion (Matt. iii. 4). Doubtless John assumed these outward marks of resemblance to the great Tishbite, in order to call attention to the inward resemblance between them as a sign that he had come "in the spirit and power of Elijah." The same reason for a sad and austere life existed in both cases. The "preacher of repentance" should himself be a penitent. Elijah and John, each in his turn, came forth as a personification of repentance, showing the people, in his own conduct, what their conduct should be. Both these austere voices from the wilderness called men

to repent, both sought to "turn the hearts of men back again" to God. (*Samuel Cox, D.D.*) *A father reconciled to his son*:—A mother in New York whose son had got into dissipated and abandoned habits, after repeated remonstrances and threats, was turned out of doors by his father, and he left vowing he would never return unless his father asked him, which the father said would never be. Grief over her son soon laid the mother on her dying bed, and when her husband asked if there was nothing he could do for her ere she departed this life, she said, "Yes, you can send for my boy." The father was at first unwilling, but at length, seeing her so near her end, he sent for his son. The young man came, and as he entered the sick-room his father turned his back upon him. As the mother was sinking rapidly, the two stood on opposite sides of her bed, all love and sorrow for her, but not exchanging a word with each other. She asked the father to forgive the boy; no, he wouldn't until the son asked it. Turning to him, she begged of him to ask his father's forgiveness; no, his proud heart would not let him take the first step. After repeated attempts she failed, but as she was just expiring, with one last effort she got hold of the father's hand in one hand, and her son's in the other, and exerting all her feeble strength, she joined their hands, and, with one last appealing look, she was gone. Over her dead body they were reconciled, but it took the mother's death to bring it about. So, has not God made a great sacrifice that we might be reconciled—even the death of His own dear Son? (*D. L. Moody.*)

Vers. 19–23. **I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God.**—"*I am Gabriel.*" *Names of angels*:—The name Gabriel signifies "The mighty messenger of God." The Bible knows of only two heavenly personages who are invested with a name: Gabriel (Dan. viii. 16; ix. 21), and Michael (Dan. x. 13; Jude 9, &c.). This latter name signifies, "Who is like God?" Here the critic asks sarcastically whether Hebrew is spoken in heaven? But these names are evidently symbolical; they convey to us the character and functions of these personalities. When we speak to any one, it is naturally with a view to be understood. When heaven communicates with earth, it is obliged to borrow the language of earth. According to the name given him, Gabriel is the mighty servant of God, employed to promote His work here below. It is in this capacity that he appears to Daniel when he comes to announce to him the restoration of Jerusalem; it is he also who promises Mary the birth of the Saviour. In all these circumstances he appears as the heavenly evangelist. The part of Gabriel is positive; that of Michael is negative. Michael is, as his name indicates, the destroyer of every one who dares to equal, *i.e.*, to oppose God. Such is his mission in Daniel, where he contends against the powers hostile to Israel; such also is it in Jude and in the Apocalypse, where he fights, as the champion of God, against Satan, the author of idolatry. Gabriel builds up; Michael overthrows. The former is the forerunner of Jehovah the Saviour; the latter, of Jehovah the Judge. (*F. Godet, D.D.*) "*And Zacharias said unto the angel*," &c.:—The circumstances under which Zacharias doubted, seem to have been very much like those under which Abraham believed; and as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; so Zacharias disbelieved, and it was counted to him for sin. And if it be thought that such a sin was heavily punished, it is to be observed (1) that we are not sufficient judges of any sin and of the punishment due to it; (2) that the dumbness of Zachariah was not merely a punishment, but also a sign; it was a punishment for want of faith, but it was at the same time a medicine to strengthen and confirm him. So it may often be, in the merciful providence of God, that the bitter draughts of His displeasure are tonics for the soul's health. (*Bishop Goodwin.*) "*I am Gabriel*," &c.—We have heard of this angel before, and we lose something unless we look back to the circumstances with which he was previously connected. This, then, was the same angel who appeared to Daniel, to explain to him the time that was to elapse until the coming of the Messiah (Dan. ix. 21–27). This being the case, we see at once the special fitness that the same angel should be employed to announce the near accomplishment of that which he had so long predicted. It is the same angel, moreover, who was sent a few months later to announce the birth of the Messiah Himself, as now of His harbinger. The same considerations apply to both transactions. (*Dr. Kitto.*) *The judgment on Zacharias*:—Zacharias is a striking example of the ills a good man may have to suffer as the result of his unbelief. I. CONSIDER HIS CHARACTER AND POSITION. He was a genuine believer. He was well instructed and greatly enlightened. He held a high office as priest. He had been

peculiarly favoured. Soothing comfort had just been administered to him. This comfort had been given in answer to his own petition. He staggered at a promise which others implicitly believed. II. WHAT THEN WAS THE FAULT OF ZACHARIAS? His fault was that he looked at the difficulty. III. CONSIDER HIS PENALTY. Mercy tempered judgment. He was not struck dead, and the chastisement did not invalidate the promise. Do not be satisfied with being weak in faith. Let the utter unbeliever tremble. If a good man was struck dumb for unbelief, what will become of you who have no faith at all? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) If incredulity, much more open doubt and disbelief, were now thus dealt with, how awfully numerous would be the additions to the family of the dumb! (*A. B. Grosart, LL.D.*) *He had seen a vision*:—But evidently this was not the ecstasy of a visionary man who imagined simply what he desired; for when the promise was made, he doubted and questioned. (*Lyman Abbot.*) "*He beckoned unto them*":—

> To have a child thou deem'st so strange a thing,
> That thou art made a child for wondering.
> Whilst for a sign too eagerly thou dost call,
> Except by sign thou canst not ask at all. (*Richard Crashaw.*)

"*Remained speechless*":—That tongue which moved the doubt, must be tied up. He shall ask no more questions for forty weeks. (*Bishop Hall.*) *Telling the news at home*:—I can conceive the rapid gladness with which Zacharias, when his office for the week was fulfilled, sped up Olivet and across the rolling plain towards Bethlehem, and up to the hill-country of Judæa, with the strange and wondrous message that a twenty or thirty years' old prayer was about to be answered in God's gift of a son to them. How Elisabeth received the intelligence is left, with fine modesty, in silence. His "stylus" would tell what his tongue could not. (*A. B. Grosart, LL.D.*) *Grieving because of unbelief*:—1. Christians are saying to the world either that God is false to his promises, or that God is true. You dishonour him by unbelief. You honour him by faith, the utmost honour you can give him. A German writer gives this incident in the life of Johannes Bruce, the founder of the order of the Carmelites, who, though a Romish priest, was a saint indeed, distinguished for his love to God and his faith. The convent was poor; and the friars, dependent on charity for daily bread, were often compelled to console themselves with the passage, "Man does not live by bread alone." One day the brethren found, when they had assembled for dinner, that their whole stock of food was a single piece of dry bread. They sat down; they asked God's blessing upon their crust. Then Johannes arose, and poured forth such words of encouragement and consolation concerning the love of Christ and the great promises He had given His people, that all of them arose delighted and refreshed, and, without partaking of their bread, returned to their cells. They had scarcely reached them, when the bell rang at the convent-gate, and a man entered with a large basket of provisions, which were carried, with a letter, to the prior, who was on his knees praying. He read, the letter dropped from his hands, and he began to weep bitterly. The porter, surprised, said, "Why do you weep? Have you not often said that we should weep for nothing but our sins?" Johannes replied, "Brother, I do not weep without reason. Think how weak the Lord must see our faith to be, since He is unwilling to see us suffer want a single day without sending visible aid. He foresaw that before evening we should despond, unless He sent immediate help to our faith by means of this charitable gift. It is because we possess so little confidence in the rich Lord in whom we are encouraged to trust, that my tears flow." (*From sermon by Charles Finney.*) *Unbelief a sin*:—Mr. Marshall, author of a treatise on Sanctification, in his early years, was under great distress for a long time, through a consciousness of guilt and a dread of the Divine displeasure. At last, mentioning his case to Dr. Thomas Goodwin, and lamenting the greatness of his sins, that able divine replied, "You have forgotten the greatest sin of all, the sin of unbelief, in refusing to believe in Christ, and rely on His atonement and righteousness for your acceptance with God." This word in season banished his fears. He looked to Jesus, and was filled with joy and peace in believing! (*Handbook to Scripture Doctrines.*) *As soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished: Trusting God and continuing in duty*:—A friend of mine once asked the wife of Havelock how her husband bore himself during the terrible conflicts in India. She replied, "I know not. But I know he is trusting in God and doing his duty." These glorious words may bind us all together; wherever we are, if those who know us

best can say with certainty, when asked about us, "They are trusting in God and doing their duty," we shall have the blessed peace that was given to Havelock. (*Dean Stanley.*) *Sticking to duty*:—An artilleryman at Waterloo was asked what he had seen. He replied that he saw nothing but smoke. The artilleryman was next asked what he had been doing. He replied that he had "just blazed away at his own gun." (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Dumb*:—Here is a sign for incredulity: he had been as good have believed without a sign. (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *Belief*:—If, then, utter unbelief is utter repression of the best in man, and if further partial belief is partial escape from this galling bondage, what must complete faith in God be, entire acceptance of His Son as Eternal Righteousness, unclouded hope in the perpetuated life of the soul, but the free expression, the joyous utterance, the complete realization of the whole spiritual life of man? Whatever destroys the best in human life cannot be true. It is impossible to believe that the best life of the individual, the family, the nation; it is impossible to believe that the heroism of the solitary soul fighting its solitary but momentous battles, the purity and sweetness and self-sacrifice of home, the advancing righteousness of our land and all lands—spring out of beliefs that are a fountain of lies. Whatever destroys human life must be a lie; whatever builds it into strength and beauty must be true. Human life, in order to complete realization of its best possibilities, needs a God, needs a Christ, needs a hereafter, needs Supreme Love as its minister, needs a supreme manifestation of that Love, and a timely future in which to do its will and enjoy its ministrations. The Jewish priest asked for a sign whereby he might know the angel's message to be true. The sign came. Dumbness was his sign. The amazed soul, trying to believe, and yet afraid, in accepting the faith of its fathers, of building its hope upon a dream, asks for a sign. The sign is given; the dumbness that falls upon the speaking, singing spirit is the sign that unbelief is disease. The priest silent at the altar, with his prayers unsaid, his thoughts unspoken, his praise unsung, his worship unuttered, is but the type of the soul in the dumbness of doubt, in the paralysis of unbelief, its whole best life denied expression, and shrivelling under the doom of an eternal sentence of repression and death. The priest at the altar, but no longer silent; the priest at the altar, naming his first-born, his tongue loosed and uttering in sublime, prophetic strains his whole grateful life—is a type of the soul that has found the utterance of faith, from which all paralysis, all dumbness, has passed away, whose thought, feeling, and volition, mind, heart, and will, are winning their noblest expression; whose whole life is in the attainment of its eternal satisfaction. (*G. A. Gordon.*)

Ver. 24. **And hid herself five months.**—*Modesty a retiring grace*:—Desirous of plucking one of the elegant sea-anemones, you extend your hand; but, at the slightest touch, its beautiful coronet begins to curl, and incurve in the form of a cup. If further annoyed, the rim of this cup contracts more and more, until the animated blossom, now transformed into a shrivelled, shapeless mass, and receding all the time from the rude assault, retires under the cover of its rocky fortress, or clings with such tenacity to the stone to which it is attached, that you will sooner tear it to pieces than make it forego its grasp. (*Hartwig.*) *Modesty*:—Virgil, who was called the Prince of the Latin Poets, was naturally modest and of a timorous nature when people crowded to gaze upon him, or pointed at him with the finger with raptures: the poet blushed, and stole away from them, and often hid himself in shops to be removed from the curiosity and admiration of the public. The Christian is called indeed to let his light shine before men; but then it must be with all meekness, simplicity, and modesty. (*Buck.*)

Vers. 26–30. **And the virgin's name was Mary.**—*The Annunciation*:—1. The messenger sent from heaven to publish the news of the conception of the Son of God—an angel. An evil angel was the first author of our ruin; a good angel could not be the author of our restoration, but is the joyful reporter of it. 2. The angel's name—Gabriel, the power of God. 3. The place the angel is sent to—Nazareth. An obscure place, little taken notice of; yea, a city in Galilee, out of which arises no prophet: even there the God of prophets condescends to be conceived. No blind corner of Nazareth can hide the blessed virgin from the angel. The favours of God will find out His children wherever they are withdrawn. 4. The person to whom the angel is sent—a virgin espoused. For the honour of virginity Christ chose a virgin for His mother; for the honour of marriage, a virgin espoused to a husband. 5. The message itself. The angel salutes the virgin as a saint; he does

not pray to her as a goddess. Full of grace she was then, full of glory she is now. 6. The effect which the sight and salutation of the angel had upon Mary—she was afraid. But in her case, as in all, the fears of holy persons end in comfort. 7. The character which the angel gives of Him who should be born of her—"Great . . . Son of the Highest." Great in respect of (1) His person, (2) offices, (3) kingdom. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Mary's home-life*:—We have very little to guide us in our conception of the scene. Scripture never quite withdraws the veil which protects, quite as much as it conceals, the life of the mother of our Lord; but we venture reverently to arrange and draw together some side-lights which it is permitted us to catch. There is quiet Nazareth itself, nestling (as only villages in Palestine do) high up in a circlet of protecting hills, like one of those flower-baskets, with creepers hanging over the sides, which we see sometimes caught up between projecting points in a rockery garden. Nazareth, so still, so shut in from the world around, that it is not once mentioned in connection with any single event in the whole of the Old Testament; not once in the Talmud, where names of obscure places occur in plenty; not once even in the pages of garrulous Josephus, who enumerates no less than 204 towns and cities in Galilee. "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself," we feel constrained to say, as we contemplate the future home of Jesus; and we ask for nothing better than to enter into the tranquil spirit of the hush of the little mountain town as we venture now to look more closely at her whose home it was. Mary was a "virgin betrothed"; that is all, as yet, that we know about her. To us she is literally "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." We have absolutely no clue at all to the interior or the surroundings of her village home. Was she spinning at her wheel, or grinding at the mill, or reading some roll of the prophets? Or was she just then sitting and musing over the great event of the last few days—her betrothal? The last we fancy most likely; for angels' visits, like dreams that are hallowed, argue a preoccupation of the mind in some direction kindred to their holy purpose. So Mary may have been looking back and looking forward: back on the past even, uneventful life, over which now there has moved a spirit of change, and which she can scarcely believe, perhaps does not even wish, ever to be quite the same again: and forward to she hardly knows what; only she is vaguely conscious of new aspirations, timid forecastings, undefined fears. And then, as all faithful Jewish women rightfully might, she would allow herself in some dim dreams of motherhood, and it might even be — for coming events cast their shadows before—that the unbidden thought would just creep across her mind that her betrothed husband and herself were both of the tribe of Judah; and was she to blame for taking to herself the sacred hope which was the heritage of every mother who belonged to the tribe that Jacob had blessed? Then came the angel, familiar to us now in name and mission, but none the less a sign and a wonder at his actual appearance. What form did the angel take? In what voice did he speak? How was he known to be an angel at all? are questions which rush into our minds at once. They will never be answered; we know no more than is written, and the inspired narrative lays upon us the responsibility of unquestioning faith. One point is left to our imagination—the angel's look. We fancy that his kind, steady, searching gaze must have been more eloquent almost than his prefatory words: "Hail, Accepted, the Lord be with thee; blessed thou among women." (*E. T. Marshall, M.A.*) *Angelic visitations*:—Their airy and gentle coming may well be compared to the glory of colours flung by the sun upon the morning clouds, that seem to be born just where they appear. Like a beam of light striking through some orifice, they shine upon Zacharias in the Temple. As the morning light finds the flowers, so they found the mother of Jesus; and their message fell on her pure as dewdrops on the lily. To the shepherds' eyes they filled the midnight arch like auroral beams of light; but not as silently, for they sang more marvellously than when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. They communed with the Saviour in His glory of transfiguration, sustained Him in the anguish of the garden, watched Him at the tomb; and as they had thronged the earth at His coming, so they seem to have hovered in the air in multitudes at the hour of His ascension. The occasions of their appearing are grand, the reasons weighty, and their demeanour suggests and befits the highest conception of superior beings. Their very coming and going is not with earthly movement. They are suddenly seen in the air, as one sees white clouds round out from the blue sky on a summer's day, that melt back even while one looks upon them. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The mother of Jesus—a woman's sermon to women*:—

All we know about Mary should appeal very forcibly to the heart and the imagination. The Child, and not the mother, is the chief theme of our talk and our thought, it is true; but no woman, and certainly no mother, can talk of the wonderful events of Bethlehem without thinking with tenderness as well as awe of Mary the mother of Jesus. From first to last she holds our eyes and moves our hearts, presenting us, as she does, with a perfect delineation of womanhood and motherhood; and our lives would probably be more full of love and helpful ministries if we gave more time to the study of her character. It may be asked, Why, when every pious Hebrew matron would have been thankful for the high and unique honour of being the mother of the Messiah, a poor, unknown, and retired virgin should have been chosen. A very little thought will suffice to show the suitability of Mary, and will also direct the mind to the womanly qualities which God honours. 1. Humility. It was this which made Mary great. Never did she obtrude herself upon the world, or try to get to herself the least share of her Son's glory. The part given her, she was content to perform with absolute self-abnegation and obedience. Lowly she was when the angel made his wonderful announcement to her; and meek and lowly of heart she remained to the end. 2. Submission. She accepted her lot, whatever it might be, without any complaint, or any attempt to have things otherwise. 3. Quietness. She was always more ready to be silent than to speak. From how many mistakes must she thus have been saved! 4. Fidelity. Not only at first, but to the very last, she rose to the tasks imposed upon her, and fulfilled the commands of God. "Not what I wish, but what I ought to do," was the rule she followed. (*Marianne Farningham.*) *Mary to be held in honour*:—Probably there was never any created being of all the created worlds, put in such honour as this woman, chosen to be the Lord's mother; all the more truly our mother, that from her begins the new-born human race. To her it is given, even to grow the germ-life of the Divine Man, Son of the Father, in its spring. And her behaviour is beautiful enough to even meet an occasion so high. That grace of bearing, that sweet, devout modesty, such as became the motherhood of everlasting innocence; that watching of her miraculous Boy, that could so easily be telling His wonders, with a weak mother's fondness, in the street, but which still she was treasuring in her heart; that wondrous propriety of silence at the cross, allowing her no wail of outcry in that hour, lest she might be making herself a part of the scene. O ye lilies and other white harbingers of spring, culled so often by art to be symbols of her unspotted motherhood, what can ye show of silent flowering in the white of purity, which she does not much better show herself? We seem just now, in these modern times, to be assuming that Mary is gone by, and the honours paid her ended; and if we choose to let our hearts be barbarized in the coarse, unappreciating prejudices that have been, so far, our bitter element, there certainly are finer moulded ages to come. Is it too soon even now to admit some feeling of rational shame, that we have been weak enough to let our eyes be so long plastered with this clay? Doubtless it must be the first thing with us, after we have entered the great world before us, to get cleared, and assured, and at home in our relations to the Son of Man Himself. After that our next thing, as I think, will be to know our mother, the mother of Jesus; for no other of the kingdom, save the King Himself, has a name that signifies more. And I make no question that, when the great hierarchs and princes of other worlds and ages, who are challenged to pay their hosannas in the highest, throng in to meet us, they will ask, first of all, for the woman by whom, under God's quickening overshadow, Christ the Eternal Son of God, obtained His life-connection with the race, and His birth into practical brotherhood with it. As the sages of the East, guided by the star, brought out their tribute to the Child at her knee, so these ancients of God will come in with us, wanting above all to know the woman herself, at whose royal motherhood, and by it, Immanuel the King broke into the world and set up His kingdom. And higher still is she raised by the recognition of her Son Himself; for as she is yearning always fondly after Him, so will He never disallow His old-time filial feeling towards her, but will ever clothe her with such honours, really Divine, as fitly crown the part she bore in His wonderful story. (*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*) *Mary's true place in Christian esteem*:—It is impossible to worship the Virgin, because the very exquisiteness of her character stands in her being a perfect type of human nature, pure and simple; her native womanly grace and innocence are her chief charm. Deify her, and, besides other things, you wrong the whole human race; you depose her from her rightful place at the head of Christian women; you cheat Christ's sisters of their sweet queen, and say, in effect, that you

can do nothing with a pure life and a humble spirit but make an idol of it. Give us back the mother of our Lord; we want her here with us on earth, that our maidens and our matrons, feeling her to be one of themselves, may learn from her, in each event of life, how to receive God's will about themselves. It is a presumptuous interference with God's own ordering of the Incarnation, to take the mother of Jesus out of the category of earthly women, and to set her already on a throne in heaven. Was Christ born of a woman or was He not? If He was, let us accept the mystery with all its consequences, reverently limiting our thoughts and fancies by the extent to which God has thrown back the veil. . . . It should be equally impossible to tolerate unscriptural legends about Mary. Men do not gild gold, or paint white frames for snow-wreaths; and do they not see what violence they do to the most retiring character in the world by dragging it to the front, and setting it on a throne, and making it an arbiter of the destinies of men? It is because we feel so strongly that Mary is just as God would have her in herself that we resent all apocryphal accounts of her doings, and deplore all unauthorized additions to her life; these fancied embellishments of the loveliest of womankind, only serve to hide from us what she really and genuinely was from God. We can forgive the false taste of a worship which professes to be sensuous; but we feel bound to protest against the tampering, in faith and doctrine, with the character and very being of her who is the cherished heritage of every Christian soul. (*E. T. Marshall, M.A.*) *The blessed among women*:—1. Poor, yet rich. 2. Troubled, yet meditative. 3. Proud, as a virgin, yet obedient as a wife. 4. First doubtful, then believing. (*Van Oosterzee.*) *Blessed of God*:—The angel's salutation of Mary may be applied to Christians in all the holy seasons of life, such as baptism, confirmation, the time of chastening, the day of death. (*Wallin.*) *Encouragement to the humble*:—It ought to be highly encouraging to those whose lot is cast in the quiet walks of life—who occupy quiet, private, and unobtrusive stations—to observe how great honour was put on one humble as themselves; and how, in the faithful discharge of simple duties, and the making use of the appointed means, such piety has been attained as has never been surpassed, and perhaps rarely equalled. Mary had undoubtedly poverty to struggle with, and she was not placed in any conspicuous part, where great things were to be done and endured for God. Up to the time of the visit from the angel she had probably lived in the unaffected life which presents daily the same duties—perhaps daily the same hardships—the life of that great mass of human beings of whom the world never hears—who, some with more, others with less, of external pressure, rise in the morning to begin a round of humble occupations, of which, if night brings the close, the morrow will bring the repetition. Yet, living such a life as this, performing the daily duties which devolve on members of low, and perhaps straitened, families—duties on which there is nothing to throw splendour, and which may seem little favourable to deep spirituality—did Mary grow so rich with the graces of piety, as to be the fittest for the high honour which God had in store for woman. After this, let no one repine at not being called to eminent station, as though it were necessary to be great in office in order to being great in the virtues or rewards of religion. It has been well said that no man is to complain of want of power or opportunity for religious perfection. The devout woman in her closet, praying, with much zeal and affection, for the conversion of souls, is in the same order of arrangement, as to grace in general, as he who, by excellent doctrines, put it into a more forward position to be actually performed. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Blessed among women*:—Next to the blessed Child, the Virgin Mother is the central figure of the Nativity. She is one of the noblest and loveliest characters in the Bible. I. The saddest page in the world's history, is THE STORY OF WOMAN'S WRONGS. The law of strength has been always the world's rule of conduct, the weaker has had to go to the wall. Woman, because of her more delicate physical organization, has been the victim of man's superior strength, the prey of his basest passions, the slave of his injustice and tyranny. To justify himself in his oppression he has represented her as worthy only of contempt. Hesiod calls women "an accursed brood, chief scourge of the human race." Æschylus speaks of her as, "the direst evil of State and home." Socrates thanked God daily that he had been born a human being and not an animal; free and not a slave; a man and not a woman. "Slacken the rein," said Cato, "and you will afterward strive in vain to check the mad career of that unreasoning animal." Seneca calls her, "an imprudent, wild creature, incapable of self-control." The Romans habitually spoke of the majesty of man, the imbecility, weakness, and frivolity of women. "Better that a thousand women should perish,

than that one man should cease to see the light." But with Christianity new ideas of the dignity and glory of womanhood came into life. The Son of God was born of a woman. "Christ," says Augustine, "was born of a woman, that neither sex might despair." By its reverence for the Virgin Mother the Christian Church wove into its deepest thought a new conception of womanhood, and did much to cancel the contempt thrown upon her in the person of Eve. If woman was guilty of the world's first sin, on her breast its Redeemer was nourished; and Bethlehem atoned for Eden. Eve was withdrawn as the representative of woman, and the mother of Jesus replaced her. Hence among the early Christians the position of woman was greatly changed. She shared with man the responsibilities of religion, the sufferings of persecution, the love of God, the hope of Heaven. II. But this is not all that the worship of the Virgin meant. Before Christ came, IT WAS THE QUALITIES ESPECIALLY CHARACTERISTIC OF THE MALE SEX WHICH WERE WORSHIPPED AS DIVINE. Force, strength, courage, mental concentration—these were the qualities regarded as of highest worth. But Christ proclaimed the Divine nature of qualities quite the opposite of these—meekness, gentleness, patience, purity, obedience, love. It is the peculiar feature of Christianity, that it exalts, not strength, intellect, courage, but gentleness, lovingness, helpfulness, purity. But these are especially womanly virtues—qualities of character in which women usually surpass men. So this worship of the virgin grew up in a world wearied by violence and passion and selfish strength, of masculine ambitions and grasping resolves, sighing for some form of strength and glory which should be consistent with tenderness, and gentleness, and sweet affection. In a world trodden by armies, corrupted by lust, dominated by ambition, this worship of the Virgin was a strong and living protest against force and war and sensuality; a silent assertion of the glory of purity, goodness, and love. When the attributes of God and Christ were lost from view, that sweet and beautiful idea of womanhood shed gentle lustre amid dungeons and scaffolds and battlefields, and did something at least to mitigate their cruelties. It hung upon the walls of the churches, it looked down from chamber and from hall, it pleaded at the corners of the street, and it melted through the imagination of cruel and sensual men, as a heavenly vision pleading for humanity. Mrs. Jameson, in her "Legends of the Madonna," says: "In the perpetual repetition of that beautiful image of the Woman highly favoured, there, where others saw only pictures or statues, I have seen this great hope standing like a spirit beside the visible form—in the fervent worship once given to that gracious presence I have beheld an acknowledgment of a higher as well as a gentler power than that of the strong hand, and the might which makes right; and in every earnest votary one who, as he knelt, was in this sense pious beyond the reach of his thought, and devout beyond the meaning of his will." And woman greatly encourages his error when she accepts his estimate of worth rather than Christ's, and bestows her admiration upon the lower and more masculine attributes, instead of recognizing the higher glory of her own womanhood. Gail Hamilton's sarcasm, "Come girls, let us be men," finds an echo in much of the life of to-day, when it ought to carry its own refutation. The Bible gives woman a glory of her own. Let her take up and wield the spiritual sovereignty that is her everlasting birthright. Let man learn to be grateful to woman for this undoubted achievement of her sex—that she, often in despite of him, has kept Christendom from lapsing into barbarism, has kept mercy and love from being overborne by those two greedy monsters, money and war. Let him remember that almost every great soul, which has led forward and lifted up the race, has been inspired by some noble woman. "A man discovered America, but a woman equipped him for the voyage." The noblest qualities of both are blended in Jesus Christ. In Him is the woman's heart and the man's brain; womanly gentleness, manly strength. We do not worship Christ and Mary, for in Christ we find all that was sought in Mary. III. There is still another truth striving for utterance in this worship of the Virgin, and this is, THE NEED WHICH THE HUMAN HEART FEELS OF A HUMAN AS WELL AS DIVINE SAVIOUR. (*J. H. McIlvaine, D.D.*) *The Annunciation*:—In the introduction of Jesus Christ to the world it would seem as if all laws of nature were to be suspended, that He Himself might be the crowning miracle of the universe. Even in the birth of His forerunner, God took the case into His own hand in a manner which excited the surprise and provoked the unbelief of servants who were walking in all His own ordinances and commandments blameless. In the birth of Christ law was not only suspended, but treated as if it had never had any existence, showing how easy it would have been for the Almighty to have founded society upon a totally

new basis. The value of these miracles is seen as to their scope or purpose most vividly in the life of Jesus Christ. From the very beginning, in itself and in its surroundings it was to be a life distinct from all other existence. The manner in which both Elisabeth and Mary received the communications is precisely that in which the heart receives the tidings of the great salvation. The idea of salvation overpowers all who apprehend it with any distinctness. It would seem as if every soul had to undergo a period of questioning and doubt and wondering before it realizes the ineffable peace and cloudless radiance of perfect trust. The reply which the angel made to Mary's question, "How shall this be?" shows distinctly that there are questions arising out of spiritual revelation which may be put without violating the Divine purpose of secrecy. Mary's point of rest must be ours; wonder was not allayed, nor was difficulty removed, yet the heart was given up to the possession of the Almighty. The gospel is to be received in the same way. Its doctrines will excite surprise and provoke inquiries, and it is possible that the answers to human questioning may but carry the mind to some higher plane of mystery. There it must rest, not in knowledge, but in faith, and the eyes of the heart must be opened when the vision of the understanding is unequal to the light. The whole incident may be used as teaching—1. That human life is accessible to angelic ministry. 2. That the great surprises of life should be held in check by religious faith, lest they unbalance the mind, and unfit it for ordinary occupations. 3. That the omnipotence of God should be regarded as the solution of all mystery and the guarantee of all safety. (*Dr. Parker.*) *Mary, the mother of Jesus:*— 1. There has been a large recoil of unbelief from these first chapters of Matthew and Luke. How comes it, many ask, if this be any proper history of facts, that it is made up so largely of poetic material? (1) First, we must observe, there is a great facility of verse in the Hebrew and Syriac tongues, so that minds but a very little excited almost naturally break into the couplet form of utterance. (2) Next, the Incarnation itself is an event so conspicuous and glorious, that everybody knowing it ought to be taken by some great mental commotion, lifted by some unwonted inspiration. (3) Furthermore, I will even dare to aver that the manner of this Incarnation-story is natural, and is cast in a form of the strongest possible self-affirmation. It comes to pass in just the only way conceivable or credible. 2. At this point my subject, which is Mary, the mother of Jesus, takes a most remarkable turn. Suddenly she drops out of improvising, out of song and singing joy, into a very nearly total and dumb silence; giving us to hear no spoken word again, save in a very few syllables, and but twice in her whole after-life. Not by the poverty of her nature that she is silent. Self-retention is the almost infallible token of a strong, deep character. 3. Jesus, a Man of thirty years old, goes to a wedding. And there we are let into a new chapter, at the very hinge of His public life, and the new relation He is to have to His mother. No reprimand, however, in His words to her ("Woman, what have I to do with thee?") save under the English idiom. 4. Look now for a moment at the home-basis Mary has provided for Jesus in the prosecution of His ministry. We see His mother's family all engaged for Him and with Him, and even if they do not believe in Him, they will stick fast by Him, we can see, in divinest and most faithful love. 5. Mary's behaviour at the cross fitly ends her story. She "stood"—a word of strong composure. Doubtless she remembers the word of Simeon—"Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." But there she stands, in the beloved disciple's company, holding fast the decencies of sorrow, as if the proprieties of the worlds were upon her. How long after this she lived we do not know. But we could most easily believe that when her mind was opened at the Pentecost, to the meaning of her Son's great mission, she was at once so astounded and exalted by the awful height of her relationship, that her soul took wing in the uplift of her felt affinity with the Highest, and was gone! But we have no such traditions. 6. Her disappearing from us, however, does not bring her story to an end; it only prepares our final appearing to her, on a higher plane of life, where she will most assuredly be the centre of a higher feeling than some of us may have imagined. Probably there was never any created being of all the created worlds put in such honour as this woman, chosen to be the Lord's mother; all the more truly our mother, that, from her begins the new-born human race. "Hail, thou highly favoured!" "Blessed art thou among women." (*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*) "*Thou hast found favour*," &c.:—Mary is not a dispenser of favour, but a recipient of it, with and for the rest of us; the type and germ of the Church. (*Rudolf Stier.*) *Mary a typical Jewess:*—Being of royal lineage, Mary undoubtedly cherished in her bosom the

traditions of her house with that secret fervour which belongs to enthusiastic natures. Like all Judean women, we are to suppose her intensely national in her feelings. She identified herself with her country's destiny, lived its life, suffered its sufferings, and waited and prayed for its deliverance and glories. This was a time of her nation's deep humiliation. The throne and sceptre had passed from Judah. Conquered, trodden down, and oppressed, the sacred land was under the rule of Pagan Rome; and Herod, the appointed sovereign, was a blaspheming, brutal tyrant, using all his power to humiliate and oppress; and we may imagine Mary as one of the small company of silent mourners, like Simeon, and Anna the prophetess, who pondered the Scriptures and "looked for salvation in Israel." (*Harriet B. Stowe.*) *Mary the flower of a selected race*:—In part, our conception of the character of Mary may receive light from her nationality. A fine human being is never the product of one generation, but rather the outcome of a growth of ages. Mary was the offspring and flower of a race selected, centuries before, from the finest physical stock of the world; watched, trained, and cultured, by Divine oversight, in accordance with every physical and mental law for the production of sound and vigorous mental and bodily conditions. Her blood came to her in a channel of descent over which the laws of Moses had established such a watchful care—a race where marriage had been made sacred, family life a vital point, and motherhood invested by Divine command with an especial sanctity. As Mary was, in a certain sense, a product of the institutes of Moses, so it is an interesting coincidence that she bore the name of his sister, the first and most honoured of the line of Hebrew prophetesses—Mary being the Latin version of the Hebrew Miriam. She had also, as we read, a sister, the wife of Cleopas, who bore the same name, a custom not infrequent in Jewish families. It is suggested that Miriam, being a sacred name, and held in high traditionary honour, mothers gave it to their daughters, as now in Spain they call them after the Madonna as a sign of good omen. (*Ibid.*) *God's presence with His people*:—How important to have God with us everywhere! The late John Wesley, after a long life of labour and usefulness, concluded his course in perfect peace and holy triumph. A short time before his departure, when a person came into his room he tried to speak to him, but could not. Finding his friend could not understand him; he paused a little, and then with all his remaining strength he cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us." And then raising his feeble voice, and lifting up his dying arm in token of victory, he again repeated, "The best of all is, God is with us." Paul, when a prisoner, had the presence of God. Turn to 2 Timothy iv. 16, 17: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." It was a noble saying of his (Rom. viii. 31): "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (*Henry R. Burton.*) *The glory of Mary*:—No woman that ever lived on the face of the earth has been an object of such wonder, admiration, and worship, as Mary, the mother of our Lord. Around her, poetry, painting, and music have raised clouds of ever-shifting colours, splendid as those around the setting sun. Exalted above earth, she has been shown to us as a goddess, yet a goddess of a type wholly new. She is not Venus, not Minerva, not Ceres, nor Vesta. No goddess of classic antiquity, or of any other mythology, at all resembles that ideal being whom Christian art and poetry presents to us in Mary. Neither is she like all of them united. She differs from them as Christian art differs from classical, wholly and entirely. Other goddesses have been worshipped for beauty, for grace, for wisdom, for power. Mary has been the goddess of poverty and sorrow, of pity and mercy, and as suffering is about the only certain thing in human destiny, she has numbered her adorers in every land, and climate, and nation. In Mary, womanhood, in its highest and tenderest development of the mother, is the object of worship. Motherhood, with large capacities of sorrow, with the memory of bitter sufferings, with sympathies large enough to embrace every anguish of humanity! Such an object of veneration has inconceivable power. (*Harriet B. Stowe.*) *Calmness of Mary*:—We see in all this that serious, calm, and balanced nature which was characteristic of Mary. Habitually living in the contemplation of that spirit-world revealed in the Scriptures, it was no very startling thing to her to see an angel standing by her; her thoughts had walked among the angels too long for that, but his enthusiastic words of promise and blessing agitated her soul. (*Ibid.*) *Absence of self-consciousness*:—One morning, according to the old legend, "as she went to draw water from the spring or well in the green open space at the north-west extremity of the town," the Angel met her with the Salutation. And Mary was

troubled at the tidings and the praise. It was the trouble of a beautiful unconsciousness. She had never thought of herself, never asked herself whether she were pure or lovely, did not care what people thought of her, made no effort to appear to the little world of Nazareth other than she was. A rare excellence in man or woman, this fair unconsciousness!—rarer than ever now. Our miscalled education, which looks chiefly to this, how a young girl may make a good figure in society, destroys often from the earliest years the beauty of unconsciousness of self. There are many who have never had a real childhood, never been unconscious, who possess already the thoughts and airs of womanhood, and who are applauded as objects to admire, instead of being pitied as victims of an unnatural training. Their manners, conversation, attitudes, are the result of art. Already they tremble, as we do, for the verdict of the world. They grow up and enter into society, and there is either a violent reaction against conventionality, or a paralyzing sensitiveness to opinion, or a dull repose of character all but equivalent to stagnation. We see many who are afraid of saying openly what they think or feel, if it be in opposition to the accredited opinions of the world; we see others who rejoice in shocking opinion for the sake of making themselves remarkable—perhaps the basest form of social vanity, for it gives pain, and does not spring from conviction. Both forms arise from the education which makes the child self-conscious. It is miserable to see how we actually take pains to root out of our children the beauty of the Virgin's early life, the beauty of a more Divine life in Christ—the beauty of unconsciousness of self. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *Mary's piety*:—The Angel does not say, observe, that the favour of God has found her, but that she has found favour with Him. The expression, it is true, may be used in either way, to indicate what God has undertaken to do for her, or what she has obtained by the suit of her gentle, sweet-minded prayers. It is most naturally taken in this latter way; giving us to see how she has been waiting before Him, from her tender girlhood onward, asking of Him grace for a good life, and questioning His oracle as to what she is to do, or to be. She has read the prophets too, as we may judge, and her feeling, like all the religious feeling of her nation, is leavened in this manner, by infinite yearnings for the coming of that wonderful unknown Being called Messiah. And so her opening womanly nature has been stretching itself Messiahward, and configuring itself inwardly to what the unknown Great One is to be. Sighing after Him thus, in the sweet longings of her prayers, she is winning such favour, and becoming inwardly akin to Him in such degree, as elects her to bear the promised Child of the skies, and be set in a properly Divine motherhood before the worlds! Ah, yes, Mary, canst thou believe it? That which the prophets of so many ages drew you into praying for; that which angels in God's highest and most ancient realms have been peering from above to look into, that for which the fulness of time has now come—that special thing of God's counsel, supereminent favour, His greatest miracle, His unmatched wonder, His one thing absolute, which lets nothing ever come to pass that can be put into class with it—even that thou hast gotten a call from God to mediate for the world, bearing it as thy Holy Thing, the fruit of thy sweet and maidenly prayers. (*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*)

Ver. 31. **Call His name Jesus.**—*The name "Jesus"*:—Bernard has delightfully said that the name "Jesus" is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, and joy in the heart. I rejoice in that expression on my own account, for it gives me my share of the delight, and leads me to hope that, while I am speaking, the sweetness of that precious name may fill my own mouth. Here also is a portion for you who are listening: it is melody in the ear. If my voice should be harsh, and my words discordant, you will yet have music of the choicest order, for the name itself is essential melody, and my whole sermon will ring with its silver note. May both speaker and hearer join in the third word of Bernard's sentence, and may we all find it to be joy in our hearts, a jubilee within our souls. Jesus is the way to God, therefore will we preach Him; He is the truth, therefore will we hear of Him; He is the life, therefore shall our hearts rejoice in Him. His transporting name is an ointment poured forth, and its scent is varied so as to contain the essence of all fragrances. I. THE NAME OF JESUS IS A NAME DIVINELY ORDERED AND EXPOUNDED. Like Himself it came down from heaven, for an angel brought it. 1. It is the best name He could bear. To be the "Saviour" is His glory. 2. It is the most appropriate name He could receive. God the Father, who knows Him best, sees this to be His grand characteristic, that He is the "Saviour," and is best represented by this name. 3. It is a name which must be true, since Infinite Wisdom has selected

it. A "Saviour" He must be upon a grand scale, continually, abundantly. II. OUR LORD WAS ACTUALLY CALLED BY THE NAME "JESUS" BY MAN. The God of heaven by His angel appoints the Child's name, but He leaves it to Joseph and Mary to announce it. Those who are taught of God, joyfully recognize that Christ is salvation, and without a question name Him thus. III. THE NAME HAD BEEN TYPICALLY WORN BY ANOTHER, BUT IS NOW RESERVED FOR HIM ALONE. Jesus and Joshua are the same word: Joshua the Hebrew form, Jesus the Greek. The son of Nun was a type of the son of Mary. Jesus of Nazareth alone can save fully from sin. IV. THIS NAME IDENTIFIES OUR LORD WITH HIS PEOPLE. He declares His relation to them. It is to them that He is a Saviour (Matt. i. 21). V. THE NAME "JESUS" IS ONE WHICH INDICATES HIS MAIN WORK. 1. He "saves" by taking all the sins of His people upon Himself. 2. He "saves" His people by bearing the penalty due to their sins. 3. He "saves" by driving out the vipers of sin from the heart, and implanting in their stead fresh and holy objects, ambitions, motives. VI. THIS NAME IS ONE WHICH IS COMPLETELY JUSTIFIED BY FACTS. Given Him before He had done anything, while yet a babe, has He not earned it? Does He not well deserve the name He bears? VII. THIS NAME IS CHRIST'S PERSONAL NAME FOR EVER. 1. It is a home name. Given Him by His own mother. 2. It is a heart name. Full of the music of love—moving our affections, and firing our souls. 3. It was His death name. Written over the cross. 4. It is His resurrection name. 5. It is His gospel name. 6. It is His heaven name. There He is ever adored as the "Saviour." Let us go and tell of this name; let us continually meditate upon it; let us love it henceforth and for ever. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Incarnation*:—The Incarnation was—1. A fact, revealed in life, words, works. 2. An unfathomable miracle, unprecedented, intimate, voluntary union of Divinity with humanity. 3. A glorious benefit; it is the glory, the light, the life of men. (*Van Doren.*) *Signification of the name Jesus*:—Means Saviour. Salvation is the beginning and end of revelation. Substance of gospel truth. 1. Light. 2. Life. 3. Liberty. 4. Pardon. 5. Sanctification. 6. Comfort. 7. Peace. 8. Hope. 9. Triumph. Christ was and is a Saviour such as the world needs, not as the Jews expected. (*Ibid.*) *The name of Jesus*:—1. Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem. 2. Jesus, the Saviour of the world. 3. Jesus, the Mediator between God and man. 4. Jesus, the Judge of all mankind. (*A. F. Barfield.*) *The miraculous conception*:—Had the narrative of the miraculous conception occurred in the literature of a heathen nation, it would justly have raised doubts. But in the sober verses of the Gospels, written by Jews, it takes a far different character. The idea was altogether foreign to the Jewish mind. The Hebrew doctrine of the unity of God, and of the infinite elevation of the Divine Being above man, the profound regard of the Jews for the married state, and their abhorrence of unwedded life, make it impossible to imagine how such a thought could ever have risen among them. The improbability of its being invented by a Jew is heightened by the fact, that, though lofty thoughts of the nature of the Messiah were not wanting in some Israelites, the almost universal belief was that He was to be simply a man, who would receive miraculous endowments on His formal consecration as Messiah. (*Dr. Geikie.*) *The name "Jesus"*:—An old divine has somewhere said: "There is majesty implied in the name 'God.' There is independent being in 'Jehovah.' There is power in 'Lord.' There is unction in 'Christ.' There is affinity in 'Immanuel;' intercession in 'Mediator;' and help in 'Advocate;' but there is salvation in no other name under heaven but the name of 'Jesus'" (Acts iv. 12). A Freedman's teacher writes of a coloured woman who, having learned her alphabet, said, "Now I want to learn to spell Jesus, for 'pears like the rest will come easier if I learn to spell the blessed name first." A good many things "come easier when we learn that name first." (*Student's Handbook to Scripture Doctrine.*) *Fulness of meaning in the name Jesus*:—So the name of "Jesus," the Saviour—a word often pronounced with little estimate of its meaning—will grow in the experience of believing hearts, the hearts of the redeemed, as all "the height, and depth, and length, and breadth" of its unspeakable tenderness, and patience, and love, are more and more in the lapse of ages disclosed to faith; till that name shall be as much more precious than all human names of tenderness and love, as the whole material universe, if crystalized into one huge diamond, would be more precious than one atom of common dust! Do not think we exaggerate. It is impossible to exaggerate the glory of the love "which passeth knowledge," the value of the "riches" which are "unsearchable." (*G. W. Heacock.*) *The lock of the heart*:—A lock was shown to Gotthold, constructed of rings, which were severally inscribed with certain letters, and could be turned round until the letters

represented the name "Jesus." It was only when the rings were disposed in this manner that the lock could be opened. The invention pleased him beyond measure; and he exclaimed, "Oh that I could put such a lock as this upon my heart!" Our hearts are already locked, no doubt, but generally with a lock of quite another kind. Many need only to hear the words "gain," "honour," "pleasure," "riches," "revenge," and their heart opens in a moment; whereas to the Saviour and to His holy name it continues shut. *The divinity of the name Jesus:*—"Jesus" was to be the special and peculiar name of the virgin's Son. It fulfilled prophecy (Isa. xlii. 2). 1. This name was new to the Saviour, who was before called "The Word of God," "The Son of God," "The Wisdom of the Father," &c. 2. It now gained a significance it never heretofore possessed. 3. It became the antitype. Joshua as leader of the chosen people into the Promised Land, and Josedech as high priest, are eminent types of Jesus Christ. By Divine appointment our Lord received this name, implying—I. THE SUBORDINATION OF THE SON. A name to be imposed upon any one, implies the subordination of the recipient to the giver. God the Father alone could have any proper right or authority over Jesus Christ. II. THE PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF THE FATHER. He alone perfectly knew the office, end, and effects of the Son coming into this world. III. A SIGN OF SPECIAL PRIVILEGE. A God-given name always means special favour and goodwill to the person it is bestowed on. Abraham, Jacob, Samson, Peter, Paul, &c. Conclusion: This name of Jesus being Divine must be—1. Reverenced and honoured. 2. Loved. 3. Obeyed. Then will its salvation become our own. (*James Marchant.*) *The preciousness of the name Jesus:*—Jesus! Name stupendous and venerable; a font of mercy; an abyss of judgment; wishing to be loved rather than feared. He took the name of Saviour rather than that of Judge. The sinner must hide as did Adam, or despair as did Cain, when he is without Jesus; but with Him he repents in hope, and rejoices in pardon and grace. This name of Jesus is—1. Of the highest import to the faithful (John i. 12). The power by no work of ours; which we cannot take away; a grace given to the willing only; by the conformation of the will and love wholly to God. 2. The one refuge for the penitent. 3. The security in conflict. This name supported many martyrs in their fierce trials. It acts upon the unseen powers of sin. 4. A loving yearning in those using it. It brings before the mind all the cost, agony, and suffering by which our salvation was wrought out by Jesus. 5. An ineffable joy to those loving it. It tells of a past work, a present gain, a future glory. (*P. von Hartung.*) *The efficacy of this name:*—The name of Jesus—1. Consoles the afflicted. Honey in the mouth; melody in the ear; joy in the heart. It speaks of love, pardon, peace. 2. Arms against dangers. 3. Quiets the soul. 4. Renders all prayer profitable. Engrave this name on thy tongue, and if that fail on thy heart, have it ever in thy hand; by it direct thy every thought, word, deed. (*M. Faber.*) *The name of Jesus a New Year watchword:*—Name of Jesus a watchword for New Year. An excellent and precious treasure; a treasure-house, full of all help, guidance, and comfort. 1. To prodigals, unconverted, ungodly (Acts iv. 12; iii. 16). 2. To disciples—partakers of the righteousness of God in Him—full of fightings without and fears within, "the name of the Lord," &c. (Prov. xviii. 10). 3. To Christian Church-workers (Col. iii. 17). 4. To the bereaved and afflicted, missing this year from the family and Church well-beloved names (Heb. xiii. 8). Take this watchword in four different applications. I. IN CHURCH LIFE. Perilous times, owing to sinful lives and divided interests of those belonging to the Church. Ship toiling through heaving waves, storm-tossed, timbers strained, sails rent; but look at her name, "Jesus," and know that she must crest every wave, and weather every storm, till the haven be reached. The name of Jesus teaches of holiness and unity; truly borne, it will rebuke sin and division; known in its saving power, it will make Christians holy in Him, and one in Him. II. IN THE WORLD. We have to live in the world, unsympathizing, scoffing, persecuting. We must not tolerate or countenance sin. Go into the world with the name of Jesus in your heart, and let it not be tainted with evil; hallow the world's work by it, and let the world's habits and customs testify of it. As Columbus leaped to plant the banner of Spain upon the new-found world, plant on the unknown land of the New Year the Cross—seize the year for Jesus; carry His name everywhere; let everything bear its impress. The name of Jesus teaches of purity and resolution; truly known it will make the Christian in the world pure in heart, and resolved to stand his ground. III. IN TIMES OF TROUBLE. That were a strange year which should bring us no trouble. As well might we look for a year of undimmed sunshine, without clouds or rain. There will be dark, dreary days, biting frosts, heavy storms and tempests:

and it is for our good in reaping the fruits of the earth that it is so. In like manner afflictions, trials, sicknesses, losses, disappointments, will come, and for our good, to the bringing forth of the peaceable fruits of righteousness. What does the Christian say to such prospects? He trusts in the name of Jesus and fears no evil. He knows in whom he has believed. The name of Jesus is his comfort and stay and peace. It teaches him resignation and unshaken trust. IV. IN THE HOUR OF DEATH. This may come during the present year. The name of Jesus is the password to heaven. It teaches, in the moment when this world passes away, simple faith in His merits and mediation, by whom alone we can be saved. Other experiences may or may not be ours: death must be. How shall we meet it? Leaning on what rod or staff? The name of Jesus, and faith in His name, is the only sure refuge, and the only secure hope. (*Thos. H. Barnett.*)

Ver. 32. **He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.**—*The greatness of Jesus:*—The title of "Great" is one which the wisdom of this world recognizes, though I am not sure that it always gives the title fairly. We have Alexander the Great, Charles the Great, Frederick the Great, and so on. The epithet has usually been applied to those whose great powers have been manifested chiefly in the subjugation of their fellows to their own will. This kind of manifestation is the most conspicuous, it involves the most open exercise of power, and is most mixed up with the gratification of human ambition, and pride, and vanity; but, undoubtedly, those who have most permanently and extensively influenced their fellows, have been those whose conquests have been in the regions of thought, in things spiritual—the founders of religions, the authors of philosophies, the great discoverers, the great teachers. A man like Alexander has ceased for centuries to be a living power in the world; but the great founder of Buddhism, *e.g.*, is still affecting the daily lives and habits of something like a quarter of the whole population of the world. A great captain is like a brilliant meteor, but the author of a new thought, or a new system of thought, is like a fixed star. I. THINK OF CHRIST'S GREATNESS AS A MAN. Estimate in any just way the influence produced upon the world's history by His life and deeds; can there be any doubt that He is the greatest man who ever lived? Whose life has been the most like a seed in this world, rising up with the irresistible power of growth, and bringing forth fruit after its kind? Whose religious teaching has been practically most potent in subduing to itself the highest intellects the human race has produced? In the most tattered rags of humanity, Jesus Christ stands forth so conspicuously as the King of men, that there are few, who do not, in some form or another, bow the knee before Him. II. CHRIST'S GREATNESS AS GOD. It is the light of Divine majesty and condescension shining through the rags of humanity, that makes the whole history intelligible. "He shall be great!" nay, He *is* great in the midst of the humiliation of the Cross itself. That humiliation was self-sought, and only adds emphasis to the declaration and promise of the text. III. CHRIST'S GREATNESS IS TO INCREASE. He is great now. But He is to be greater still—not absolutely, but relatively—in the magnitude of His Kingdom and the universality of His sway. IV. ALL MAY PROMOTE THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST. This is the noblest aim of man. Men are willing enough to make themselves great, to get themselves on in the world, to promote their own interests, wealth, glory, and within reasonable limits it is right that this should be so; but the privilege of the believer is to transfer his zeal for promoting his own greatness to the promotion of the greatness of Christ. (*Bishop Harvey Goodwin.*) *The grandeur of Christ:*—This subject far transcends all utterance. Jesus is such a One that no oratory can ever reach the height of His glory, and the simplest words are best suited to a subject so sublime. Fine words would be but tawdry things to hang beside the unspeakably glorious Lord. I can say no more than that He is great. If I could tell forth His greatness with choral symphonies of cherubin, yet should I fail to reach the height of this great argument. I will be content if I can touch the hem of the garment of His greatness. I. HE IS GREAT FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW. I might have said, from every point of view; but that is too large a truth to be surveyed at one sitting. Mind would fail us, life would fail us, time would fail us; eternity and perfection will alone suffice for that boundless meditation. But from the points of view to which I would conduct you for a moment, the Lord Jesus Christ is emphatically great. 1. In the perfection of His nature. Peerless and incomparable; Divine, and therefore unique. He is all that God is; and He is all that man is as God created him. As truly God as if He were not man; and as truly man as if He were not

God. 2. In the grandeur of His offices. He comes to rebuild the old wastes, and to restore the fallen temple of humanity. To accomplish this He came to be our Priest, our Prophet, and our King; in each office glorious beyond compare. He came to be our Saviour, our Sacrifice, our Substitute, our Surety, our Head, our Friend, our Lord, our Life, our All. He is the Standard-bearer among ten thousand. Who is like unto Him in all eternity? 3. In the splendour of His achievements. He is no holder of a sinecure; He claims to have finished the work which His Father gave Him to do. Is it not proven that He is great? Conquerors are great, and He is the greatest of them. Deliverers are great; and He is the greatest of them. Liberators are great, and He is the greatest of them. Saviours are great, and He is the greatest of them. They that multiply the joys are men truly great, and what shall I say of Him who has bestowed everlasting joy upon His people, and entailed it upon them by a covenant of salt for ever and ever? 4. In the prevalence of his merits. He has such merit with God that He deserves of the Most High whatsoever He wills to ask; and He asks for His people that they shall have every blessing needful for eternal life and perfection. 5. In the number of His saved ones. 6. In the estimation of His people. 7. In the glory of heaven. 8. On the throne of the Father. II. "He shall be great," and He is so, for HE DEALS WITH GREAT THINGS. 1. It was a great ruin He came to restore, great sin that He came to do away, great pardon that He came to bestow. 2. He has great supplies to meet our great wants. 3. He is a Christ of great preparations. He is engaged before the throne, to-day, in preparing a great heaven for His people; it will be made up of great deliverance, great peace, great rest, great joy, great victory, great discovery, great fellowship, great rapture, great glory. III. HIS GREATNESS WILL SOON APPEAR. It now lies under a cloud to men's blear eyes. They still belittle Him with their vague and vain thoughts; but it shall not always be so. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The greatness of Christ*:—The Saviour of men, and the example for all, must be the isolated one, the unparalleled Man in human history. He must be both like us and unlike us—like us in so far as His human nature is concerned: He must be born, He must increase in stature, be in subjection to His parents, and be subject to all the ordinary conditions of human nature as it develops itself from infancy to manhood. In all this He is like us—for otherwise He could not be our pattern and our Saviour. Then, again, He must be unlike us, or how could He be that One whom we are to imitate, and of whose fulness we must all partake? Christ as a Man was unlike all other men. He alone of all great men is the unparalleled One of all history; and the conviction of this truth suggests that more than man is here—more than a great and unparalleled man: it is none other than the "Son of the Highest." (*Bishop Martensen.*) *The Incarnation*:—The plan of salvation is likened unto a vine which has fallen down from the boughs of an oak. It lies prone upon the ground; it crawls in the dust, and all its tendrils and claspers, which were formed to hold it in the lofty place from which it had fallen, are twined around the weed and the bramble, and, having no strength to raise itself, it lies fruitless and corrupting, tied down to the base things of the earth. Now, how shall the vine arise from its fallen condition? But one way is possible for the vine to rise again to the place from whence it had fallen. The bough of the lofty oak must be let down, or some communication must be formed connected with the top of the oak and at the same time with the earth. Then, when the bough of the oak was let down to the place where the vine lay, its tender claspers might fasten upon it, and, thus supported, it might raise itself up, and bloom, and bear fruit again in the lofty place from whence it fell. So with man: his affections had fallen from God, and were fastened to the base things of earth. Jesus Christ came down, and by His humanity stood upon the earth, and by His divinity raised His hands and united Himself with the Deity of the Everlasting Father: thus the fallen affections of man may fasten upon Him, and twine around Him, until they again ascend to the bosom of the Godhead, from whence they fell. (*Watts.*) *The higher life*:—In one of his essays upon the phenomena of nature, Bacon tells of a mountain so high that no storm ever disturbs its air. Its climate knows little vicissitude. The clouds cannot float so high. The sunshine is constant by day, and the night comes late and the morning comes soon. So peaceful is that summit that a traveller having written some words in the white ashes of his camp fire, found the words still there after a score of years had passed. What an Elysian field is that! far above tornado and lightning shafts, and the miasma of the marsh and the battlefields of men. A fable in part, but an emblem of those heights where dwell those mortals who have reached the widest and deepest education and affections and the purest ethics. As

in classifying physical beauty we feel constrained to make distinctions between a violet and an oak, or between a cascade with its murmur and mist, and a cathedral with its spire and arches, and between a trailing vine and a range of mountains. and must change our words with the change of feeling in the soul, and to the rose say "beautiful," to the oak "grand," "pretty" to the violet, and "sublime" to the mountain, so we must divide into many parts the attractiveness of humanity, and must confess some to be witty, some pretty, some beautiful, some learned, and then when already the heart is full of admiration it perceives one more class rising above all other grades of mortality—those morally and mentally great. In this grouping all ages may meet. The infinite love of the Creator is in nothing more manifested than in this, that He has made this moral height accessible to all. Not all can be rich, beautiful, witty, young; but all can climb upward to the higher life. It is not the mere privilege of all, but the pressing duty of all. The heights are large, and voices full of mercy and of alarm are bidding those in the valley to "go up higher." God is represented as being in the holy mountains, and thither He expects His children to come. The heights are everywhere. They are seen in each profession and pursuit. There are merchants who grovel in the mire and whose gains stand for fraud, and there are merchants whose wealth tells of the industry, and growth, and welfare of the people. There are lawyers low and high—lawyers who are always upon the side of criminals, and concerning whose health and presence criminals are said to make inquiry before they plan a new crime; other lawyers, to whom men repair for help when they feel that their cause is just, and the points of law and equity must be placed clearly before jury or bench. There are writers low, and writers who are lofty. The former are witty and verbose in the defamation of character and in detailing the sins of society—these are the remains of human coarseness that are being slowly but steadily eliminated from all written thought, and therefore in greater multitude appear the writers of the pure school whose editorials, or essays, or books, or poems come into all homes as welcome as the beams of the morning sun. . . Said one of the greatest poets: "On every height there lies repose." This peace is not found elsewhere. It is not a sleep, not an easy existence of inaction, but a repose that comes from the sublimity of the landscape, and from the matchless purity of the air. It is not to be wondered at that the human mind, while sitting in the long past ages at the loom of thought, wove for the Deity such an attribute as "The Highest." And it is not to be wondered at, that when Christ came with His faultless words and deeds, with His boundless friendship and upper forms of thought, the admiring world felt that He was a Son of the Highest—figures of speech which should be taken up afresh by our far-off age. We have read in the ocean and in the storm and in the stupendous size of the universe, that the Creator has power. We have seen in the marvellous laws of mind and material that He has wisdom. We read the Divine love in the entire pageant of life, animal and rational, and we read the Divine eternity in the awful age of the universe, which drinks up millions of years as the sun dries up dewdrops; but we have omitted to learn from the high in thought, and industry, and art, from their eternal beauty and repose, that God is also "The Highest." Far above the sun, far above the suns to us unseen, is enthroned the world's God—the God of all worlds—on a height undreamed of by mortals. His mansions are there. Compared with this summit, the mount in the poetic philosophy of Lord Bacon sinks down and becomes a part of time's vale of tears. God is on the heights, and all those minds in this lower world which love the higher life are steadily walking up the slope of this range, hidden now perhaps by mist, but covered with light beyond the clouds. (*David Swing.*) *Forgotten great ones*:—What a roll of greatness should we have were there tables of marble, or brass, or gold in which were engraven the names of those who in all times and places have attempted to attain mental and spiritual excellence. It is a sad thought that what is called history is only a page from a vast, grand, but lost, volume. Violence and reckless ambition impressed into service all the chroniclers of the past, and that kind of greatness we see in Christ was not often asked to sit for its picture. It was too high for the surrounding kings and their hosts of sycophants. It would require a whole London of Westminster Abbeys to hold the urns of the noble ones whose very names are forgotten. The loss is great to the present, for many minds see a preponderance of evil in our age, and are not sure that our world was planned by benevolence, to which desponding minds an adequate conception of the continuous glory of man would be a welcome inspiration. There has been a succession of minds on the heights, and these have signalled to each other in all the years of man upon our globe. What ones are

visible, are only a few wanderers from the mighty herd. Solon and Moses studied at the Egyptian Heliopolis indeed, but of the many thousands of men always studying there, it cannot be possible that the honours were all borne away by a Hebrew and a Greek. At that educational centre, thousands and tens of thousands came and tarried and went while centuries passed along. It must be that the few names that have come to us are only types of a great army which was scattered over the prolific East. Aspasia was not the only intellectual powerful woman of the age of Pericles. She was the one brought into the foreground by her alliance with a powerful king; others having her education and her beauty and power lived and died in a fame that could not cross the gulf of many centuries. Nor was Cleopatra the only Greco-Egyptian woman who could speak and write in all the tongues of the Mediterranean coast, but she was one made historic by the accidents of crowns and vices, leaving us to assume that there were other women, many who equalled her in learning, and passed far above her in all higher worth. Thus history is only a page out of a lost volume. As those who dig in the sands of the Swiss lakes, or in the deserted cave-homes of man and beast, or who explore the ruins of Mycenæ, toss out a few implements or a few carved bones or a few jewels worn once by beauty, so history casts up out of the vast sepulchre where the ages sleep traces only of an absent world. (*Ibid.*) *Jesus not a fabrication*:—"We can learn," says Theodore Parker, "but few facts about Jesus. But measure Him by the shadow He has cast into the world, and by the light He has shed upon it, and shall we be told, that such a man never lived—that the whole story is a lie? Suppose that Plato and Newton never lived, that their story is a lie; but who did their works, and thought their thoughts? It takes a Newton to forge a Newton. What man could have fabricated a Jesus? None but a Jesus." *Christ the ideal representative of humanity*:—It is no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable is superadded by the tradition of the followers. Who among His disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived from the higher source. About the life and sayings of Jesus there is a stamp of personal originality combined with profundity of insight, which, if we abandon the idle expectation of finding scientific precision where something very different was aimed at, must place the Prophet of Nazareth, even in the estimation of those who have no belief in His inspiration, in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast. When this pre-eminent genius is combined with the qualities of probably the greatest moral reformer and martyr to that mission who ever existed upon earth, religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract in the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life. (*John Stuart Mill.*) *Divine humanity realized in Christ*:—Dr. Philip Schaff mentions the testimony of Dr. De Wette, one of the ablest and most learned sceptical critics of Germany. After all his brilliant scepticism Dr. De Wette wrote, a few months before his death: "I know that in no other name can salvation be found than in the name of Jesus Christ, the Crucified; and there is nothing loftier for mankind than the Divine humanity realized in Him, and the kingdom of God planted by Him.

Ver. 33. **And He shall reign.**—*Christ's everlasting kingdom*:— The everlasting kingdom. There is no reason to doubt that the right and true and the holy shall have the victory. All dominions hostile to Christ must give way. All kingdoms incompatible with His must be dissolved. The kingdoms of this world have their symbols in the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the fourth dreadful and terrible beast: and by a law universally proved, their passions and discord shall precipitate their own destruction. But Christ's kingdom has nothing anarchical, because it has nothing sinful in it; it has not one element of decay, because into it nothing that defileth can enter. Suns shall grow pale, stars shall become dim; the crescent shall wane, the crucifix shall fall from the hands of him that holds it; and Christ's kingdom shall extend over all the earth, and all shall bless Him, and be blessed in Him. We see already tokens of that day. I take a bright view of the coming

days. What progress do knowledge, science, education, Christianity, the Bible, make everywhere throughout the world at this moment? Do we not see the whole human family drawing nearer to each other? Do we not see the two great nations, America and England, speaking a tongue that promises more and more every day to become the tongue of the whole world? Do we not see all languages, however diversified, becoming reducible to two, three, or four at the very most,—Christians becoming less earthly, and Christianity less alloyed? What are these but the tokens of the approaching glory; voices in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord; messengers sent before to announce that the bridegroom cometh? I see flowers of paradise begin to bloom in many a desert. I see upon all sides the sea of barbarism and superstition begin to ebb, and many a dove take wing, and fly over the length and breadth of the world's chaotic flood, giving tokens that the Prince of Peace is on His way, warning us that the sound of His approach already breaks upon the ear. Let us hail the twilight; let us urge on, as far as we can, the coming day. (*Cummings.*) *Christ the key to the world's history*:—The great Swiss historian, John Von Müller, gives the result of his life-long labours, extracted, he says, from seventeen hundred and thirty-three authors, in seventeen thousand folio pages, in this striking confession: "Christ is the key to the history of the world. Not only does all harmonize with the mission of Christ; all is subordinated to it. When I saw this," he adds, "it was to me as wonderful and surprising as the light which St. Paul saw on his way to Damascus, the fulfilment of all hopes, the completion of philosophy, the key to all the apparent contradictions in the physical and the moral; here is life and immortality. I marvel not at miracles; a far greater miracle has been reserved for our times, the spectacle of the connection of all human events in the establishment and preservation of the doctrine of Christ." (*Prof. Henry B. Smith.*)

Vers. 34, 35. **The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.**—*Of Christ's Incarnation*:—These words are the angel's answer to Mary, who, understanding the angel as speaking of a thing presently to be done before Joseph and she should come together, desires to know how she, being a virgin, should conceive. Here—1. The angel tells her how she should "conceive and bring forth a Son," namely, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the power of the Highest, the Spirit of God being the true God, and so the Highest. The way of the Spirit's powerful working to this miraculous conception, is denoted by two words. One is, that the Holy Ghost should come upon her, not in an ordinary way, as in the conception of all men (Job x. 8, "Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about)"; but in an extraordinary way, as on the prophets, and those that were raised to some extraordinary work. The other is, that the power of the Highest, which is infinite power, should overshadow her, to wit, make her, though a virgin, to conceive by virtue of the efficacy of infinite power, by which the world was created, when the same Spirit moved on the waters, cherished them, and framed the world. 2. He shows what should follow on this miraculous conception, namely, that the fruit of her womb, the child she should bear, should be called "the Son of God." Where the angel teaches two things. (1) The immaculate, sinless conception of the child Jesus, that holy thing, a holy thing though proceeding from a sinful creature, not tainted with sin, as all other children are. The powerful operation of the Divine Spirit sanctified that part of the virgin's body of which the human nature of Christ was formed, so that by that influence it was separated from all impurity and defilement. So that, though it proceeded from a creature infected with original sin, there was no sin or taint of impurity in it. This was a glorious instance of the power of the Highest. (2) He tells the virgin, that therefore, seeing that child to be thus conceived, he should be called, that is, owned to be, "the Son of God." He says not, Therefore that holy thing shall be the Son of God, for he was the Son of God before, by virtue of His eternal generation; but, therefore he shall be called, *i.e.*, owned to be really so, and more than a man. I, I AM TO SHOW WHO SHE WAS THAT WAS THE MOTHER OF CHRIST AS MAN. Christ as God had no mother, and as man no father. But His mother as man was Mary. She was the seed of Abraham; and so Christ was that seed of Abraham, in whom all nations were to be blessed (Gal. iii. 16). She was of the tribe of Judah (Luke iii. 33), and of that tribe Christ by her did spring (Heb. vii. 14). She was also of the family of David, as appears by her genealogy (Luke iii.), and therefore Christ is called the Son of David, as the Messiah behoved to be. She was, however, but a mean woman, the family of David being then reduced to a low outward condition

in the world, having long before lost its flourishing state; so that our Lord "sprung up as a root out of a dry ground" (Isa. xi. 1, and liii. 2). II. I COME TO SHOW WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY CHRIST'S BECOMING MAN. It implies—1. That He had a real being and existence before His incarnation. He truly was before He was conceived in the womb of the virgin, and distinct from that being which was conceived in her. "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" (John vi. 62). Yea, He was with His Father from all eternity, before any of the creatures came out of the womb of nothing. 2. That He actually took upon Him our nature. He assumed the entire nature of man into the unity of His Divine person, with all its integral parts and essential properties; and so was made or became a real and true man by that assumption. Hence it is said (John i. 14), "The Word was made flesh." But though Jesus Christ had two natures, yet not two persons, which was the error of Nestorius, who lived in the fourth century. Again, though "the Word was made flesh," yet it was without any confusion of the natures, or change of the one into the other: which was the heresy of the Eutychians of old, who so confounded the two natures in the person of Christ, that they denied all distinction between them. Eutyches thought that the union was so made in the natures of Christ, that the humanity was absorbed and wholly turned into the Divine nature; so that, by that transubstantiation, the human nature had no longer being. But by this union the human nature is so united with the Divinity, that each retains its own essential properties distinct. The properties of either nature are preserved entire. It is impossible that the Majesty of the Divinity can receive any alteration; and it is as impossible that the meanness of the humanity can receive the impression of the Deity, so as to be changed into it, and a creature be metamorphosed into the Creator, and temporary flesh become eternal, and finite mount up into infinite. As the soul and the body are united, and make one person, yet the soul is not changed into the perfections of the body, nor the body into the perfections of the soul. There is a change indeed made in the humanity, by its being advanced to a more excellent union, but not in the Deity; as a change is made in the air when it is enlightened by the sun, not in the sun which communicates that brightness to the air. Athanasius makes the burning bush to be a type of Christ's incarnation; the fire signifying the Divine nature, and the bush the human. The bush is a branch springing from the earth, and the fire descends from heaven. As the bush was united to the fire, yet was not hurt by the flame, nor converted into the fire, there remained a difference between the bush and the fire, yet the properties of fire shined in the bush, so that the whole bush seemed to be on fire. So in the incarnation of Christ, the human nature is not swallowed up by the Divine, nor changed into it, nor confounded with it: but they are so united, that the properties of both remain firm: two are so become one, that they remain two still; one person in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the Divinity, and the weakness of the humanity. The fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ. 3. Christ's becoming man implies the voluntariness of this act of His in assuming the human nature. III. I proceed to show that CHRIST WAS TRUE MAN. Being the eternal Son of God, He became man, by taking to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul. He had the same human nature which is common to all men, sin only excepted. He is called in Scripture "man," and "the Son of man, the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Son of David," &c.; which designations could not have been given unto Him, if He had not been true man. The actions and passions of His life show that He had true flesh. He was hungry, thirsty, weary, faint, &c. For certainly if the Son of God would stoop so low as to take upon Him our frail flesh, He would not omit the nobler part, the soul, without which He could not be man. We are told that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, the one in respect of His body, the other in respect of His soul. The sufferings of His body were indeed very great; it was filled with exquisite torture and pain; but His soul sufferings were much greater, as I observed in a former discourse. IV. I come now to show WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND BY CHRIST'S BEING CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE WOMB OF THE VIRGIN MARY. To open this a little three things are to be considered here. 1. The framing of Christ's human nature in the womb of the Virgin. The matter of His body was of the very flesh and blood of the Virgin, otherwise He could not have been the Son of David, of Abraham, and Adam, according to the flesh. Indeed God might have created His body out of nothing, or have formed it of the dust of the ground, as He did the body of Adam, our original progenitor: but had He been thus extraordinarily formed, and not propagated from

Adam, though He had been a man like one of us, yet He would not have been of kin to us; because it would not have been a nature derived from Adam, the common parent of us all. It was therefore requisite to an affinity with us, not only that He should have the same human nature, but that it should flow from the same principle, and be propagated to Him. And thus He is of the same nature that sinned, and so what He did and suffered may be imputed to us. Whereas, if He had been created as Adam was, it could not have been claimed in a legal and judicial way. The Holy Ghost did not minister any matter unto Christ from His own substance. Hence Basil says, Christ was conceived, not of the substance, but by the power, not by any generation, but by appointment and benediction of the Holy Ghost. 2. Let us consider the sanctifying of Christ's human nature. I have already said that that part of the flesh of the Virgin, whereof the human nature of Christ was made, was purified and refined from all corruption by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, as a skilful workman separates the dross from the gold. Our Saviour was therefore called "that holy thing" (Luke i. 35). Now this sanctification of the human nature of Christ was necessary. (1) To fit it for personal union with the Word, who, out of His infinite love, humbled Himself to become flesh, and at the same time out of His infinite purity, could not defile Himself by becoming sinful flesh. (2) With respect to the end of His incarnation, even the redemption and salvation of lost sinners; that as the first Adam was the fountain of our impurity, so the second Adam should also be the pure fountain of our righteousness. He that needed redemption himself could never have purchased redemption for us. 3. We are to consider the personal union of the manhood with the Godhead. To clear this a little, you would know—(1) That when Christ assumed our nature, it was not united consubstantially, so as the three persons in the Godhead are united among themselves; they all have but one and the same nature and will: but in Christ there are two distinct natures and wills, though but one person. (2) They are not united physically, as the soul and body are united in a man: for death actually dissolves that union; but this is indissoluble. So that when His soul was expired, and His body interred, both soul and body were still united to the second person as much as ever. (3) Nor yet is this such a mystical union as is between Christ and believers. Indeed this is a glorious union. But though believers are said to be in Christ, and Christ in them, yet they are not one person with Him. But more positively, this assumption of which I speak is that whereby the second person in the glorious Godhead did take the human nature into a personal union with Himself, by virtue whereof the manhood subsists in the second person, yet without confusion, as I showed already, both making but one person Immanuel, God with us. So that though there be a twofold nature in Christ, yet not a double person. Again, as it was produced miraculously, so it was assumed integrally; that is to say, Christ took a complete and perfect soul and body, with all and every faculty and member pertaining to it. And this was necessary, that thereby He might heal the whole nature of the disease and leprosy of sin, which had ceased upon and wofully infected every member and faculty of man. Christ assumed all, to sanctify all. Again, He assumed our nature with all its sinless infirmities: therefore it is said of Him (Heb. ii. 17), "In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren." But here we are to distinguish between personal and natural infirmities. Personal infirmities are such as befall particular persons, from particular causes, as dumbness, deafness, blindness, lameness, leprosies, &c. Now, it was no way necessary that Christ should assume these; but the natural ones, such as hunger, thirst, weariness, sweating, bleeding, mortality, &c. (Rom. viii. 3). Again, the human nature is so united with the Divine, that each nature still retains its own essential properties distinct. The glory of His Divinity was not extinguished or diminished, though it was eclipsed and obscured under the veil of our humanity; but there was no more change in the hiding of it, than there is in the body of the sun, when he is shadowed by the interposition of a cloud. And this union of the two natures in Christ is an inseparable union; so that from the first moment thereof, there never was, nor to all eternity shall there ever be, any separation of them. V. I now proceed to show WHY CHRIST WAS BORN OF A VIRGIN. That Christ was to be born of a virgin, was prophesied and foretold many ages before His incarnation, as Isa. vii. 14. The Redeemer of the world behoved to be so born, as not to derive the stain of man's nature by His generation. It was most conformable to the infinite dignity of His person, that a supernatural and a Divine person be concerned as an active principle in it. By His being born of a virgin the holiness of His nature is effectually secured. Christ was an extraordinary person, and

another Adam; and therefore it was necessary He should be produced a new way. Thus we may be thoroughly satisfied—1. That Christ had a true human body; and that though He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, He had not merely the likeness of flesh, but true flesh (Luke xxiv. 39; Heb. ii. 14). 2. That He had a reasonable soul, which was a created spirit, and that the Divine nature was not instead of a soul to Him. 3. That Christ's body was not made of any substance sent down from heaven, but of the substance of the Virgin (Gal. iv. 4). He was "the seed of the woman" (Gen. iii. 15), and the fruit of Mary's womb (Luke i. 42), otherwise He had not been our brother. 4. That the Holy Ghost cannot be called the Father of Christ, since His human nature was formed, not of His substance, but of that of the Virgin, by His power. 5. That though as to the nativity of Christ there was nothing as to the way of it extraordinary, but He was at the ordinary time brought forth as others (Luke ii. 22, 23), and that as a general truth, "A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come" (John xvi. 21), yet He was born without sin, being "that holy thing." He could not have been our Redeemer, had He not been so (Heb. vii. 26). 6. That the reason why Christ was born without sin, and the sin of Adam did not reach Him, was because He came not of Adam by ordinary generation, not by the blessing of marriage, but by a special promise after the fall. I shall conclude all with some INFERENCES. 1. Jesus Christ is the true Messiah promised to Adam as the seed of the woman, to Abraham as his seed, the Shiloh mentioned by Jacob on his deathbed, the Prophet spoken of by Moses to be raised from among the children of Israel, the Son of David, and the Son to be born of a virgin. 2. Behold the wonderful love of God the Father, who was content to degrade and abase His dear Son, in order to bring about the salvation of sinners. 3. See here the wonderful love and astonishing condescendency of the Son, to be born of a woman, in order that He might die in the room of sinners. What great love to sinners, and what unparalleled condescension was here! 4. See here the cure of our being conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. 5. Christ is sensibly touched with all the infirmities that attend our frail nature, and has pity and compassion upon His people under all their pressures and burdens (Heb. ii. 17, 18). (*T. Boston.*) *The life of separation:*—The question that is uttered by Mary is not for a moment an utterance of incredulity. It is really the utterance of a believer who accepts the message that God has sent her, but who is conscious of difficulties in the way of its fulfilment. "How can I ever be a mother, how can I ever be a mother of the Messiah Christ? The conditions—the fixed, the unalterable conditions—of my life make that to be for me an impossibility. 'How can this be, seeing I know not man?'" The words, of course, teach us this truth, that Mary was conscious that there was to the Divine promise and its fulfilment in her what seemed like a mighty barrier. We cannot say for certain whether the old legend is true; but it has always seemed to me that these words of our Lady bear out its truth in a most remarkable way. I refer to the old story that when St. Mary was quite a child she was taken up by her parents to the Temple, and that she there dedicated herself to serve God by a life of separation, and in the state of life-long virginity, under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit of Love. And certainly that there was the existence of some such special barrier as this seems to be recognized and confessed in the question we are now considering. For just consider what her position was. She had been already espoused unto an old man called Joseph; and if their union was to have been the marriage union under its ordinary conditions, the message of Gabriel to Mary would simply have been understood by her in this way, that she should be, in the course of nature, the mother of David's Greater Son. We know quite well that one of the great longings of every Jewish maiden down through the ages had been to become the mother of the Messiah; and it was this longing that made the thought of virginity utterly abhorrent to the whole spirit of Judaism. If, then, Gabriel had come to Mary when she was about to enter the married life under ordinary conditions she would never have been staggered by the Divine promise, and would never have seen any difficulty in the way of its fulfilment. In her humility she might have felt unworthy of it, but she would have bowed her head in pure and simple submission, and would have said—not the first—but her second word: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word." But what she says is this: "How can this be, seeing I know not man." What does this lead me to recognize? This fact, that already the love of God had done this for Mary—it had led her to a life of separation, it had led her to deliberately turn away from the state of life which was the common longing of the daughters of Israel; that she had already separated

herself from man as a necessary preliminary condition of consecrating herself to God; and that the motive of this had been the love of God. Mary is emphatically revealed to us in the Bible not simply as a woman of devotion, but a woman whose devotion takes especially the contemplative form. "She kept all His sayings and treasured them in her heart;" she was one who was continually looking up at God with the fixed eye of wrapt contemplation; she was the pure in heart, and she saw God. And as she gazed on the vision of God's beauty and lived in the recognition of God's love, the love of God took possession of her heart in wondrous fulness and power; and as she gave herself up to be moulded by that love her first response to its working was the response of separation. Now Christian life is always a life of separation. That is its first aspect. We are taught this by the lessons of olden times. If you go back to the history of Israel, the Chosen People could only consecrate themselves to God in the Church in the wilderness and in the land of Canaan when they had come out of Egypt and had been separated from it by the separating waters of the Red Sea. Why, the very term whereby the Christian society is known shows this,—I mean the Greek equivalent to our word "Church." Now what is the *Ecclesia*. The *Eccleisa* is a people called out. Out from what? Out from the world. As long as the present condition of things continues, the Church and the world can never be coextensive terms. The Church will always be found to be an *Ecclesia*, an election; in other words a people of separation, separate by privilege of course, but separate by responsibility also. And separation is the first essential feature of every true Christian life. In this separation there are two things to be remembered. In the first place, the separation is the act of God. It is God who separates, as He teaches us, when speaking to His people of old He says to them, "Be ye holy, for I am holy, who have separated you to be My people." God separated His people to Himself, first, by the passage of the Red Sea, and then by the sprinkling of the blood when Moses came down from Mount Sinai. And so it is with us. We are separated by God's act. The great act of separation with us is the act of Holy Baptism. We have been separated by God's act, and we are to respond to it now by coming out and by being separate. Separate from what? Now here we must be very careful as we work our way, for we have to avoid two distinct difficulties. We have to avoid practically making the Church and the world the same, and saying that the Church has, so to say, to put a gloss over the world; and, on the other hand, we have to avoid an unpractical, uncommon sense trancendentalism, which is contrary to the example of Christ and the spirit of His gospel. That marvellous Eucharistic prayer of our Lord seems to teach the plain truth about this matter: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." What He prays for is this—not that He may have a people living in absolute isolation from society, but that He may have a people going out into the society of their day, living lives of loyalty to Christ where Christ's name is denied, living lives of bold obedience to principle while passion sways the conduct of the many. Well, then, what we understand by the world is society as far as it is swayed by passion and desire, and not by principle and loyalty to Christ. In other words, the world is godless and corrupt society; and from that we must come out and be separate. Woe be to us if we fail in loyalty to Christ here. We shall bear, to our own shame before men, angels, and God, the brand of moral cowardice, and a more degrading brand than that cannot be stamped on any man or woman's brow. Again, what are we to understand by separation? Well, we know in the Jewish days there were different degrees of separation. There was, for instance, the separation of the tribe of Levi for the diaconate, the separation of the family of Aaron for the priesthood, the separation of the Nazarites for a life of special strictness. Then, above all, there was the life of separation which marked off every Jew from the Gentiles as he obeyed the requirements of the Jewish law. So, again, in the Church there are different forms of separation. I. To mention the highest of all, THERE IS THE SEPARATION TO WHAT WE CALL RELIGION. There are those to whom the voice comes which has found its expression in the 45th Psalm, verses 10 and 11. There is a state of life created by Christ in His Church, to which men and women are attracted to follow Him in poverty, in chastity, and in obedience; and of all forms of separation, that of the religious life is the most intense in its expression. II. Then, again, THERE IS THE SEPARATION OF PROVIDENTIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. I want to mention three especially. 1. First of all, come family ties. Always think highly of the family. There is no sphere in life in which woman can minister better, in which she can do greater work for God, for the Church, and for those for whom Christ lived and died, than within the limits of the home.

2. Then there are those who are called aside by sickness, those whom God in His wonderful way leads by constrainings that must be submitted to, to a separation not only from the world outside, but sometimes even from the family within. As the world would say, they are apparently useless for life. But no; they are led by God within the veil. Like the priest of Israel who twice daily entered into the Holy Place, and stood by the altar of incense alone and offered its sweet savour to God; so these are led by God by a wonderful separation to do a higher work than that of ministering, and that is the work of intercession. 3. Then, again, I cannot help thinking that there is a third way in which God separates some in His providential leadings, and that is by a retiring disposition. I do not for a moment say that you ought to give way to that self-consciousness which to many makes intercourse with the world one long agony. But there are many of you who go through life sorely weighted by that shyness, that self-consciousness, which makes you always think that nobody cares for you. It may be that even this temperament is a revelation of the will of God for you, and that by it he has separated you from much social joy and from many opportunities of exercising visibly holy influence, in order that you may be numbered with that hidden band whose ministry is the secret ministry of intercession rather than the ministry of open work. And, believe me, all these family ties, all these providential visitations of sickness and of temperament, are separations created by God, to which it is our wisdom, as it is our duty, to be submissive and obedient. III. Then, again, THERE IS THE SEPARATION OF OBEDIENCE TO THE INNER LEADINGS OF THE SPIRIT. "We are not under the law, but under grace." Many, we know, would like to have a definite law telling them what they may do and what they may not. You may go to a concert, but not to a theatre, you may go to a dinner party, but not to a ball—everything put down as clear as it can be. And we know that in former days Puritanism did attempt something of the kind; but it ended in failure, as it was bound to do. For we have not simply to deal with abstract laws, but we have to deal with individual characters. Cannot you see how it may be harmful for one to go where to another it would not only be not harmful, but positively helpful. So, outside the great Moral Law, God does not lay down any hard and fast rule, He does not legislate for our amusements. He put us under the guidance of the Spirit. Some people go with a clear conscience where others cannot go but with a guilty conscience. The great law of Christian life here is this — always be true to conscience; never allow yourself to do what you believe to be contrary to God's Will for you, but do not limit another Christian's liberty by your own rule of conduct or your own conviction as to what is lawful or expedient. Ah! be sure of it, separation will always mark off those whose lives are ruled by principle where lives are generally ruled by passion. What is the great principle that rules conduct in the world? Is it not undisciplined desire? That is the one great thing men live for—to gratify desire. But when Christ really comes into the heart the pain of pains is to grieve Him, and the joy of joys is to please Him, because we love Him. In no mere metaphorical language, we really love Him, and to give Him joy is our joy. How can we henceforth go out into the world and deny Him, and not rather there own Him gladly, by proved obedience to His manifested will? Last of all, love separates in yet another way. Love melts. It first renews, and then inspires, and then it melts. It has often happened even in the love of this world, that intercourse has begun with revulsion, but then love came in after a time, and the one who has been misunderstood is seen as she really is; and then comes grief for all the past, and with that grief comes of necessity the desire for reparation, the ready confession of wrong-doing and full purpose of amendment of life. And so it is with us. We loved not God, we knew not what He was; and then came a revelation of Him in Christ, and then the free gift of His Spirit in our hearts brings upon us a deep grief. I grieve that I should have sinned against a love so great, so long enduring—this recognized love of God melts me down into contrition, it makes me hate all my past life, until continuance in it is an impossibility, it brings me to his feet in confession, it raises me to go forth and show my sorrow for a life conformed to the world in the dead past by separation from the world in the living present. Such is the first thought that we have to notice. The life of a Christian is a life of separation because it is a life lived in the power of the love of God. (*Canon Body.*) *The miraculous conception*:—I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE AS AN ARTICLE OF THE FAITH. It is evidently the foundation of the whole distinction between the character of Christ in the condition of a man and that of any other prophet. Had the conception of Jesus been in the natural way,

His intercourse with the Deity could have been of no other kind than the nature of any other man might have equally admitted; than the prophets enjoyed, when their minds were enlightened by the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Scriptures speak a very different language: they tell us, that "the same God who spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these latter days spoken unto us by His Son;" evidently establishing a distinction of Christianity from preceding revelations, upon a distinction between the two characters of a prophet of God, and of God's Son. Moses bore to Jesus, as we are told, the humble relation of a servant to a son. And lest the superiority on the side of the Son should be deemed a mere superiority of the office to which He was appointed, we are told that the Son is "higher than the angels; being the effulgence of God's glory, the express image of His person;" the God "whose throne is for ever and ever, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness." And this high dignity of the Son is alleged as a motive for religious obedience to His commands, and for reliance on His promises. It is this, indeed, which gives such authority to His precepts, and such certainty to His whole doctrine, as render faith in Him the first duty of religion. But we need not go so high as to the Divine nature of our Lord to evince the necessity of His miraculous conception. It was necessary to the scheme of redemption, by the Redeemer's offering of Himself as an expiatory sacrifice, that the manner of His conception should be such that He should in no degree partake of the natural pollution of the fallen race whose guilt He came to atone, nor be included in the general condemnation of Adam's progeny. On the other hand, it were not difficult to show that the miraculous conception, once admitted, naturally brings up after it the great doctrines of the atonement and the incarnation. The miraculous conception of our Lord evidently implies some higher purpose of His coming than the mere business of a teacher. The business of a teacher might have been performed by a mere man enlightened by the prophetic spirit. II. Having seen the importance of the doctrine of the miraculous conception as an article of our faith, let us, in the next place, consider THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE EVIDENCE BY WHICH THE FACT IS SUPPORTED. We have for it the express testimony of two out of the four evangelists,—of St. Matthew, whose Gospel was published in Judea within a few years after our Lord's Ascension; and of St. Luke, whose narrative was composed (as may be collected from the author's short preface) to prevent the mischief that was to be apprehended from some pretended histories of our Saviour's life, in which the truth was probably blended with many legendary tales. It is very remarkable, that the fact of the miraculous conception should be found in the first of the four Gospels,—written at a time when many of the near relations of the holy family must have been living, by whom the story, had it been false, had been easily confuted; that it should be found again in St. Luke's Gospel, written for the peculiar use of the converted Gentiles, and for the express purpose of furnishing a summary of authentic facts, and of suppressing spurious narrations. Was it not ordered by some peculiar providence of God, that the two great branches of the primitive Church, the Hebrew congregations for which St. Matthew wrote, and the Greek congregations for which St. Luke wrote, should find an express record of the miraculous conception each in its proper Gospel? Or if we consider the testimony of the writers simply as historians of the times in which they lived, without regard to their inspiration, which is not admitted by the adversary,—were not Matthew and Luke—Matthew, one of the twelve apostles of our Lord, and Luke, the companion of St. Paul—competent to examine the evidence of the facts which they have recorded? Is it likely that they have recorded facts upon the credit of a vague report, without examination? (*Bishop Horsley.*) *The difficulty of Mary's situation:*—It is not, commonly, sufficiently seen what an advance these words are upon the angel's previous announcement, and how simply appalling they must have sounded to the trembling listener. There had been nothing as yet which suggested a single step beyond the ordinary course of nature, and mothers are proverbially capable of believing in any the most exalted future for their children; but now words had been spoken which proposed to change the whole tenor of her life and being, and demanded little short of an *agony* of faith. Nay! *may* she acquiesce without sin? Her betrothal—what can it mean?—is to be ignored, and her child is to recognize no earthly father. What will the world say, that little world—all the more terrible because it *is* so little—of society in Nazareth? And how shall she break it to Joseph? And, then, she may remember some dreadful story she has overheard her elders tell in low, stern tones; how some betrothed maiden had been suspected of what she herself was now

called upon to brave, and how there had been a trial, and she had been pronounced guilty; and then they had brought her out to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city had stoned her to death: the only way, they said, of putting away evil from among them. And she was conscious that she must brave all this, practically, alone; there was no prophet, in her case, who would make himself responsible for her integrity, and explain it all to the people, and give them a sign, and convince them that it was all from God. The angel there before her might be very real to *her*, but when he has disappeared and left her—people do not very readily believe in angels' visits to their neighbours; will she ever be quite sure herself? (*E. T. Marshall, M.A.*) *Rome—her new dogma, and our duties:*—First, then, WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE? It is, that the Blessed Virgin Mary was herself, by a miraculous interposition of God's providence, conceived without the stain of original sin. That the nature, therefore, with which she was born into this world was, from the first moment in which she began to exist, not that nature which all inherit who "naturally are engendered of the offspring of Adam," but another nature; free from that fault and corruption which, as an hereditary taint, infects every member of the fallen race who is naturally born into this world. II. And now let us see, secondly, THE PENALTIES UNDER WHICH THIS DOCTRINE IS PROMULGATED. They are those of the Church's anathema and the condemnation of God. Whosoever henceforth shall deny it is condemned as an heretic. "Let no man," says the decree, "interfere with this our declaration, pronunciation, and definition, or oppose or contradict it with presumptuous rashness. If any should presume to assail it, let him know that he will incur the indignation of the Omnipotent God, and of His blessed apostles Peter and Paul." III. Thirdly, let us consider OUR REASONS FOR OBJECTING TO THIS PROMULGATION. First, then, we object to it as the unlawful addition of a new article to the Creed. And here, first, we must establish that it is such an addition. There can be no mistake as to this matter. Before the promulgating of this decree, any one within the Roman communion might, as she teaches, deny, with St. Bernard and St. Augustine, the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the virgin and be saved; since that 8th of December, whosoever denies it must be lost. It is, therefore, on their showing, a new and necessary article of a Christian man's faith. Every lawful addition then to the Creed must be made in accordance with these conditions. And now, if we try this newly-propounded article by these conditions, we shall be able to prove its unlawfulness. For, first, it lacks the condition of the assent of the whole body of the faithful. It is assented to neither by the Eastern, nor by our own branch, of the universal Church. It is true that this argument will not weigh with Rome, because, after the exact pattern of the old Donatist schismatics, she claims to be exclusively THE catholic body, and makes, as they did, communion with herself the one condition of communion with her Lord. But to all beyond these comparatively narrow limits, this argument against her intrusive article is of itself unanswerable. But next it falls under the same condemnation, because it is not the old truth held from the beginning, but a new proposition, which was not received by the primitive Church. To prove this, we need but to compare a few of the plainest facts of history with the very words of the decree by which this dogma has been now promulgated. "The Church," it declares, "has never ceased to lay down this doctrine, and to cherish and to illustrate it continually by numerous proofs, and more and more daily by splendid facts. For the Church has most clearly pointed out this doctrine, when she did not hesitate to propose the conception of the Virgin for the public devotion and veneration of the faithful. By which illustrious act she pointed out the conception of the Virgin as singular, wonderful, and very far removed from the origins of the rest of mankind, and to be venerated as entirely holy; since the Church celebrates festival-days only of the saints." Here, then, we have (1) an admission that, for the validity of the decree, it must be possible to assert that it is the ancient truth which it enacts; and next (2) the best pretended proof which can be given that the doctrine was thus held of old. From what remote antiquity then is this proof drawn? The answer is well worthy of notice. The earliest date which the Pope can give for any declaration of the dogma, is that of the "illustrious act by which the Roman Church proposed the conception of the virgin for the public devotion of the faithful." And when that "act" was wrought we may learn from a decree of Alexander VIIth, the earliest of his predecessors whom the Pope dares to quote by name, as having "protected and defended the conception as the true object of devotion." For this decree informs us, that "this pious, devout, and laudable institution emanated from our

predecessor Sixtus the IVth." Now Sixtus IVth succeeded to the papacy almost at the close of the fifteenth century; so that this is the earliest act which the Pope can allege to prove his proposition, that "the Church has never ceased to lay down this doctrine." But even this is not all; since we cannot fully estimate the falsehood of this reference until we compare it with the decree itself. For this, so far from implying, even at that late period, the implicit holding of the doctrine which is here insinuated, actually provides a special prohibition to guard against any being led by the fact of the festival to condemn those who deny the immaculate conception, "because the matter has not been decided by the Apostolic See." Of so late a growth is this doctrine in the Roman communion itself, and so signally does this its novelty condemn its promulgation as an article of faith. We are able to disprove by positive evidence the only other conceivable suggestion by which it could be justified, namely, that though not enunciated sooner, yet that within the bosom of the Church the doctrine was held implicitly from early times. For in answer to this, we assert not only that there is no evidence for it, but that the voice of catholic antiquity distinctly contradicts such a supposition. "Of thee," for instance, says one, speaking of our Lord's nativity, "He took that which even for thee He paid. The mother of the Redeemer herself, otherwise than by redemption, is not loosed from the bond of that ancient sin." "He, therefore," says the great Augustine, "*alone* who was at once made Man and remained God, had never any sin, nor took a flesh of sin, although He came from a maternal flesh of sin. For that of flesh which He took He either purified to take it, or in the taking purified it;" and so say all their own greatest authorities. Hear the judgment on this point of one of their bishops, by no means the least learned of their canonists:— "That the Blessed Virgin," says Melchior Canus, "was entirely free from original sin, is nowhere held in Holy Scripture, taken in its literal sense; but on the other hand, in them is delivered the general law which includes all the sons of Adam, without any exception. Nor can it be said that this teaching descended to the Church through the tradition of the apostles, since such traditions have come down to us only through those ancient and holy writers who succeeded the apostles. But it is evident that those ancient writers had not received it from those before them. . . . All the saints who have mentioned this matter have with one mouth asserted that the Virgin Mary was conceived in original sin. This St. Ambrose lays down, this St. Augustine repeatedly; this St. Chrysostom, this Eusebius Emissenus, this Remigius and Maximus, this Bede and Anselm affirm; this St. Bernard and Erhardus, bishop and martyr, with a multitude besides: this doctrine none of the saints have contravened." Neither implicitly, then, nor in open declaration, has this dogma been a doctrine of the Church of old. IV. But once more, and above all; since the canon of Holy Scripture was complete, NO DECLARATION OF DOCTRINE COULD EVER BE INSERTED IN THE CREEDS, WHICH COULD NOT BE SHOWN TO ACCORD WITH THAT WRITTEN WORD OF GOD. And when tested by this rule, the unlawfulness of this attempt will be most clearly proved. For not only is there no passage which can be alleged as even tending to prove it, but against it stand arrayed the clearest sentences of Holy Writ. "For," says St. Paul, after examining the case alike of those without the law, as the heathen, or under the law, as the mother of Christ; "For there is no difference, for *all* have sinned"—and therefore Mary—"and come short of the glory of God; being justified," not by immaculate conception, but "freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And again, "There is none righteous, no, not one." But next (V.) we object, not only to any introduction of a new dogma, but we object also in particular to this as, to say the least, HAVING DIRECT TENDENCIES TO HERESY. For it is no mere speculation; it is full of deadly consequences. For, first, if in the course of the Divine process for working out our salvation, our fallen nature was pure from spot of sin in any one before that in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord it was through the operation of the Holy Ghost, sanctified wholly by the union of His Godhead with it, then is that one, and not He, the first fountain of new life to our corrupted race. This teaching, therefore, points us not to Christ, but to Mary, as the well-head of our restored humanity; and thus does it directly shake the great doctrine of the incarnation. And then, further, if that nature which He thus took in the womb of His virgin mother was not that which she, like others, inherited from Adam, but one made by God's creative power to exist under new conditions of original purity, how can we say that He indeed took from her our very nature? Then was that quarry whence was dug that flesh which He united to His Godhead, not of our fallen, but of a new and different, nature; and then is His perfect

brotherhood with us destroyed. And yet once more: this last conclusion leads us to another reason why, in God's name, we protest against this dogma. For it is not merely accidentally that it thus endangers our faith in the true incarnation of our Lord, and points our eyes from Him to His mother as the medium between God and us; but this dangerous delusion is a part, and the crowning part, of a whole system which really places on the Mediator's throne the virgin mother instead of the incarnate Son. For this is the grand characteristic of the whole Roman system of Mariolatrous imposture. It does confer upon the Virgin Mary the Mediator's office. The whole system of Rome does make the Virgin Mother the special mediator between God and man. It teaches sinners to look to her as more tender, more merciful, more full of pity, more able to sympathize with their infirmities, than is that true High-priest, who is such as "became us," because He is fitted by the perfect holiness, and yet true brotherhood with us, of the nature He assumed, "to have compassion upon the ignorant, and upon them that are out of the way." Amongst all its defacement of the truth of Christ, this is perhaps the plainest and one of the most hideous features of Roman superstition. VI. Lastly, brethren, suffer me to lay before you SOME OF THE DUTIES WHICH, AS IT SEEMS TO ME, ARE ENFORCED UPON US BY THIS SAD SPECTACLE OF DEEP CORRUPTION WITHIN THE ROMAN CHURCH. 1. The first is that which, however inadequately, I have felt bound to attempt this day to discharge. It is to protest anew against this monstrous effort to corrupt, by man's additions, the revealed truth of God. 2. Next, surely it is our duty, with all sadness of soul, to make on behalf of those who have so deeply fallen, our humble intercessions with our long-suffering Lord. 3. Again, the sight of this evil surely enforces upon us another duty. For the sake of truth and for the love of souls, we, whose rule of faith is God's Word, and whose interpreter of Scripture is true catholic consent, are bound to hold faster than ever to these our real principles. 4. But we have yet another duty, as we contemplate this fearful spectacle; we have to separate ourselves from its evil. (*Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.*)

Ver. 37. **Nothing shall be impossible.**—*God's omnipotence:*—It certainly is not possible for us to be in a position where omnipotence cannot assist us. God hath servants everywhere; and, where we think He has none, His word can create a multitude. There are "treasures hid in the sand," and the Lord's chosen shall eat thereof. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The scorn of impossibility:*—It is not a lucky word, this same *impossible:* no good comes of those who have it so often in their mouth. Who is he that says always, There is a lion in the way? Sluggard, thou must slay the lion, then; the way has to be travelled. In art, in practice, innumerable critics will demonstrate that most things are henceforth impossible; that we are got, once for all, into the region of perennial commonplace, and must contentedly continue there. Let such critics demonstrate; it is the nature of them: what harm is in it? Poetry once demonstrated to be impossible, arises the Burns, arises the Goethe. Unheroic commonplace being now clearly all we have to look for, comes Napoleon, comes the conquest of the world. It was proved by fluxionary calculus, that steamships could never get across from the farthest point of Ireland to the nearest of Newfoundland: impelling force, resisting force, maximum here, minimum there, by law of Nature and geometric demonstration. What could be done? The *Great Eastern* could weigh anchor from Bristol Port; that could be done. The *Great Eastern*, bounding safe through the gullets of the Hudson, threw her cable out on the capstan of New York, and left our still moist-paper demonstration to dry itself at leisure. "*Impossible!*" cried Mirabeau, "*ne me dites jamais ce bête de mot*" (Never name to me that blockhead of a word). (*Thomas Carlyle.*)

Ver. 38. **Behold the handmaid of the Lord.**—*Mary's quiet acceptance of greatness:*—Nothing impresses us more than the calmness with which, after the first trouble was past, the virgin received the message of the angel. She was not dazzled nor excited by her glorious future. She was not touched by any vanity. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." In nothing more than in this is the simple greatness of her character displayed. What was the reason of this? It was that the thought of God's presence with her destroyed all thought of self. She could not think of her greatness otherwise than as bestowed by God. "He that is mighty hath magnified me." She could not feel the flutter of vanity. It died in the thought of the glorious salvation which was coming to her country and the world. She was nothing; God was all. Do you want a cure for that false humility,

that mock modesty, which says, "I am not worthy," and trumpets its denial till all the world knows that an honour has been offered; which, while it says with the lips, "It is too great for me," feels all the time in the heart that self-consciousness of merit which betrays itself in the affected walk and the showy humility? Would you be free from this folly? Learn Mary's secret. Feel that God is all; that, whether He makes you great, or leaves you unknown, it is the best for you, because it is His work. Do you want a cure for that unhappy, restless vanity, ever afraid, yet ever seeking to push itself forward; ever shy, yet ever trembling on the verge of impertinence; which shows itself to inferiors in rank in a bustling assumption of superiority which suspects it is not superior, and to superiors in rank by an inquietude, an ignorance of when to speak and when to be silent, sometimes by a fawning submission, sometimes by an intrusive self-assertion? Learn Mary's secret. Feel that you are the child of God, not the servant or the master of any man, but the servant of Christ, who was the servant of all. Vain! What have any of us to be vain of? Rank? wealth? beauty? pomp of household? dress? splendour of appearance? A few years, and we are lying in the chill earth of the churchyard; our eye dead to admiration, our ear to praise; and the world—whose smile we forfeited eternal life to court—regrets us for an hour, and then forgets. And *that* is human life! No; it is the most miserable travesty of it. We stand in the presence of God. What are all the adventitious advantages of rank or wealth to Him, or to us in Him? Only the tarnished spangles, the tinsel crowns, the false diamonds, which are the properties of this petty theatre which we call the world. Once be able to say in your heart, "behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me as He will," and vanity and all its foolish fluttering tribe of small victories over others, of pushing meannesses, of restless desires, of little ostentations, will abandon your heart for ever. The true greatness, wealth, nobility, is to be at one in character with the everlasting goodness, truth, and love of God; to be great with the magnanimity of Christ, to be rich in all the eternal virtues, to be noble among the aristocracy of the best men. He who possesses these can never be vain, and the way to possess them is the Virgin's way—to be the servant of God, to do His will. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *Ready acquiescence in God's will*:—How fit was her womb to conceive the flesh of the Son of God, by the power of the Spirit of God, whose breast had so soon, by the power of the same Spirit, conceived an assent to the will of God! and now, of a handmaid of God, she is advanced to the mother of God. No sooner hath she said, "Be it done," than it is done; the Holy Ghost overshadows her, and forms her Saviour in her own body. (*Bishop Hall.*) *Mary's answer exhibits*:—1. Genuine humility, with joyful faith. 2. Quiet resignation, with active zeal. 3. Faithful love, with unwavering heroism. (*Van Doren.*) *Reasons for submission to the will of God*:—I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. It is that of a Father. Whatever we have, it is God's more than ours. II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE OF GOD. III. THE MERCY AND GOODNESS OF GOD. IV. THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF GOD. V. THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD. (*D. Beaumont.*) *The call of God*:—It was the answer of profound and humble obedience to the greatest call ever addressed from heaven to a mortal creature. Sudden, undreamt of, overwhelming—interrupting in the most startling manner the daily curse of an obscure human life, breaking in on its privacy, and laying on it the most awful of charges—it was a call to prepare for being the instrument of the final and complete accomplishment of God's highest words and most amazing work. It was a call to be the last link in a chain which, beginning from God Himself, and composed of that august line of chosen souls who in all ages had carried forward His purpose and His promise, was to end in man brought at last to the utmost and most inexpressible closeness unto God—the human mother of the Eternal Son. It was a call to such a pinnacle of unearthly and unapproachable greatness that the consequences involved in it, and the price which it might exact, must have confounded and baffled all anticipation and forethought. What might have to come before the glory, who could conjecture? What might she not have to be, to endure, to surrender, to look forward to, who in a moment learned, in the depth of her obscurity, that she had been chosen, and was called out of all mankind, to be the mother of the "Son of the Highest," the "Son of God," the "Christ." It is idle, it is profane to attempt to imagine the mind and soul of a human being like ourselves at such a moment. In its sudden translation and lifting up out of all the ordinary conditions of human life, in the tides of honour and rapture, of crushing shame and consciousness of the Divine election, of possible sacrifice and certain triumph, it could be like nothing that man has ever

gone through. But whatever passed before the thought of that blessed one while the angel's words were setting before her the lot to which she had been appointed, and the place she was to fill in the eternal history, her instant expression of character was that of absolute self-surrender to all that she was called to—of perfect readiness for all that might be required of her. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, &c." (*Dean Church.*) When Mary uttered these words of sweet and humble sublimity, she at once received the rankling sword-thrust into her soul, and steeped her soul in a balm that healed, and more than healed all possible sword-thrusts. (*Professor Warfield.*) *The handmaid of the Lord*:—I. Let your attention be called to THE GRAND EVENT HERE DESCRIBED AND MADE KNOWN. It is clear that He who was to be a perfect sacrifice must have a purer origin than fallen man; supernatural. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," &c. II. MARY'S ANSWER TO THIS GRACIOUS COMMUNICATION. "Behold the handmaid," &c. 1. That this obedient saint was using the language and expressing the sentiments of God's people in all ages. The title of Moses was "the servant of God" (Daniel vi. 20; Psa. cxvi. 16). Ready obedience. 2. We are not less bound to the service of God under the gospel; the titles of servants and handmaids do as much befit *us*, as they did the people of old. St. Paul and St. James style themselves "servants of God." 3. A word to those who can say, "Whose I am, and whom I serve." This is your world of trial, and you may expect difficulties to draw you aside. The Master's rule is best found in His word, "Be it unto me according to Thy word." Let us receive with humility and gratitude the entire Word of God. With what delight must the angel have received Mary's pious answer to his communication: and when he returned and told it in the court of heaven, there would be joy in the presence of the rest of the angels of God: so when your hearts respond to the messengers of grace. (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *Blessedness of resignation*:—I have at times caught a glimpse of the comfort which it yields to the spirit when I merge my will into God's will, when I resolve to have no will of my own separate from God. I feel quite assured that this renunciation of self and entire devotion to God's service would give a simplicity and grandeur to my existence; would throw an unclouded sunshine over all my ways; would raise me above the cares and provocations of this life; would enhance even my sensible gratifications, and superadd those gratifications of a higher order, which constitute the main and essential blessedness of heaven. O, my God, may it be thus with me! (*Dr. Chalmers.*) *The life of consecration*:—As Mary uttered this word, she laid herself upon God's altar in absolute abandonment to God's will, that He might do in her, and through her, whatever pleased Him. I. If we consider the CIRCUMSTANCES THAT PRECEDED AND LED UP TO THIS GREAT UTTERANCE, we shall see, in Gabriel's conversation with her, three arresting things. 1. Gabriel made clear to her what her vocation was. This is the first condition of a rightly lived life—it must be lived in obedience to the recognition of the vocation of God. Each of us has been created for a definite end, and to fill a special sphere in life. 2. Gabriel's converse with Mary revealed also the power in which that vocation was to be realized. She must abandon herself to the power of the Holy Ghost. 3. Gabriel indicated also the condition under which alone the Divine vocation could be realized, and that was by the consent of her own will. God could not take possession of Mary without her free response to His call. II. THE LIFE OF REGENERATION IS OF NECESSITY NOT SIMPLY A LIFE OF NEGATIVE SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD, BUT A LIFE OF POSITIVE CONSECRATION TO GOD. 1. If consecration to God is the condition of a rightly-lived life, since it is an action, it is an action which must take place at some time in our lives. It must be definitely entered into. 2. If this life of consecration is one which we definitely enter into, it must be continuously persevered in. You cannot consecrate yourself in a moment, so as to secure perseverance in a consecrated life. We can only live the consecrated life when, having entered into it by an act of self-surrender, we live in obedience to consecrating grace. 3. The life of consecration must be lived in a God-assigned sphere. If Mary had turned aside from the vocation of God, and with all possible zeal had sought to serve Him elsewhere, and in other spheres than He had appointed, her life would have been a life, not of consecration to God, but one of self-pleasing. For you must remember this, that it is quite possible for a religious life to be a self-pleasing life. We may be apparently leading the most heroic lives of self-sacrifice, and, after all, our lives may be lives of self-pleasing all the time, for they are lived in a self-chosen sphere; and the question which every one who seeks to be consecrated to God must ask himself is this—Lord, where wouldest Thou have me to be? And then—Lord, what wouldest Thou have me to

do? And then—Lord, what wouldest Thou have me suffer? We must be where God would have us be, we must do what God would have us do, we must suffer what God would have us suffer, if our life is to be consecrated to God, and not dedicated to self. It is so important that we should remember that all right spheres in life are God-assigned. God calls one man to the priesthood, another to serve Him in lay life; God calls one to religion, another to secular life; God calls one to serve Him in married life, and another to serve Him in single life; God calls one to serve Him in wealth, and another in poverty; but the essential law of living a life of consecration to God is a hearty, generous embrace of the God-assigned sphere of life. Hearty, generous embrace—no mere resignation. What have we Christian people to do with resignation? We have to rise to something much higher than resignation; we have to leap forward in response to Divine vocation, because it is the vocation of God. III. THE CONDITION OF RESPONDING TO THE DIVINE VOCATION IS ABANDONMENT TO THE HOLY GHOST. What is God's great purpose in putting us in the sphere of life in which we are? I do not answer this question with dogmatic confidence, but my belief is that the primary purpose of God's dealing with His people is—formation of character; that we are placed in our spheres of work, wherever they may be, rather for what God means to do in us than what God means to do by us. I know quite well that wherever God places us He means to do a work by us; but—I repeat it—I believe that God's primary purposes of His dealings with us is not the work He does by us, but the work He wills to do in us. IV. CONSECRATION IMPLIES PAINFUL SACRIFICE. Mary would naturally shrink back from response to this vocation for two reasons. 1. The call might seem too high for her. How many there are who shrink back from living generous, Christian lives in the world because they think that, if they are really to make up their minds to live lives consecrated to Christ and of loyalty to God "in among the haunts of men," they will be taking up a position which is too hard and difficult for them to maintain. What underlies many a poor, miserable, dwarfed Christian life is this cowardice which is so common among us. It is undeniably the fact that whole surrender to God does of necessity involve painful consequences; for they who thus give themselves up to God are called to know the fellowship of Christ's suffering. It is quite true that consecration to God is going to Calvary. Unless we are prepared to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, we cannot really and truly say this second word of Mary's. 2. But there is another thing that would have made her shrink back from her vocation, and that was the suspicion and calumny that would follow upon her consecration. Ere long men were pointing at her with the finger of scorn, and even Joseph was thinking of putting her away. And one thing is certain—is it not?—that men who go out into the world to try to lead a godly life often find themselves exposed to its calumny. Its hatred of goodness will make it only too ready to believe any scandalous story that is spread abroad about any one who lives for God. It is a fear of the condemnation of the world which holds so many back from God. Yet Mary faced it all; though her response meant such awful nearness to God, though it involved such great sacrifice as to bring upon her intense shame, boldly she said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word." IN CONCLUSION, let me point out how that this life of consecration is the fruit of love. It is love that consecrates. Love is based on gratitude, and Mary recognized the fact gratefully that God had the right to claim her to use as He willed. "Behold the handmaid,—the slave of the Lord—be it unto me according to Thy word." "O God, I am Thine handmaid, Thy slave; Thy right over me is absolute; I cannot for a moment refuse to obey Thy voice." And so it is. God has upon us a threefold claim, each springing from an act of love. 1. The first is the claim of creation. Here we are in God's world not of our own will, but of His will. 2. But God has a second claim upon us, and that is the claim of redemption. The eternal Christ, the Son of God, came into the world, became the Child of Mary, and passed to the cross. He gave Himself—every portion of Himself—upon the tree for us—His mind, His heart, His will, each member of His sacred body. Behold it quivering upon the cross! Why? That He might buy us for His own. 3. But there is one other reason, and that is gratitude for regeneration. O mystery of mysteries! To think that you and I, sin-stricken as we are, should not only have been redeemed, but that we should have been "married to the Lord!" To think that He who in His humanity is the fairest of God's creation, should have stooped from the height of His Father's throne to the deep depths of our fallen state, and not simply have brought us forgiveness, but that He should have embraced us in His arms, and brought us

to His sacred heart, and made us with Him one—bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh! To think of this, and all this as within the bounds of truth! Grasp the mystery of regeneration, and what follows? Consecration to God, abandonment to Christ. As the wife consecrates herself to her husband, so the regenerate to the great Bridegroom of the Church. Whole surrender is my duty; whatever He asks, that I yield. Creation, redemption, regeneration—revelation after revelation of God's love, kindle in my heart gratitude, and then lead me to take myself wholly up to God's altar and lay myself down there a living sacrifice at God's feet, as I cry, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word." (*Canon Body.*)

Vers. 39–45. **And Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country.**—*The home of Zacharias:*—Juttah, an ancient priestly town, is held by the Greek Church to be the birthplace of St. John the Baptist, and as such it is the goal of pilgrimage to thousands of Greek Christians each year. Support to this view is believed to be found in the words of St. Luke, which, in our version, speak of the Virgin Mary as journeying "into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah." This, it is held, should be "to the town Judah" or Juttah, since it would be vague in the extreme to speak merely of "a city of Judah." On this ground, so great authorities as Reland, Robinson, and Riehm think this place was actually the residence of Zacharias and Elisabeth, and the birthplace of the Baptist. It is a large stone village, standing high on a ridge; but some of the population live in tents. Underground cisterns supply water, and on the south there are a few olive trees, but the hill and its neighbourhood are very stony, though the vine must in ancient times have been extensively cultivated, since rock-cut wine-presses are found all round the village. There are, besides, some rock-cut tombs, which also date from antiquity. But, poor though the country looks and is, the population are very rich in flocks, the village owning, it is said, no fewer than seven thousand sheep, besides goats, cows, camels, horses, and donkeys. The hills everywhere are very rugged and stony, consisting of hard crystalline limestone; but the valleys, which are numerous, have good soil in them, some of them being especially fertile. The vineyards and olive plantations on the west, north, and south of Hebron—for the east side of the town has none—appeared like a great oasis in the desert, though the Negeb is very far from being a desert as things are judged in such a land as Palestine. (*C. Geikie, D.D.*) *Went into the hill country: Mary's journey:*—It will prove an interesting exercise to trace on the map the route which this Jewish maiden must have taken in going down across the plain of Esdraelon, from Nazareth southward. It was doubtless the same general path to which she had been accustomed, from her ordinary journeys to the Holy City, at the solemn annual feasts. But just now her mind was in a strange new frame of feeling. Each familiar locality, so crowded with history and devout reminiscences of her nation's annals, would, under these present circumstances, make on her imagination a far deeper impression than usual. We must remember this, for it gives help in the interpretation of her song. Out from under the shadows of western hills, she would come into full view of the whole country, quite across to Mount Carmel, on the desolate ridge of which Elijah defied and conquered the priests of Baal. Megiddo, where Josiah lay dying; Jezreel, where Ahab sinned; the brook Kishon, beside which Deborah sang, after Sisera was slain—these were close at her feet. Before long she would arrive at Shechem, and seem to hear the old burden of cursing and blessing echoing from Ebal and Gerizim. Perhaps she paused a moment beside Joseph's grave; perhaps she sat to rest, and quenched her thirst at Jacob's well. A little further down she would reach Jerusalem, "beautiful on the sides of the north," and catch glimpses of the golden-roofed temple shining in the sun. Diminutive Bethlehem next would have to be passed, and her tired feet would tread the lonely path that goes by Rachel's tomb. Her eyes would roam over the verdured fields where David tended his father's flocks, and caught the starry figures of the eighth and the nineteenth psalms. And while she lingered on such a spot, she would think of Ruth returning with Naomi after bidding Orpah farewell. Hard hills are those which now she would have to climb, before she could reach the cave of Machpelah, or discover the small houses of Hebron in the distance. Of this we have no detail. But it aids us much afterward to keep it in mind; for it shows how she went thinking all the way to her destination. We meet her first in the story in the presence of Elisabeth, dwelling, perhaps, almost beneath the shade of Abraham's oak in Mamre. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The power of*

sympathy:—The dialogue is brief; those two women talked together as only two women could talk who perfectly understood each other. Mary heard Elisabeth say, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Her troubles had been so hard, her joys had been so great, and her silent heart had been so full of both of them, that her relief must have been sudden and overwhelming. When the sweet face of that pure, unmarried maiden saw in the joyous countenance of that incorruptible Jewish matron the sign that she would be welcomed as faultless and true, oh, in that supreme moment, she could answer only with a song, and pour forth her gratitude in nothing less than the inspired numbers of a New Testament psalm! (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Religious intercourse*:—When serious persons are met together, the example of Mary and Elisabeth teaches them how they ought to be employed. Let not the time be wasted on trifles: but needful and becoming attention being paid to the demands of courtesy and common life, let the concerns of religion occupy a prominent place in their conversation. Such intercourse is most acceptable to God, and will be most advantageous to yourselves. 1. It will be the means of your being better informed, for "the lips of the wise increase knowledge." 2. It will operate as a check on all that is evil, and as a stimulus to all that is good. 3. It will give an opportunity of comparing your experience, which will greatly encourage and edify you in the faith and obedience of the gospel. 4. It will elicit many a latent spark of affection and zeal. 5. It will support your mind under temptation, and steel your heart with resolution to act a decided part in life; for it will convince you and keep you in mind that there are some of the same sentiments with yourself, anxiously watching your conduct, and deeply concerned for your stability. Nor can you deem it a light matter that you will find those who will be safeguards to you in the time of prosperity, and will not forsake you in trouble. The hour of sorrow, sickness, dissolution, is drawing on apace—an hour in which worldly associates would withdraw, as conscious of their unfitness for such a scene; or, if they remained, would prove but miserable comforters; but an hour in which those who know and love the truth would delight to stand by you, to suggest comforting and edifying thoughts, and assist in cheering the last moments and smoothing the pillow of death. Seek the society of the pious, and you form a friendship which, although interrupted for a season by death, will be renewed with increased endearment, where infirmity no longer troubles, nor separation divides. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *Mary's visit to Elisabeth*:—The next step taken by Mary is in accordance with the calmest practical good sense, and displays an energy and a control over other minds which must have been uncommon. She resolves to visit her cousin Elisabeth in the mountain country. The place was supposed to be near Hebron, and involved a journey of some twenty miles through a rugged country. For a young maiden to find means of performing this journey, which involved attendance and protection, without telling the reason for which she resolved upon it, seems to show that Mary had that kind of character which inspires confidence, and leads those around her to feel that a thing is right and proper because she has determined it. (*Harriet B. Stowe.*) *The subordination of personal joys*:—Remarkable that Elisabeth allowed herself to be swallowed up in the greater joy of Mary. Did not felicitate herself, but pronounced the mother of her Lord blessed among women. Her ecstatic reference to her own babe is in marked consistency with the whole tone of her spirit. These were some of the real blessings of the advent of Jesus Christ. Before He was yet born the promise of His coming sent gladness into human hearts. The mother rejoiced, and her coming child seemed already to share His mother's ecstasy. All this typical. The coming of Christ should always be associated with the creation of new and higher joys. The exlcamation of Elisabeth shows how possible it is for all our tenderest interests and proudest hopes to be absorbed in noble Christian emotion. If ever a woman could be tempted to exalt her own comforts and expectations, so as to shut out from her view the condition of other people, Elisabeth was surely exposed to such a temptation. The case, however, was not one of each woman rejoicing in selfish anticipations of her own happiness; already there was a payment of homage when homage was the price of self-suppression—a beautiful proof this, that the work that was done in the case of Zacharias and Elisabeth was the work of the Holy Ghost. Probably there is no finer test of the religiousness of our spirit than the subordination of our personal joys to the gladness which is demanded by the presence and claims of Jesus Christ. (*Dr. Parker.*) *The speech of Elisabeth must be regarded as an inspired speech*:—St. Luke seems to assert as much when he says that she was

"filled with the Holy Ghost," and that she spake out with a loud voice and described the blessed virgin as the mother of her Lord. And observe that in this inspired speech Elisabeth addresses Mary in the very phrase which the angel had already used, "Blessed," &c. Observe also the manner in which Elisabeth speaks of the blessed virgin's faith. There is a peculiar emphasis in the phrase, "Blessed is she that believed." It was her faith, in the one great instance in which it was tried, which made her, as it were, a fellow-worker with God, and gave her the high honour and privilege of being something more than a mere passive instrument in the great work of human redemption. (*Bishop Goodwin.*) *Happiness communicated doubles itself*:—The blessed maid, whom vigour of age had more fitted for the way, hastens her journey into the hill-country to visit that gracious matron whom God had made a sign of her miraculous conception. Only the meeting of saints in heaven can parallel the meeting of these two cousins: the two wonders of the world are met under one roof, and congratulate their mutual happiness. When we have Christ spiritually conceived within us, we cannot be quiet till we have imparted our joy. (*Bishop Hall.*)

Blest earth, whereon she trod,
  Put forth your fragrance sweet:
  Blest hills that felt her feet,
The mother with her God.

More blest ye friends, whose guest
  She now doth silence break,
  Of heavenly things to speak,
And where her footsteps rest. (*Parisian Breviary.*)

Ver. 45. And blessed is she that believeth.—*Blessedness of firmly believing*:—Doubting nothing! That is the secret of liberty, of efficiency, of success in every work which is undertaken by men: a confidence in the practicability, in the value of the work, in the Divine authority which imposes it upon us as an obligatory work, and in the Divine providence and power which will bring it to a successful performance. It is the secret of success, of enthusiasm in any secular enterprise. You see it in the inventor who is perfectly certain of the combination of instruments by which he is to accomplish a certain result—a result which is of value and importance to mankind. Nothing can hinder his endeavour, nothing can obscure or damp his enthusiasm, because he is certain of ultimate success. You see it in the teacher who knows that he has a truth to communicate to men, a truth which it is of importance to them to apprehend and to understand, who is not groping among uncertainties as he speaks it, who is not vaguely feeling after conjectures while he utters it, who is able to affirm it to others, because he has it affirmed in his own intelligent and intuitive spirit—the principle which he is declaring to the world. Kepler said: "God has waited so many centuries for an observer of the heavens, I can wait for years for an interpreter of those observations." And every man who as certainly knew that he had apprehended truth and had it conveyed to others has been reinforced, inspired by this confidence, and gone to his work doubting nothing. See it in the soldier who knows, because he knows the commander, that the order which has been given is wise, practicable, needful; that no life will be wasted which can be saved, and no endeavour commanded which is not indispensable to the great result. See it in the sailor who trusts his clock and his compass, and is absolutely certain that the sun, of which he takes the meridian observation, will not tell him a lie, but will point out exactly the point on the ocean where the ship at that moment is; and he goes on his course, after his observation, doubting nothing, knowing where he is as exactly as if the commerce of nations had built at that very spot a beacon and had labelled it in immense letters of light in all the languages of the world: "This is at such a point on such a meridian." He knows as certainly as he could know then, when he has caught the ray of the sun upon his instrument, where he is on the ocean, which to others seems pathless and intricate. Everywhere, then, this confidence is the condition of enthusiasm and of success, and in Christian enterprises, precisely as in secular enterprises, it is a confidence not merely in the usefulness of the work, but in the Divine authority which connects itself with that work, and the Divine care and the Divine affection, the Divine impulse which attend us in our endeavours to perform it. (*R. Storrs.*) *Saving faith*:—I. IN THE SIMPLICITY OF ITS NATURE. II. IN THE IMPORTANCE OF

ITS OBJECTS. III. IN THE SUFFICIENCY OF ITS GROUNDS. IV. IN THE PROPRIETY OF ITS ACTS. V. IN THE BENEFITS OF ITS EXERCISE. "Blessed is she that believeth; for there shall be a performance," and only a performance when we believe. (*William Dawson.*) *Trust in God*:—Mary's faith, astounding in itself, the most supreme example probably of perfect trust in God and absolute self-devotion to Him that human flesh has ever given, was all the more striking to Elisabeth on account of its contrast with the unbelief of her own husband under a far less severe trial. No wonder that when Mary appeared before her spirit-illuminated eyes, she seemed the embodiment of Faith—that modest virgin, with clasped hands, whom Hermas saw in vision, though whom the elect of God are saved, and from whom spring all the Christian graces as fair daughters of a fair mother. Mary is thus, in Elisabeth's eyes, the most blessed of women, because the most faithful; and it suits well that the first psalm of the New Testament should take the form of a praise of the fundamental evangelical virtue. (*Professor Warfield.*)

Vers. 46–55. **My soul doth magnify the Lord.**—*Mary's song*:—Mary was on a visit when she expressed her joy in the language of this noble song. It were well if all our social intercourse were as useful to our hearts as this visit was to Mary. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." Mary, full of faith, goes to see Elisabeth, who is also full of holy confidence, and the two are not long together before their faith mounts to full assurance, and their full assurance bursts forth in a torrent of sacred praise. This praise aroused their slumbering powers, and instead of two ordinary village women, we see before us two prophetesses and poetesses, upon whom the Spirit of God abundantly rested. When we meet with our kinsfolk and acquaintance, let it be our prayer to God that our communion may be not only pleasant, but profitable; that we may not merely pass away time and spend a pleasant hour, but may advance a day's march nearer to heaven, and acquire greater fitness for our eternal rest. I. MARY SINGS. 1. Her subject is a Saviour. She hails the incarnate God. 2. Her peculiar delight was that this Saviour was to be born of her. 3. The choice poem before us is a hymn of faith. No Saviour was yet born: nor had the Virgin any evidence as yet, such as carnal sense requires, that He would be. But faith has its music as well as sense—music of a diviner sort. If the viands on the table make men sing and dance, feelings of a more refined and ethereal nature can fill believers with a hallowed plentitude of delight. 4. Her lowliness does not make her stay her song; nay, it imports a sweeter note into it. The less worthy I am of His favours, the more sweetly will I sing of His grace. 5. The greatness of the promised blessing did not give her an argument for suspending her thankful strain. Although she appreciated the greatness of the favour, she did but rejoice the more heartily on that account. 6. The holiness of God did not damp the ardour of her joy. On the contrary, she exults in it. She weaves even that bright attribute into her song. 7. Mark how her strain gathers majesty as it proceeds. 8. She does not finish her song till she has reached the covenant—the softest pillow for an aching head, the best prop for a trembling spirit. II. SHE SINGS SWEETLY. 1. She praises her God right heartily. Evidently her soul is on fire. 2. Her praise is very joyful. 3. She sings confidently. 4. She sings with great familiarity. It is the song of one who draws very near to her God in loving intimacy. 5. While her song was all this, yet how very humble it was, and how full of gratitude. She wants a Saviour; she feels it; her soul rejoices because there is a Saviour for her. She does not talk as though she should commend herself to Him, but she hopes to stand accepted in the Beloved. Let us take care that our familiarity has always blended with it the lowliest prostration of spirit, when we remember that He is God over all, blessed for ever, and we are nothing but dust and ashes. He fills all things, and we are less than nothing and vanity. III. SHALL SHE SING ALONE? Yes, she must, if the only music we can bring is that of carnal delights and worldly pleasures. The joy of the table is too low for Mary; the joy of the feast and the family grovels when compared with hers. But shall she sing alone? Certainly not, if this day any of us, by simple trust in Jesus, can take Christ to be our own. If Christ be thine, there is no song on earth too high, too holy, for thee to sing; nay, there is no song which thrills from angelic lips, no note which thrills archangel's tongue, in which thou mayest not join. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *My soul doth magnify the Lord*:—The keynote of a choice sonnet. When your own heart is lifted up, then lift up the name of the Lord. Exalt Him when He exalts you. If you cannot magnify God, it is pro-

bably because you are magnifying yourself. May the Lord cut self down, and make nothing of you, and then you will make everything of Him. When you sink in your own estimation, God will rise in your esteem. I. HERE IS AN OCCUPATION FOR ALL GRACIOUS PEOPLE. All who know the Lord, and have been born into His family, may "magnify" Him. 1. It is an occupation which may be followed by all sorts of people. None are too humble or lowly to do this. 2. This occupation can be followed in all places. The occupation sanctifies the place. 3. It can be fitly performed in solitude. 4. It requires no money. 5. It does not require great talent. The soul may sing, although the voice cannot. 6. It is the grandest occupation that mortals can engage in. II. A REMEDY FOR SELF-CONGRATULATION. Mary had received a great promise. Nature would have bid her magnify herself; grace taught her to "magnify the Lord." Following the prompting of grace, she dealt a death-blow to the temptation to pride, and rendered praise where due. III. A FRUITFUL UTTERANCE FOR HOLY FEELINGS. This was evidently the overflow of a full soul. 1. Wonder. 2. Expectation. 3. Awe. 4. Humility. 5. Calm thought. Mary's utterance is full, many-sided, and natural, and yet most spiritual. It breathes the purest and the holiest emotions. IV. A REASON FOR HOPEFULNESS. It would be well to be wrapped up in this spirit with regard to everything. 1. Our own providential condition. 2. Our glances into futurity. 3. The salvation of our fellow-men. V. A GUIDE IN OUR THEOLOGY. This will keep us right. (*Ibid.*) *Rejoicing in God*:—When Mary speaks here of her soul and her spirit, she means to describe exhaustively the whole inward immaterial being of man—its higher and its lower elements—the seat of reason and personality, as well as the seat of affection; that which we have in common with the lower animals, as well as that which distinguishes us from them as immortal beings. The whole inward being, she says, enters on this work of joyful praise—soul and spirit alike. And the reason is that the human soul is so constructed that contact, real contact, with God affords it the highest pleasure, of which such language as Mary's is the natural, the unexaggerated, expression. Without God, man, viewed on the highest side of his nature, is but a spent force—incomplete, inexplicable. With God, he attains the complement, the explanation, of his mysterious being. These words express—I. THE SATISFACTION WHICH MAN'S REASON EXPERIENCES AT CONTACT WITH GOD. God satisfies some of the deepest yearnings of our intellectual nature, *e.g.*—1. The desire to find some common principle and comprehensive law explaining seeming irregularities. 2. The desire to know the real causes of things. II. THE SATISFACTION WHICH GOD YIELDS TO THE AFFECTIONS OR EMOTIONS. 1. The emotion of awe. God alone is great in Himself, distancing all possible competition. 2. The love of beauty. 3. Filial affection. III. SATISFACTION TO THE CONSCIENCE. God supports and justifies conscience. He gives to conscience basis, firmness, consistency. He relieves its anxieties. He reconciles by a fuller revelation its questionings about Himself. (*Canon Liddon.*) *True praise*:—1. Clear eye to estimate God's works. 2. A glad heart to rejoice in them. 3. A loosened tongue. (*Van Doren.*) I. Thankful joy. II. Humble joy. III. Hopeful joy. IV. God-glorifying joy. (*Ibid.*) *Religious joy*:—Mary's praise is very joyful—"My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." The word in the Greek is a remarkable one. I believe it is the same word which is used in the passage, "Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy." We used to have an old word in English which described a certain exulting dance, "a galliard." That word is supposed to have come from the Greek word here used. It was a sort of leaping dance; the old commentators call it a *levalto*. Mary, in effect, declares, "My spirit shall dance like David before the ark, shall leap, shall spring, shall bound, shall rejoice in God my Saviour." When we praise God, it ought not to be with dolorous and doleful notes. Some of my brethren praise God always on the minor key, or in the deep, deep bass; they cannot feel holy till they have the horrors. Why cannot some men worship God except with a long face? I know them by their very walk as they come to worship: what a dreary pace it is! How solemnly proper and funereal indeed! They do not understand David's Psalm—

> "Up to her courts with joys unknown,
> The sacred tribes repair."

No, they come up to their Father's house as if they were going to jail, and worship God on the Sunday as if it were the most doleful day in the week. It is said of

a certain Highlander, when the Highlanders were very pious, that he once went to Edinburgh, and when he came back again he said he had seen a dreadful sight on Sabbath, he had seen people at Edinburgh going to kirk with happy faces. He thought it wicked to look happy on Sunday; and that same notion exists in the minds of certain good people hereabouts; they fancy that, when the saints get together, they should sit down and have a little comfortable misery, and but little delight. In truth, moaning and pining is not the appointed way for worshipping God. We should take Mary as a pattern. All the year round I recommend her as an example to fainthearted and troubled ones. "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Cease from rejoicing in sensual things, and with sinful pleasures have no fellowship, for all such rejoicing is evil. But you cannot rejoice too much in the Lord. I believe that the fault with our public worship is that we are too sober, too cold, too formal. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Magnificat—its structure and contents:*—A majesty truly regal reigns throughout this canticle. Mary describes first her actual impressions (vers. 46–48a): then she rises to the Divine fact which is the cause of them (vers. 48b–50); she next comtemplates the development of the historical consequences contained in it (vers. 51–53); lastly, she celebrates the moral necessity of this fact as the accomplishment of God's ancient promises to His people (vers. 54, 55). The tone of the first strophe has a sweet and calm solemnity. It becomes more animated in the second, in which Mary contemplates the work of the Most High. It attains its full height and energy in the third, as Mary contemplates the immense revolution of which this work is the beginning and cause. Her song drops down and returns to its nest in the fourth, which is, as it were, the amen of the canticle. This hymn is closely allied to that of the mother of Samuel (1 Sam. ii), and contains several sentences taken from the Book of Psalms. Is it, as some have maintained, destitute of all originality on this account? By no means. There is a very marked difference between Hannah's song of triumph and Mary's. While Mary celebrates her happiness with deep humility and holy restraint, Hannah surrenders herself completely to the feeling of personal triumph, in her very first words breaking forth into cries of indignation against her enemies. As to the borrowed Biblical phrases, Mary gives to these consecrated words an entirely new meaning and a higher application. The prophets frequently deal in this way with the words of their predecessors. By this means these organs of the Spirit exhibit the continuity and progress of the Divine work. Every young Israelite knew by heart the songs of Hannah, Deborah, and David; they sang them as they went up to the feasts at Jerusalem; and the singing of psalms was the daily accompaniment of the morning and evening sacrifice, as well as one of the essential observances of the Passover meal. (*F. Godet, D.D.*) *The Magnificat—external characteristics:*—It is worth much just in itself as a Christian hymn. 1. Begin with the poetry of it. It strikes us with wonder in these modern days that a peasant woman of Galilee should be able to chant in so exalted a strain. But we know "a pure heart makes the best psalter." And she was speaking out of the abundance of hers. Yet never was such an occasion, never was such an angelic preparation; never—surely never before—was such a theme! Israel's Messiah was on His way, God was about to manifest Himself on earth in the flesh! 2. Observe also the Israelitish aspect of the song. It would be easy to parallel almost every expression in Mary's poetry by an utterance very similar in the anthems of the temple service. The mechanical structure is not very difficult, for the Hebrew and Syrian languages are easily wrought into rhymeless verses. There is extant now a Gospel in Hebrew; those who can read it are interested in noting the idioms followed here in the Magnificat, The mind of this woman was filled with the old prophets' imagery. Her whole thoughts were tinged with what she had studied and committed to memory. So this song has been exquisitely compared to what might have been expected from "some ideal Puritan maiden," whose mind was so imbued and saturated with the Scriptural forms of expression, that it would fall unconsciously into inspired phrases when she spoke. 3. Then observe the femininity of this song. No one but the queen of her sex could possibly have composed it. Mark the delicacy of turn in the sentences, the mingling of dignity with humility; the majesty, as sublime as Ezekiel's, and the tenderness, more gentle than John's. For this shows the mind and heart of just the one woman whom Elisabeth could call the "Mother of her Lord." (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The Magnificat—internal characteristics:*—1. Mary's instant devotion. She does not pause to return Elisabeth's greeting; she does not wait to pass back the congratulation; she seems to think only of God

above. 2. Her evangelic faith. She felt the need of a Saviour, just as much as any one else. A great word this, Saviour. Here first it appears in the New Testament; the word which the heathen orator said afterward he found on a tomb that he passed on one of his journeys, "Salvator, a new word, but very beautiful as it appears to me." 3. Her personal humility. How sweetly she says, "He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." What was this Galilean damsel, poor and lonely now, that she should have been singled out for so exalted a lot? There is in her whole demeanour, during this pathetic part of her history, an unusual poise and serenity. She was not even frightened or abashed by the angel; she meekly received his announcement, neither overcome nor unduly elated in her prospects. As she acquiesced then, she sings now. 4. Her lofty ambition. Her heart rises to its supreme elevation. "From henceforth," &c. She is glad with her whole heart that the chance is going to be given her to become a blessing. She is peerlessly ambitious, not to be rich, prospered, honoured, famous, but—to do good. 5. Her voluminous praise. Mary makes each Divine attribute in succession record God's glory in a new light. Holiness, grace, power, justice, beneficence. 6. Her magnificent patriotism. She passes almost unconsciously from God's attributes to God's people. The finest thing in the Magnificat is this adoring ascription of praise to God for what He had done for her country and her race. "He hath holpen," &c. (*Ibid.*) *The Magnificat*:—Mary's song of praise is—1. The climax of all the hymns of the old covenant. 2. The beginning of all the hymns of the new. (*Van Oosterzee.*) This hymn exhibits deep conviction of the reception of the highest favours combined with personal humility. (*Ibid.*) All the perfections of God glorified in the gift of the Saviour. 1. Grace. 2. Power. 3. Holiness. 4. Mercy. 5. Justice. 6. Faithfulness. (*Ibid.*) *Mary's canticle*:—This is the first canticle, or song of praise, recorded in the New Testament, composed by the Blessed Virgin with unspeakable joy, for designing her to be the instrument of the conception and birth of the Saviour of the world. Observe—1. The manner of her praise. Her soul and spirit bear their part in the work of thanksgiving. As the sweetest music is made in the belly of the instrument, so the most delightful praise arises from the bottom of the heart. 2. The object of her praise. She does not magnify herself, but the Lord; yea, she does not rejoice so much in her Son as in her Saviour. (1) Thus she implicitly owns and confesses herself a sinner; for none need a Saviour but sinners. (2) By rejoicing in Christ as her Saviour, she declares how she values herself, rather by her spiritual relation to Christ as His member, than by her natural relation to Him as His mother. 3. Observe how she admires and magnifies God's peculiar favour towards herself, in casting an eye upon her poverty and lowly condition; that she, a poor, obscure maid, unknown to the world, should be looked upon with an eye of regard by Him who dwells in the highest heavens. As God magnified her, she magnifies Him. 4. She thankfully takes notice that it was not only a high honour, but a lasting honour, which was conferred upon her, "All generations," &c. She beholds an infinite, lasting honour prepared for her, as being the mother of a universal and everlasting Blessing, which all former ages had desired, and all succeeding ages should rejoice in, and proclaim her happy for being the instrument of. 5. Observe how she passes from the consideration of her personal privileges to the universal goodness of God. She declares the general providence of God towards all persons; His mercy to the pious, His justice on the proud, His bounty to the poor. Learn, hence, the excellency and advantageous usefulness of the grace of humility; how good it is to be meek and lowly in heart. This will render us lovely in God's eye; and though the world trample upon us, He will exalt us to the wonder of ourselves and the envy of our despisers. 6. Observe how she magnifies the spiritual grace of God in our redemption—"He hath holpen His servant Israel," *i.e.*, blessed them with a Saviour, who lived in the faith, hope, and expectation of the promised Messiah; and this blessing she declares was—(1) The result of great mercy; (2) the effect of His truth and faithfulness in His promises. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *The visit of Mary to Elisabeth*:—In glancing at the Magnificat, observe, first, that it is marked by that peculiar characteristic of Hebrew poetry known as parallelism. Our rhythm is the rhythm of metre, our rhyme is the rhyme of sound. The Hebrew rhythm was the rhythm of clause or statement, the Hebrew rhyme was the rhyme of thought and sentiment; or, as Ewald beautifully expresses it, "The rapid stroke as of alternate wings," "The heaving and sinking as of the troubled heart." Hebrew poetry is as much nobler than the classic as rhyme of thought is nobler than

rhyme of sound. When will our colleges teach Job, and David, and Isaiah, and Habakkuk, as well as Homer, and Virgil, and Dante, and Shakespeare? Again, observe the intensely Jewish character of the Magnificat, alike in its phraseology and in its reminiscences. Once more, observe how, in the holy strains of the Magnificat, the Old Testament glides into the New. Mary's cadences are the interlude between law and gospel—at once the finale to the old covenant and the overture to the new—and so linking Sinai and Calvary, temple and church, Moses and Jesus. Very beautiful is the picture, this mutual greeting of aged Elisabeth and youthful Mary; it is the emblem of the mutual greeting of type and antitype, of law and grace. Such is the story of the visitation. All deep feeling is essentially poetical. And as there is a profound relation between devotion and poetry, so there is a profound relation between devotion and music. Accordingly, music is an essential, vital part of public worship. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col. iii. 16). But devotion is even more than a song, it is a life. And here even the deaf and dumb may sing, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord. Oh, how many spiritual Beethovens there are!

There are in this loud, stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th' 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 repeat.

What God is like our God, who giveth songs in the night, turning the raven's croak into the nightingale's warble! God be praised! there is such a thing as rhythm of life, an inward life-psalm, and so an outward—heaven the phone, earth the antiphone. Our heavenly Father, Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth! The real liturgy, after all, is the service of daily character. (*G. D. Boardman.*) *The Magnificat:*—Bible contains accounts of three remarkable women whose lips broke forth into a song of pious exultation and profound gratitude. Miriam (Exod. xv. 20), Hannah (1 Sam. ii. 1), and Mary, mindful of the honours and benedictions with which she is about to be crowned as the mother of the Messiah. It is a threefold expression of mercy. I. THIS INCOMPARABLE SONG EMBODIES MARY'S SENSE OF THE DIVINE MERCY SHOWN TO HER PERSONALLY. II. THE SONG REHEARSES THE DIVINE MERCY TO OTHERS IN GENERAL. III. THE SONG POINTS OUT GOD'S SPECIAL MERCY TO HIS PEOPLE. (*Dr. Doolittle.*) *The song of Mary:*—I. THE PROPHETIC ELEMENT IN IT. 1. That all generations would call her blessed. 2. That her Son would be a blessing to Israel. II. HER REASONS FOR THANKFULNESS. 1. That God did not regard the conventional distinctions among men (ver. 48). 2. The greatness of the blessing (ver. 49). 3. That God had cast dishonour on pride and vanity, and had honoured humility (vers. 50–52). 4. That God gives favours through His mercy (ver. 54), not through His justice, &c. Helplessness is the strongest argument to secure Divine help. 5. Because of the blessing which was to come to Israel through God's remembrance of His promises (ver. 54–55). Her heart had yearned that Zion and her nation might be blessed. (*Preacher's Monthly.*) *A new song:*—This song is in its substance the fit utterance of all hearts in whom Christ is born the hope of glory. It must never be forgotten that whenever Christ has entered into the human heart, a new song has been put into the mouth of the believer. Christianity in the heart means music in the life. A religion without joy is a landscape without the sun. Christianity without elevation is as an eagle with broken wings. Christianity has given to the world more poems, hymns, anthems, and manifold utterances of triumph and joy than any other influence which has touched the nature of mankind. Truly it has made the dumb man eloquent and turned silence itself into singing; and as for those of low degree and no account, it has in innumerable instances brought them to the front and invested them with supreme attraction and commanding influence. (*Dr. Parker.*) *The Virgin's character:*—1. We have here a type of that character in which Christ is for ever being born. To the pure, the humble, and the unselfish, the Blessedness of blessedness was given. When the angel appeared to her she was troubled at the tidings and the

praise. It was the trouble of a beautiful unconsciousness. A rare excellence in man or woman this fair unconsciousness! rarer than ever now. The unconscious life of Mary—what a charm those who possessed it might exercise upon the world! 2. Look next at the Virgin's quiet acceptance of greatness. 3. Her idea of fame. 4. This large conception of womanly duty—this which is the patriotism of the woman, was not absent from the Virgin's character. She rejoiced in being the means of her country's blessing (vers. 54–55). She forgot her own honour in God, she forgot herself in her country. And this is that which we want in England—women who will understand and feel what love of country means and act upon it. This is the woman's patriotism, and the first note of its mighty music—a music which might take into itself and harmonize the discord of English society—was struck more than 1800 years ago in the song of the Virgin Mary. (*Stopford Brooke.*) "*My Saviour*":—I. THE PLEA OF THE PENITENT. II. THE SONG OF THE SAVED. III. THE STAFF OF THE PRODIGAL. IV. THE ANTHEM OF HEAVEN. (*Stems and Twigs.*) *The beatitude of Mary, the mother of the Lord*:—These words contain at once—(*a*) A prophecy; (*b*) a command, because spoken in the fulness of inspiration; (*c*) a revelation. Why should all generations call her blessed? I. THE FIRST BROAD AND GENERAL ANSWER IS THIS: She occupies in one—and that a subject of the highest importance—a unique position as *the* example. 1. There was a strong and vivid faith. 2. Humility. 3. The entire simplicity of self-surrender. II. The fulfilment of this beatitude is to be found, above all, in THE DIGNITY OF HER OFFICE. Mary was called in the beginning of redemptive love to co-operate, by the grace that was given to her, in the effecting of the mystery of the Incarnation, which is the foundation-truth of Christianity. III. She was THE MOTHER OF THE SON OF GOD. That strikes the keynote of the beatitude. Beautiful picture always—the mother and her child; and the great prototype is that heavenly vision—nay, that historical reality—Jesus and Mary. Nearness and devotion to Jesus were her beatitude, and may be ours. (*Canon Knox Little.*) *The Magnificat, as it exemplifies the life of joy*:—You know the circumstances under which it was uttered. Recall them briefly to mind. In the cottage of the Annunciation the call of God had come to her; she had responded to it; she had given herself by a magnificent act of abandonment into the manipulation of the Divine Hand: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word." And even as she spoke—for there is no delay with God—the mystery of mysteries was wrought out, and the Incarnate had taken up His dwelling within her very person, and she was the shrine, the ark, of the Eternal Son of God. It cannot have been that she could have undergone such a crisis as this without its having an effect upon her inner being. Could Christ have been in her without illuminating her intellect, without communicating fervour to her heart, without acting mightily on her will? Who should be the first to taste the reality of the Incarnation? Who but the earthly instrument through whom it is wrought out. Who should first sing the hymn that tells of the thrilling experiences of those who know the touch of the Incarnate? Who but the dear mother in whom He abode. But for the moment her lip is sealed; she cannot speak as yet. There is within her a thought too big for utterance, and she cannot speak of it until she has received some confirmation from without. She has got a secret; with whom shall she share it? With whom but her cousin Elisabeth. She rises and goes from Nazareth into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Judah where Elisabeth is dwelling with her husband Zacharias, and as she enters the house she salutes Elisabeth, and hereupon Elisabeth utters her beatitude, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Thus the mystery that has been wrought out in her has been by God revealed to another; it is no longer a secret that she must keep to herself; she may share it with another; she may know the joy and sympathy of communicating it to another. As thus the message of Gabriel is confirmed, Mary said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Cannot you follow, step by step, the whole of this wondrous experience that led up to the utterance of this hymn of hymns? And yet how was it that Mary was thus enabled to utter this wondrous hymn? It is an unique hymn. Amidst all the poetic compositions which are the treasure of the world to-day, is there one hymn which in its chaste and wondrous beauty surpasses the Magnificat? Why, its loveliness has attracted generation after generation, and its beauty is as intensely felt to-day as in any previous age of the Church. And who was it who composed it? A poor, simple, peasant maid, probably some sixteen years of age, untrained in all

the culture which generally precedes the composition of a hymn so exquisitely perfect and so beautiful as this. Whence was this poor, simple maiden of Galilee enabled to give utterance to a hymn which through eighteen centuries of Christendom has expressed fully, and more than expressed, all the adoring worship of mighty spirits in their vision of the Incarnate God? Mary was taught this undoubtedly by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Yes; but how? By the action of the Spirit upon her whole being, upon her whole nature, her soul, her *Psyche*, and then upon her spirit, her *Pneuma*—the emotional and moral part of her nature; and then upon her very lips. Her lips were touched with a live coal from God's altar, and in perfect language they gave expression to the perfect music of her sanctified inner nature as it thrilled under the touch of the Holy Ghost, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." What illumination there is in it, how deep she saw into the mystery of the Incarnation, how, above all, was she enabled to look forward and prophetically to foretell its magnificent results! What fervour there is in it, chastened, I know, but how intense! And whence came this rapt fervour that finds expression in this hymn? Surely she who is revealed to us in it cannot be a maiden in her early youth! What a strength there is in it! Whence comes it all but through the action of the Spirit, giving fervour, giving love. Yes; it was the Spirit of God that drew forth from Mary's nature all the wondrous music that finds expression in her unequalled hymn. And again, what is it that fills Mary with this joy that inspires her with this hymn? What inflames, what energizes her whole being? It is the vision of Jesus Christ. She looks within—not around, not above, but she looks within, and the eyes of her understanding, enlightened by the Spirit of God, fall upon the wondrous vision of the Babe indwelling. She is indeed *Christopheros*—the Christbearer. O mystery of mysteries, within her tabernacles the very Eternal Son of God Himself, and every step she treads from Nazareth she bears within herself the burden of her Incarnate God! And as she looks on the Presence of Jesus Christ dwelling within her, her whole being thrills with a joy hitherto untasted by the sons and daughters of men. For her joy is not primarily joy in God as He is in Himself, but it is primarily joy in God Incarnate. Why? There is in Mary, first of all, as she gazes on Jesus, joy in the revelation of the love of God. She knew what God had wrought for man; she knew that God had taken in her very person, lowly as she was, human nature into union with the personality of the Divine Son, and she knew why. Now, if you look at the Magnificat, you will see what were the three elements in her joy in her vision of Christ. 1. She rejoiced in the revelation of God's saving love. 2. She rejoiced in Christ as revealing God's ennobling love. "I am high and lifted up, I have been magnified; but my magnificence is an act of God's grace, it is the result of God's condescension. God has come to me not simply to set me free from the trammels of sin by His saving love, but, having set me free from sin by His gift of salvation, He has embraced me, He has brought me near to Himself in close and mystic union." And Mary's second joy in the vision of her Child was the joyful recognition of her elevation. 3. But more than that, there was in her vision of Jesus a third joy, the joy of union with God, and that a twofold union. First the joy of the union of contemplation. As Mary looked upon Jesus she saw mirrored in Him the beauty of God. There she sees the vision of His might—God is powerful. There is then the vision of His holiness—God's power is blended with righteousness. There is then the vision of His mercy—it is tempered by His compassion. There is then the revelation of His wisdom underlying His mysterious elections. There is the revelation of His justice, showing that He deals with men according to their moral position. Above all, there is the revelation of His faithfulness, for ever true to His blessed word. And as Mary gazed upon her Son she saw God—God in all the beauty of His perfection, and, as she saw God in Christ, God took possession of her whole being, and she rejoiced in the union of contemplation. But more than that, she rejoiced in her co-operation with Him. As she gazed upon Jesus, she knew that she had responded to God's call; and, therefore, her life was a life of joy; in the knowledge of her union with her God as His chosen instrument in His great work. And so we learn this great truth, that the life of Mary was a life of joy. Before we conclude, we may pass on to one other thought in connection with her life of joy—it was not a selfish joy. It is remarkable how, in the Magnificat, Mary begins with her personal experiences, but soon passes on from that to identify herself with the human race. Mary looks ahead and sees what the effect of the birth of her Son is to be on the world, how it is to ameliorate the whole condition of human life,

how the oppressed are to be set free from their oppression, the hungry to be fed, the helpless to be assisted. And as she looks forward and sees the effect of the Incarnation on the race, Mary rejoices with the joy of a perfect charity, with the joy of the second Eve of our race, with each member of which she was so specially identified, because she was the mother of Him who is indeed the Son of Man. And so it ever is. Christian life is truly a life of joy. What strikes the keynote of life in the Church? Is it not the Holy Eucharist? What does the term mean? Joy, thanksgiving. It is not penance that strikes the keynote of Christian life. True, as we shall see next week, there is an under-current of the note of penance for ever blending with the thanksgiving of the Church on earth; there is a sorrow that tempers and beautifies its joy; but for all that, it is not at the tribunal of penance that the keynote of Christian life is struck. It is struck at the altar morn by morn, and it rings out there clear and distinct in the Holy Eucharist. We are baptized into Christ that we may live our lives beneath the shadow of the altar; we are baptized into Christ that we may live lives that are true to the Eucharistic note that there is struck; we are baptized into Christ in order that the experience of Mary may be our abiding experience, and the song, Magnificat, be our continuous song. Is it not so? What did Mary rejoice in as she sang Magnificat? In the indwelling of Jesus Christ. And in strange real mystery the blessing of Mary becomes the blessing of her children. Did not our Lord once say—"Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother." What do you understand these words to mean? Are they not words which cannot be fully understood outside the limits of His Church and divorced from the mystery of the Eucharist? But in His Eucharist their meaning is clear and distinct. For what was the privilege of the Incarnation? That Mary was the Christ-bearer. What is the joy of the Eucharist? That we each become a Christ-bearer. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me and I in him. So, then, as we go forth on our way into the world from the altar of God we bear about within us Christ. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (*Canon Body.*) *The reverence due to the Blessed Virgin:*—I. CONSIDER IN WHAT RESPECTS THE VIRGIN MARY IS BLESSED. 1. In her the curse pronounced on Eve was changed into a blessing. Eve was doomed to bear children in sorrow, but now this very dispensation was made the means of bringing salvation into the world. All our corruption can be blessed and changed by Christ. The very punishment of the fall, the very taint of birth-sin, admits of a cure by His advent. 2. When Christ came as the seed of the woman, He vindicated the rights and honour of His mother. From that time, marriage has not only been restored to its original dignity, but even gifted with a spiritual privilege, as the outward symbol of the heavenly union subsisting betwixt Christ and His Church. 3. Mary is doubtless to be accounted blessed and favoured in herself, as well as in the benefits she has done us. Who can estimate the holiness and perfection of her who was chosen to be the mother of Christ? If to him that hath, more is given, and holiness and Divine favour go together (and this we are expressly told), what must have been the transcendant purity of her, whom the Creator Spirit condescended to overshadow with His miraculous presence? What, think you, was the sanctified state of that human nature, of which God formed His sinless Son—knowing, as we do, that "what is born of the flesh, is flesh," and that "none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean"? II. This being so, WHY ARE WE NOT TOLD MORE ABOUT THE BLESSED VIRGIN? 1. Scripture was written, not to exalt this or that particular saint, but to give glory to Almighty God. Had Mary been more fully disclosed to us in the heavenly beauty and sweetness of the spirit within her, she would have been honoured, her gifts would have been clearly seen; but the Divine Giver would have been somewhat less contemplated, because no design or work of His would have been disclosed in her history. He would have been seemingly introduced for her own sake, not for His, and we should have been in danger of resting in the thought of her, the creature, more than God the Creator. Thus it is a dangerous thing, it is too high a privilege, for sinners like ourselves, to know the best and innermost thoughts of God's servants. It is in mercy to us that so little is revealed about the blessed virgin, in mercy to our weakness, though of her there are "many things to say," yet they are "hard to be uttered, seeing we are dull of hearing." 2. The more we consider who Mary was, the more dangerous will such knowledge of her appear to be. Other saints are but influenced or inspired by Christ, and made partakers of Him mystically. But, as to Mary, Christ derived His manhood from her, and so had an especial unity of nature with her; and this wondrous relationship between God and man, it

is perhaps impossible for us to dwell upon without some perversion of feeling. For, truly, she is raised above the condition of sinful beings, though by nature a sinner; she is brought near to God, yet is but a creature; and seems to lack her fitting place in our limited understandings, neither too high nor too low. We cannot combine in our thought of her all we should ascribe with all we should withhold. Hence, we had better only think of her with and for her Son, never separating her from Him, but using her name as a memorial of His great condescension in stooping from heaven, and not abhoring the virgin's womb. Nothing is so calculated to impress on our minds that Christ is really partaker of our nature, and in all respects man, as to associate Him with the thought of her, by whose ministration He became our brother. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *True womanly fame*:—A true woman's thought! For so far as a woman is sincere to the nature God has given her, her aspiration is not so much that the world should ring with her fame, or society quote her as a leader of fashion, but that she should bless, and be blessed in blessing. It is not that she should not wish for power, but that she should wish for a noble, not an ignoble power. It is not that she should not wish to queen it in this world, but that she should wish to queen it, not by ostentation of dress or life, nor by eclipsing others, but by manifestation of love, by nobility of gentle service, by unconscious revelation in her life and conscious maintenance in others by her influence, of all things true and pure, of stainless honour in life, of chivalrous aspiration in the soul. At home or in the wider sphere of social action her truest fame is this, that the world should call her blessed. The music of that thought sounds through every line of the virgin's psalm. And there is no sadder or uglier sight in this world than to see the women of a land grasping at the ignoble honour, and rejecting the noble; leading the men, whom they should guide into high thought and active sacrifice, into petty slander of gossip in conversation, and into discussion of dangerous and unhealthy feeling; becoming, in this degradation of their directing power, the curse and not the blessing of social intercourse—becoming what men in frivolous moments wish them to be, instead of making men what men should be; abdicating their true throne over the heart to grasp at the kingdom over fashion; ceasing to protest against impurity and unbelief, and giving them an underhand encouragement; turning away from their mission to bless, to exalt, and to console, that they may struggle through a thousand meannesses into a higher position, and waste their Divine energy to win precedence over their rival; expending all the force which their more excitable nature gives them, in false and sometimes base excitements day after day, with an awful blindness and a pitiable degradation; exhausting life in amusements which fritter away, or in amusements which debase, their character; possessing great wealth, and expending it only on self, and show, and shadows; content to be lapped in the folds of a silken and easy life, and not thinking, or thinking only to the amount of half a dozen charitable subscriptions—a drop in the waters of their expenditure—not thinking that without "their closed sanctuary of luxurious peace," thousands of their sisters are weeping in the night for hunger and for misery of heart, and men and children are being trampled down into the bloody dust of this city, the cry of whose agony and neglected lives goes up in wrath to the ears of God. This is not our work, you say, this is the work of men. Be it so if you like. Let them be the hands to do it; but who, if not women, are to be the hearts of the redemption of the poor from social wrong? As long as the women of England refuse to guide and to inspire, as long as they forget their nature, and think of pleasure instead of blessing, as long as they shut their ears to the agony of the cities of this land, that they may not be disturbed in their luxury, and literature, and arts, so long men will, as they have ever done, take the impulse of their lives from them and do nothing chivalrous, nothing really self-sacrificing, nothing very noble and persistent for the blessing of the world. The regeneration of society is in the power of the woman, and she turns away from it. All future English generations might call her blessed, and she prefers that they should call her fashionable! (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *The Virgin Mary; or, true blessedness*:—The Virgin Mary is *the* woman of all others whom truly to contemplate is to revere. She stands alone among the women of the earth. She occupies a position that is unique in the history of the world—the most illustrious of all her sex, "whom all generations shall call blessed. I. In DWELLING UPON THE CHARACTER OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, THERE ARE TWO ERRORS TO BE AVOIDED. 1. The error of the Roman Church—"Mariolatry," *i.e.*, the exaltation of Mary to a position that no created being can occupy, a position scarcely inferior to that of Christ Himself, the appealing to her to bring her influence to

bear on her Son, as though He needed thus influencing, as though any one could be more tender, more compassionate, more truly sympathetic than that all-merciful High Priest, who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," having been "tempted in all things as we are," "bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh." 2. On the other hand, there is the opposite error, which is doubtless a reaction, a recoil from this undue exaltation of the Blessed Virgin—I mean the error of the puritanical school of thought, which, by a kind of rebound, throws itself into the opposite extreme, and, almost dreading the very mention of her name, seems to deny to her the respect which is surely due to her, and which is claimed for her in Holy Scripture. II. CONSIDER WHAT THOSE SPECIAL VIRTUES WERE THAT SHONE FORTH IN THE VIRGIN MARY, those graces and characteristics that give such beauty to our conception of her saintliness. 1. Humility. The burden of the Magnificat is the greatness of God and her own littleness, the marvellous condescension of "the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity," in stooping so low to visit one so poor and so humble as she was. Humility, what a beautiful virtue it is! and yet how difficult to acquire! How easy it is to mistake it. There are so many spurious imitations of it; there is so much dissimulation in the world that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a mock humility and the genuine virtue. It is so necessary that the motive be the right one. True humility consists not merely in appearing lowly to others, it is the being lowly, lowly in one's own estimation, lowly in heart. It is to recognize what God is, and what we are. It is the only garb that befits weak and erring mortals such as we are. 2. Simplicity of character. How much this grace is needed among us—in words, in dress, in demeanour. 3. Faith. "Blessed is she that believed." Faith, what is it? It is to take God at His word, it is to rest the soul on Him, to trust Him, to surrender the whole being, body, soul, and spirit, to His keeping. A person strong in faith is one who can rise above the poor paltry objects of this earth, and "endure as seeing Him who is invisible." Conclusion: If we would do the will of God, if we would be blessed as Mary, there must be in us the qualifications that Mary possessed—humility, simplicity, faith. Humility, that God may dwell in us; simplicity, that we may be true children of God; faith, that God's voice may be heard and obeyed. Oh, how beautiful must such a life as this be! the life of God in the soul—"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (*Rowland Ellis, M.A.*)

The Magnificat:—Every burst of true religious life is accompanied by its burst of religious poetry. This is marked in our own most popular hymn-books by the names of Luther, Wesley and Whitfield, Keble and Newman. St. Luke's Gospel shows us that it was so just before our Lord's appearance. All through that Gospel, indeed, an attentive ear can catch choral vibrations. Its close is anthem-like. But more especially is this the case with its opening chapter. The air is full of song. The whole field is in flower. I. LET US LOOK AT THE HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK IN WHICH THE MAGNIFICAT IS SET. Mary was misconstrued by the world. She was called upon to bear the cross which is heaviest for the purest souls—a cross of shame. In Nazareth she could not remain. She turned to the spot towards which she seemed to be invited by an angel's lips, and pointed by an angel's finger. A light twinkled for her among the hills. If, as seems most probable, Elisabeth lived at Hebron, the journey would be, for a traveller supplied with the best horses of the country, one of seven or eight hours; for one unable to procure such help, about twice that length of time. The journey lies through one of the sternest and wildest routes in Palestine. The solitude is the most desperate which travellers of experience have ever traversed. The scenery is so stern that the very mountains of Moab, touched as they are with a beautiful rosy tint, present a contrast which is almost a relief. At the end of her second or third day's journey—probably late on the third—lines of blue smoke, piercing a sky touched by the twilight shadows, told the Virgin that she was drawing near to Hebron. The softer and more humanised character of the landscape might insensibly communicate a measure of relief to that aching heart. Yet Hebron was a spot which could scarcely be entered without solemn associations, by one whose spirit habitually breathed and moved in the atmosphere of the Old Testament Scriptures. It not only included the grotto of Machpelah, the last resting-place of Sarah, of Abraham, of Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, Jacob. Its foundation ascended to an antiquity which just exceeded that of Tanis, in Egypt. Long before the Canaanites came, the gigantic shapes of Anakim and Rephaim moved through the primæval forests by which it was surrounded. The Canaanites gave it the name of Arba, a great warrior of the Anaks (Kirjath-arba). These distant and marvellous recollections must impress the

least susceptible imagination. However this may have been, there must have been a pathos in the quiet word of the gentle maiden as she saluted Elisabeth. Elisabeth, for her part, knew her cousin's voice, even before she saw her pale and suffering face. And in the power of the Holy Spirit, the babe within her quickening, and seeming to leap into joyous life, she spoke with a thrilling and exultant voice, that swelled and rang out in ecstatic welcome to the mysterious Incarnation into whose presence she was brought. Two thoughts here naturally occur. 1. It was nothing but a brief, unrecorded salutation, probably of one or two words, which drew out the amazing and magnificent acknowledgment, that came home to Elisabeth with the power of the Holy Ghost, and, for a while, stirred her very frame, elevated her spirit, ennobled and transformed the tones of her voice into a rich and stately music. Here, as is so often the case, God's work is done by an unconscious influence going forth from His servants. Even handkerchiefs and aprons lead to high manifestations of the powers that are lodged in the gospel. When souls are steeped, day by day, in prayer and prolonged realization of the presence of God, more especially when they are in sorrow, or bearing the cross, a sweet contagion goes forth from them. A mere act of common courtesy and affection perhaps, as in the case of Mary's salutation, touches the deepest spiritual chords in other hearts. 2. It certainly should not be overlooked that, in the presence of the incarnate Lord, Elisabeth's child leaped and quickened beneath her leaping heart. It is strange, then, that believing people should assume that very young children are necessarily insusceptible of grace. Such an assumption is not reasonable. "The first springs of thought," said a great philosopher, "like those of the Nile, are veiled in obscurity." What influences may be made to stir those unknown springs, what elements may be mingled with those obscure waters, we cannot tell, and therefore we are not in a position to deny, in the presence of a counter-affirmation of the Word of God. II. WE NOW PROCEED TO THE MAGNIFICAT ITSELF. After the prominence given to the loud ecstatic utterance of Elisabeth (ver. 42), it seems certain that the delicate pencil of St. Luke presents us with a real contrast in a single word. "And Mary *said.*" Elisabeth's utterance and supernatural possession by the Holy Ghost was instantaneous; it was a single and exceptional burst, a momentary elevation. But, during those months, when her very frame was the shrine of the Christ of God, Mary was habitually steeped in the Spirit, habitually absorbed in the great Presence by which she was inhabited. There is a noble quiet in the one word *said.* But that quiet does not exclude a great and special joy, which gushed up within her soul and spirit at the words of Elisabeth. For those words are pervaded not only by enthusiastic acknowledgment of Mary's purity, but by enthusiastic recognition of the secret in her soul, of the truth of which she was the favoured depositary. Every one who is possessed by a great unpopular truth, finds that unpopularity one of the severest of trials. He may, indeed, and he must bring it forth to others; but he will be plied with sarcasms in the world, with texts and anathemas even in the Church. There is a joy of the purest and rarest kind, when some one at last says, "The truth which possesses you has taken possession of me also. I understand you." Such was Mary's joy when she said, in the rhyme-thought of Hebrew poetry, the second rhythm at once repeating and passing beyond the first—"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit did exalt upon that God who is my Saviour." Let us examine the personal traits, and the general religious principles, by which the Magnificat is pervaded. 1. Of these personal traits, humility is, no doubt, the chief. Mary, in the Magnificat, does not profess humility; she practises it. Favoured, indeed, she is. Yet (as the word so translated implies) she has no thought of that which she is—only of that which, in God's free grace, she has received. In the second line she counts herself among the lost whom He has brought into a state of salvation. Her joy and exultation repose upon that God who is her Saviour. Her woman's heart does, indeed, throb as it thinks of the cry which arises from the heart of redeemed humanity, as it turns to the grace which she has received—"For lo! from hence on, all the generations shall call me blessed." But why? "For He that is mighty hath done to me great things, and holy is His name." "He who hath a gift," writes an excellent old divine, "and is puffed up by it, is doubly a thief; for he steals the gift, and the glory of it also; and both are God's." 2. The religious principles by which the Magnificat is pervaded are these. Mary's soul is full of faith in the tenderness and power of God—in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. And she believes intensely in the victory of that Incarnation; in the sure triumph of God. With the instinct

of a prophetess, she sees an outline of all history, and compresses and crushes the vast drama into four strong rugged words—still as the rocks, obscure as the mists or troubled sunlights that veil them, the secrets of God, whose meaning men see when a great revolution is over, and which then goes back into silence for centuries again. "He hath put down the lords of dynasties from thrones." That dethronement includes not Herod only, though it may have begun from the Idumæan usurper. Scribes and Pharisees, men of action and science; pontiffs, powerful with a power not of God; men of action which is not heavenly, and science which is not true; Mary sees them sink, or their thrones stand untenanted, if they stand at all. Not always by the earthquake of war and revolution. In an old Greek city, a modern engineer once remarked a mass of stone, many tons in weight, lifted up for several feet from the ground, and hanging, as if suspended in the air. On looking more closely, he saw that the root of a huge fig-tree had performed this achievement. By exercising an even, continued pressure, every moment of the twenty-four hours, for about three centuries, it had fairly lifted off this stupendous weight. Something of this strong, yet gentle and gradual work is done by the influence of Christianity. A miracle of lifting is performed. The tyrant is hurled from his throne, "not by might, not by power." III. WE MAY PROCEED TO DRAW SOME LESSONS, ECCLESIASTICAL AND PERSONAL, FROM THE MAGNIFICAT. 1. It will not, we think, offend those earnest Christians who object upon principle to parts of the English Liturgy, or even to liturgies in general, if we venture—surely in no spirit of offence or controversy—to give expression to the reasons which probably induced our Reformers to retain this poem in the Reformed Prayer-book. A manual of public prayer, they doubtless thought, would scarcely be complete without the Magnificat, and other poems of the New Testament. A Scriptural service should reproduce the Bible essentially. In the Old Testament it should incorporate the Psalms. In the New Testament there are but few Divine songs. But there are some, and surely they are there for good reasons. We can scarcely fail to remark that there is much caprice in the taste for hymns. It is, in the midst of fluctuation and mutability, a great thing to have some hymns in public service whose permanence is insured by their being strictly scriptural. 2. Not without propriety is the Magnificat placed in the public service. It comes after the Old Testament lesson. Now the Magnificat was breathed by Mary with the Old Testament promise fully before the gaze of her soul. "In remembrance of His mercy," she exclaims, "as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever." She stood, as her song stands with us, between the two Testaments. 3. By using the Magnificat we fulfil her own prophecy, "All generations shall call me blessed." Some, in a superstitious horror of superstition, forget this. She is blessed. Blessed because chosen out from all the mothers of Israel, and of the earth, to an inconceivable privilege. Blessed, because consecrated as a temple for the Eternal Word; by ineffable conjunction, uniting to Himself that human nature which was conceived and born from her. 4. Personal lessons. We may well apply Mary's words to ourselves for a mercy common to all. Jesus Himself teaches us that her blessedness is ours; that so there is a strange family likeness between us and her (Matt. xii. 48–50). In a family which possesses some one specially gifted member, we often see looks of him in others. So the likeness of Christ is reproduced, generation after generation, in all the children of God. Again, praise should be our work. The brute rolling in the dust of our roads is said to have inherited associations of the free desert sands. The dog, scraping and turning before he lies down to rest, similarly acts from a blind reminiscence of progenitors in the prairie grass. Much more do men inherit the instinct of that praise, of which the Magnificat is the purest expression. Once more, joy and peace are part of our purchased inheritance. When we read or join in the Magnificat, let us see to it, that that peace is ours which will make its words true for us. (*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*) *The Virgin Mary's joy*:—The events in Mary's life which lead to this burst of joy. 1. The first event to be noticed in her life, IS THE HIGH HONOUR GOD UNEXPECTEDLY PUTS ON HER. We find her, in an earlier part of this chapter, living at Nazareth, a city or town of Galilee. Little, however, is said of her rank or condition there. But suddenly comes down an angel from heaven to her, salutes her as the highly favoured of Jehovah, and announces to her that she is the destined mother of the world's Saviour. We often tell you, brethren, that there may be many an unexpected affliction and sorrow awaiting you in the future; we may tell you now that there may be too in that future many unlooked for joys and honours

awaiting you. These things, like all others, are in the hands of a sovereign God, and in His wise and holy sovereignty He often pours them out abundantly where they are the least expected. "He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden," says Mary, as though recognizing the pleasure He takes in exalting the humble, and surprising them with manifestations of His love. 2. We see next in Mary's life THE PAINFUL TRIAL WITH WHICH THIS HIGH HONOUR WAS ACCOMPANIED. One moment's thought, brethren, will bring this to your minds. The angel appeared to her privately. None saw or heard him but herself. When she tells of his visit and message, who will believe her? and if she is not believed, what in a short time will be her situation? Her character ruined, the world scorning her, her friends mourning over her, and worse—her betrothed husband, the object perhaps of her warmest youthful affections, lost to her, loving her still but casting her off; nay, her very life endangered, for she will be charged with an offence which, by a Jewish law, is death. Dearly, some would say, will she pay for the honour intended her. But when does God bestow honour on any one without calling on him to pay something for it? We could not bear the Divine mercies, were it not for the afflictions, the sorrows and mortifications, which generally accompany them. 3. Observe next in Mary HER SUBMISSIVE ACQUIESCENCE BOTH IN THE HONOUR AND IN THE TRIAL ALLOTED HER. Moses, when God Himself appears to him at Horeb, and makes known to him that He has chosen him to be the deliverer of His people, begins to debate the matter with God, telling Him He has made a mistake, and chosen a wrong instrument for the accomplishment of His purpose. "Who am I," he asks, "that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Mary rises above it all. The angel delivers his message to her. There is no bidding him pass her by and go elsewhere, no telling him of her unworthiness, no obtruding of herself or her own feelings in any way. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," she says: "be it unto me according to thy word." And that is real humility, which leads us to regard ourselves as God's servants. But Mary was a thoughtful as well as an humble woman. It is more than probable, therefore, that all the consequences which must naturally follow the honour designed for her, rushed at this moment into her mind. The tone of her answer seems to intimate this. And a word from her, we are ready to say, would have averted these consequences. "Go," she might have said to the angel, "to my parents, or go to some of my neighbours and friends, or go to Joseph and tell him what is to happen to me. Save those kind hearts from sorrow, and me from shame." But not a word of the kind comes from her. She looks on honour and dishonour, evil report and good report, with the same calmness. "Come what will," she seems to say, "be it unto me according to thy word." We must now look at her joy. 1. It is clear that it was a joy ACCOMPANIED WITH BOTH AFFLICTION AND SUBMISSION. At Nazareth, Mary's home, all was still dark as before. Yet Mary is happy; she magnifies the Lord and her spirit rejoices. But what is the promised joy of the gospel? It is abounding joy in abounding tribulation. You must wait, therefore, for your tribulation to abound, before you are warranted to complain or wonder that your spiritual joy does not overflow. But are your trials severe? Then you have to learn that there is no abounding joy for you, till you are perfectly content to have them severe; till your minds are completely reconciled to them; till all murmuring, and rebellion, and impatient struggling to get rid of them, are come to an end. The soul often keeps up a long effort in affliction to make terms with its God. Tribulation must work patience before it can work joy, or hope, or anything pleasant. 2. And this joy before us is A DEEPLY SEATED JOY. "My soul doth magnify the Lord; my spirit hath rejoiced." It was no superficial, transient pleasure, excited in her by Elisabeth's words or kindness; it was a joy lodged deeply within her, filling her heart and soul; quickened and called into outward expression indeed by the sympathy she had experienced, but existing in perfect independence of that sympathy and of all outward things. It is evident that, young as she was, she had a mind and feelings of unusual strength. Her joy partook, therefore, of the character of her mind and feelings. It was a powerful joy. Light minds will have light joys They are not spacious enough for the joy of the Holy Ghost to dwell largely in them. A child must not wonder that it can take little or no share in the pleasures of a man. 3. This joy again IS A SINNER'S JOY IN A SINNER'S GOD. It is joy in a Saviour. Holy as she was, she felt herself a sinner; and her highest joy was not in Elisabeth's kindness, though that must have been at this time a balm indeed to her; nor in the honour the Lord had put on her, though in that she exults; it was in this—that she had found for her guilty

soul a mighty, a Divine Saviour. And was there anything wonderful or peculiar in this? Nothing peculiar, for the saints of God in all ages have felt the same. "My heart shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in His salvation;" had said her father David long before. The reason is, the Lord in all His dispensations with us deals with us as sinners. There is a peculiarity in His dispensations towards us. He will have a corresponding peculiarity therefore in our conduct and in our feelings towards Him. The worship that He requires of us, is a sinner's worship; the praise we offer Him, must be a sinner's praise; and the joy too we feel in Him, will be a sinner's joy. Nor is this wonderful. Consider what salvation is. It is the restoration of a ruined soul. It is the taking of us from the very gates of hell to heaven. "I would not forget God as my Preserver, my Benefactor, my Comforter, the sole Author and Giver of all my blessings; but if I magnify Him, my soul must magnify Him the most, and if I rejoice in Him, my spirit must rejoice in Him the most, as God my Saviour." 4. And this also we must notice in this joy—it was A JOY THAT WAS THE FRUIT AND EFFECT OF FAITH. It is as a Saviour that we must chiefly rejoice in Him, and His salvation is a future thing, not one of us has received more than an earnest and foretaste of it. Faith therefore becomes a necessary pre-requisite to joy. It is the eye of the soul, which enables it to discern the beauty, and excellency, and glory, of its unseen God; and the reality, greatness, and certainty, of the salvation and blessings He has promised us. We turn to Mary, and in her we see this faith exemplified. As we repeat her words in our service, we are ready to imagine that they must have come from her with the infant Jesus in her arms, that they were a young mother's first words of joy over her new-born babe. But that Jesus is as yet unborn. She is singing here a song of almost pure faith. She is placing God's promises before her mind, and in them she is exulting. And here, brethren, lies the great secret of almost all a Christian's joy—he is living, not a life of sense, but a life of faith. Many of you look to what you have for comfort and happiness; he looks to what he is to have, to what God has promised him, to what the rolling years are to bring him ages and ages hence. This is no delusion, brethren. It is not, as you may suppose, an ideal thing. It is a real thing. There are those now around you, who could tell you that it is a real thing. The joy of Mary's soul in God her Saviour, is a joy they can understand as well as you can understand a parent's joy in his children, or a friend's joy in his friend, or a thirsty man's joy in a fountain, or a weary traveller's joy in his home. It is a joy they have known and felt. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Magnifying the Lord*:—"My soul doth magnify the Lord." Here is an occupation for all of us who know the Lord, and have been born into His family. It is an occupation which may be followed by all sorts of people. This humble woman speaks of her low estate, and yet she could magnify the Lord. All believers, of every rank and condition, can attend to this work. This is an occupation which can be followed in all places. You need not go up to the meeting-house to magnify the Lord, you can do it at home. You may be tossed about upon the sea in a storm, but you may trust His name, and be calm, and so magnify Him. Or, you may be no traveller, and never go a hundred yards out of the village in which you were born, but you may magnify the Lord just as well for all that. This is not an occupation which requires a crowded congregation, it can be fitly performed in solitude. I suppose this sonnet of the Virgin was sung with only one to hear it, her cousin Elisabeth. There is quorum for God's praise even where there is only one; but, where there are two that agree to praise God, then is the praise exceeding sweet. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Living in God a source of joy*:—What a blessing is a cheerful spirit! When the soul throws its windows wide open, letting in the sunshine, and presenting to all who see it the evidence of its gladness, it is not only happy, but it has an unspeakable power of doing good. To all other beatitudes may be added, "Blessed are the joy-makers." I have power in my soul which enables me to perceive God. I am as certain as that I live that nothing is so near to me as God. He is nearer to me than I am to myself. It is part of His very essence that He should be nigh and present to me. . . . And a man is more blessed or less blessed in the same measure as he is aware of the presence of God. (*John Tauler.*) *Joy under unfavourable circumstances*:—When some of its tribe have migrated to lands where the frost never sets, and the snow never falls, the sweet little Robin with its red breast, and its warm brown plumage, its cheerful chirp, and nimble movements, never seems to lack any good thing, but in frost and snow is daily fed, and is seldom found dead from cold or hunger, or even wearing the appearance of a famished state. The peasants wonder how the robin lives, and

in some districts they call it "God Almighty's bird," because they suppose that by some special providence it is sustained and fed. There are many like this feathered creature; their outward circumstances always wear a wintry aspect, and yet they are always cheerful, they never complain, they never seem to want any good thing. (*Samuel Martin.*) *Joyous workers do most for God*:—Joy. God delights in joy; and His desire for His people is that they should be trustful and joyful—and this both for their own sakes and for His glory. God needs vigorous workers, and He can only have these by bestowing on them a joy adequate to the greatness of the work. In joy the apostles went forth to work for God, and they found that the joy of the Lord was their strength. It is joy then, not sorrow, that is our strength; and they that have done most for God, have been those who have had most joy in God. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Rejoicing always*:—Billy's whole life was spent in praising the Lord, and for the most part aloud. He couldn't help himself; with a heart always in tune, every influence, every breath shook from its tremulous chords some note of thanksgiving. "As I go along the street," he said, "I lift up one foot, and it seems to say 'Glory!' and I lift up the other, and it seems to say 'Amen!' and they keep on like that all the time I walk." Probably you would have come upon him singing. "Bless the Lord, I can sing," he would say; "my Heavenly Father likes to hear *me* sing. I can't sing so sweetly as some, but my Father likes to hear me sing as well as those who can sing better than I can. My Father likes to hear the crow as well as the nightingale, for He made them both." (*Life of Billy Bray.*) *Happiness of confiding in God*:—There once lived in an old brown cottage a solitary woman. She tended her little garden, and knit and spun for her living. She was known everywhere, from village to village, by the name of "Happy Nancy." She had no money, no family, no relatives, and was half-blind, quite lame, and very crooked. There was no comeliness in her, and yet there, in that homely, deformed body, the great God, who loves to bring strength out of weakness, had set His royal seal. "Well, Nancy, singing again?" would the chance visitor say, as he stopped at her door. "O yes, I'm for ever at it." "I wish you'd tell me your secret, Nancy. You are all alone, you work hard, you have nothing very pleasant surrounding you; what is the reason you're so happy?" "Perhaps it's because I haven't got anybody but God," replied the good creature, looking upward. "You see, rich folks like you depend upon their families and their houses; they've got to be thinking about their business, of their wives and children; and then they're always mighty afraid of troubles a-head. I ain't got anything to trouble myself about, you see, 'cause I leave all to the Lord. I think, well, if He can keep this great world in such good order, the sun rolling day after day, and the stars shining night after night, and make my garden things come up the same, season after season, He can certainly take care of such a poor thing as I am; and so you see I leave it all to the Lord, and the Lord takes care of me." "Well, but, Nancy, suppose a frost comes after your fruit-trees are all in blossom and your plants out; suppose——" "But I don't suppose—I never can suppose—I don't want to suppose, except that the Lord will do everything right. That's what makes you people unhappy—you're all the time supposing. Now, why can't you wait till the suppose comes, and then make the best of it?" "Ah, Nancy, it's pretty certain you'll get to heaven, while many of us, with all our worldly wisdom, will have to stay out." "There you are—at it again," said Nancy, shaking her head; "always looking out for some black cloud. Why, if I were you, I'd keep the devil at arm's length, instead of taking him right into my heart. He'll do you a desperate sight of mischief." She was right. We do take the demon of care, of distrust, of melancholy foreboding, of ingratitude, right into our heart. We canker every pleasure with gloomy fear of coming ill. We seldom trust that blessings will enter, or hail them when they come. We should be more childlike to our Heavenly Father, believe in His love, learn to confide in His wisdom, and not in our own: and, above all, wait till the "suppose" comes, and make the best of it. Depend upon it, earth would seem an Eden if you would follow Happy Nancy's rule, and never give place in your bosom to imaginary evils. (*Student's Handbook to Scripture Doctrines.*) *The greatest blessedness is to be a follower of Christ*:—"All generations shall call me blessed." So sang Mary, when the greatness of her mother-joy was made known to her. Yet her highest blessedness, after all, was not so much because she was the mother, as because she was the disciple, of Jesus Christ. It was a great favour to be His nurse, but a far greater to be His follower. (*J. Stringer Rowe.*) *Mary's unselfishness*:—In these words we see, as in the song of Hannah, the exaltation of a purely unselfish spirit, whose personal experiences

merge themselves in those of universal humanity. One line alone expresses her intense sense of the honour done her, and all the rest is exultation in her God as the helper of the poor, the neglected, the despised and forgotten, and the Saviour of her oppressed country. No legend of angel ministrations or myths of miracle can so glorify Mary in our eyes as this simple picture of her pure and lofty unselfishness of spirit. (*H. B. Stowe.*) *Christianity and women*:—The position of women in Christian society is directly traceable not only or chiefly to our Lord's teaching, but to the circumstances of His birth. Before He came woman, even in Israel, was little better than the slave of man. In the heathen world, as in Eastern countries now, she was a slave to all intents and purposes. Here and there a woman of great force of character joined to hereditary advantages might emerge from this chronic oppression—might become a Deborah or a Semiramis, or a Boadicea, or a Cleopatra, or a Zenobia—might control the world by controlling its rulers. But the lot of the great majority was a suffering and a degraded one. But when Christ took upon Him to deliver man, He did not abhor the virgin's womb. In the greatest event in the whole course of human history, the stronger sex had no part whatever. The Incarnate Son was conceived by the Holy Ghost and was born of the Virgin Mary, and therefore in, and with Mary, woman rose to a position of consideration unknown before, in which nothing is forfeited that belongs to the true modesty and grace of her nature—by which a larger share of influence in shaping the destinies of the Christian races was secured to her in perpetuity. It was the Incarnation which created chivalry and those better features which sweeten our modern life, and which are due to chivalry. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Greatness of God*:—When Massillon pronounced one of those discourses which have placed him in the first class of orators, he found himself surrounded by the trappings and pageants of a royal funeral. The temple was not only hung with sable, but shadowed with darkness, save the few twinkling lights on the altar. The beauty and the chivalry of the land were spread out before him. The censers threw forth their fumes of incense, mounting in wreaths to the gilded dome. There sat Majesty, clothed in sack-cloth and sunk in grief. All felt in common, and as one. It was a breathless suspense. Not a sound stole upon the awful stillness. The master of mighty eloquence arose. His hands were folded on his breast. His eyes were lifted to heaven. Utterance seemed denied to him. He stood abstracted and lost. At length, his fixed look unbent; it hurried over the scene, where every pomp was mingled and every trophy strewn. It found no resting-place for itself amidst all that idle parade and all that mocking vanity. Again it settled; it had fastened upon the bier, glittering with escutcheons and veiled with plumes. A sense of the indescribable nothingness of man "at his best estate," of the meanness of the highest human grandeur, now made plain in the spectacle of that hearsed mortal, overcame him. His eye once more closed; his action was suspended; and, in a scarcely audible whisper, he broke the long-drawn pause—"There is nothing great but God." (*Sermons by Dr. Hamilton.*) *God's continuing mercy*:—What a comfort to remember that the Lord's mercy and lovingkindness are to be continued. Much as we have experienced in the long years of our pilgrimage, we have by no means outlived eternal love. Providential goodness is an endless chain, a stream which follows the pilgrim, a wheel perpetually revolving, a star for ever shining, and leading us to the place where He is who was once a babe in Bethlehem. All the volumes which record the doings of Divine grace are but part of a series "to be continued." (*C. H.S.*) *An ignominious fall*:—How proudly in history sounded the name of William the Conqueror! Intimidator of France and Anjou and Brittany, victor at Hastings sustaining the English crown, driving people from their homes that he might have a game forest, making a Domesday Book by which all the land was put under despotic espionage to avenge a joke at his obesity, proclaiming war, trampling harvest-fields and vineyards under cavalry hoof, until nations were horror-struck. But at that apex of renown, while he was riding one day his horse put forefoot on a hot cinder and plunged, wounding the rider against the pommel of the saddle so that he died, his son hastening to England to get the crown before his father's breath ceased. The imperial corpse, coffinless, carried in a cart, most of the attendants leaving it in the street at a fire alarm, that they might go and see the conflagration. The burial in the church, built by the Conqueror, interrupted by some one who cried: "Bishop, the man whom thou hast praised was a robber; the very ground on which we are standing is mine, and is the site where my father's house stood. He took it from me by violence to build this church upon it. I reclaim it as my right, and in the name of God I forbid you to bury him here or cover him with my glebe."

"Go up," said the ambition of William the Conqueror. "Go up by way of a throne; go up by way of criminality; go up by way of revenge." "Come down," says God. "Come down by the way of a miserable death; come down by the way of ignominious obsequies; come down in the sight of all nations; come clear down; come for ever down!" (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Pride the master sin:*—"Pride is the great master sin of the human heart." Ruskin says, "In general, pride is at the bottom of all great mistakes." Napoleon declared, "Pride never listens to the voice of reason, nature, or religion." "God resisteth the proud." "Those that walk in pride He is able to abase." David, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Herod experienced this. (See Dan. iv. 5; Acts xii. 23.) Charles V. was so sure of victory when he invaded France, that he ordered his historians to prepare plenty of paper to record his exploits. But he lost his army by famine and disease, and returned crest-fallen. A South-American farmer had such large herds of horses, that he boasted, "I'll never want horses, not even if God wished it." Soon after, an epidemic destroyed them every one. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." (*H. R. Burton.*) *Pride before destruction:*—As weeds naturally grow in rich soil, so pride is commonly engendered by prosperity. The devil and his angels when they were in heaven, and desired to usurp the place of God; our first parents when they were in Eden, and aspired to be as gods; Haman when he was the favourite of Ahasuerus, and wished everybody to honour him; David when he became great, and commanded Joab to number Israel that he might know how mighty a king he was;—are Scripture illustrations of pride and its results. Bajazet, Sultan of the Turks about five hundred years ago, was a great conqueror, till at length he was completely defeated by Timur, the Emir and general of the Tartars. In reply to Timur's question, "Had you conquered what would you have done with me?" Bajazet haughtily answered, "Put you in an iron cage, and exhibited you wherever I went." "Proud man," angrily replied Timur, "it shall be done so to thee;" and for about three years Bajazet was exhibited like a wild beast, till, in his misery, he killed himself by beating his head against the bars of his cage. When the first Napoleon was preparing to invade Russia, a lady, trying to dissuade him, said, "Man proposes, but God disposes;" "Madame," he proudly answered, "I dispose, as well as propose." It was remarked that from that time he never prospered. "Great gifts are beautiful as Rachel, but pride makes them barren as she was." "A proud heart and a lofty mountain are never fruitful." (*Ibid.*) *Help offered:*—With marked effect Mr. Moody narrated the following incident, communicated to him by Pastor Monod: A friend of mine in Paris said that when Prussia was at war with France, they went out one night after darkness had come to bring in the wounded men. They were afraid to take out lights for fear of getting a bullet from the enemy. When they thought they had gotten all the wounded, and were ready to retire into the city, a man got on the top of a high spot of ground and cried in a loud voice, asking if there were any who wished to be taken into Paris, and telling them the ambulance was ready to go. Before he spoke it was silent; not a voice was heard. But the moment he had ceased speaking, and the men knew that there was help, there was a cry all over the field. I come to-day to tell you that there is One willing to save, that there is help. Let a cry go up: "Shepherd, save me from death and hell." This is the gospel. *Copiousness of God's mercy:*—God's pity is not as some sweet cordial, poured in dainty drops from a golden phial. It is not like the musical water-drops of some slender rill, murmuring down the dark sides of Mount Sinai. It is wide as the whole scope of heaven. It is abundant as all the air. If one had art to gather up all the golden sunlight that to-day falls wide over all this continent, falling through every silent hour; and all that is dispersed over the whole ocean, flashing from every wave; and all that is poured refulgent over the northern wastes of ice, and along the whole continent of Europe, and the vast outlying Asia and torrid Africa—if one could in anywise gather up this immense and incalculable outflow and treasure that falls down through the bright hours, and runs in liquid ether about the mountains, and fills all the plains, and sends innumerable rays through every secret place, pouring over and filling every flower, shining down the sides of every blade of grass, resting in glorious humility upon the humblest things—on sticks, and stones, and pebbles—on the spider's web, the sparrow's nest, the threshold of the young foxes' hole, where they play and warm themselves—that rests on the prisoner's window, that strikes radiant beams through the slave's tear, that puts gold upon the widow's weeds, that plates and roofs the city with burnished gold, and goes on in its wild abundance up and down the earth, shining everywhere and always, since the day of primal

creation, without faltering, without stint, without waste or diminution; as full, as fresh, as overflowing to-day as if it were the very first day of its outlay—if one might gather up this boundless, endless, infinite treasure, to measure it, then might he tell the height, the depth, and unending glory of the pity of God! The light, and the sun, its source, are God's own figures of the immensity and copiousness of His mercy and compassion. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Power of a true Christian woman:*—We are told that this sacred visit lasted three months. A mythical legend speaks of a large garden, pertaining to the priests' house, where Mary was wont to walk for meditation and prayer, and that bending one day over a flower, beautiful, but devoid of fragrance, she touched it, and thenceforth it became endowed with a sweet perfume. The myth is a lovely allegory of the best power of a true and noble Christian woman. (*H. B. Stowe.*) *Take heed of abusing the mercy of God:*—Suck not poison out of the sweet flower of God's mercy: do not think that because God is merciful you may go on in sin; this is to make mercy become your enemy. None might touch the ark but the priests, who by their office were more holy; none may touch this ark of God's mercy but such as are resolved to be holy. To sin because mercy abounds is the devil's logic. He that sins because of mercy, is like one that wounds his head because he hath a plaister; he that sins because of God's mercy, shall have judgment without mercy. Mercy abused turns to fury. Nothing sweeter than mercy, when it is improved; nothing fiercer when it is abused; nothing colder than lead, when it is taken out of the mine, nothing more scalding than lead, when it is heated; nothing blunter than iron, nothing sharper when it is whetted. Mercy is not for them that sin and fear not, but for them that fear and sin not. God's mercy is a holy mercy; where it pardons, it heals. (*T. Watson.*) *The Christian's exaltation:*—I have read of Ingo, an ancient king of the Draves, who, making a stately feast, appointed his nobles, at that time pagans, to sit in the hall below, and commanded certain poor Christians to be brought up into his presence-chamber, to sit with him at his table, to eat and drink of his kingly cheer; at which many wondering, he said, "that he accounted Christians, though never so poor, a greater ornament to his table, and more worthy of his company, than the greatest peers unconverted to the Christian faith; for when these might be thrust down to hell, those might be his consorts and fellow-princes in heaven." Although you see the stars sometimes by their reflections in a puddle, or in the bottom of a well, aye, in a stinking ditch, yet the stars have their situations in heaven. So, though you see a godly man in a poor, miserable, low, despised condition for the things of this world, yet he is fixed in heaven. (*T. Brooks.*) The coming of Jesus is—1. The exaltation of the lowly. 2. The putting down of the mighty. 3. The satisfying of the hungry. 4. The leaving empty of those who regard themselves as spiritually rich. (*Van Oosterzee.*) It is the nature of God to make something out of nothing; therefore, when any one is nothing, God may yet make something of him. (*Luther.*) *Mary's patriotism:*—It might be imagined that thoughts like these would be too universal for a simple Jewish maiden. But remember she was espoused to one in whose veins ran the blood of Abraham, whose fathers had been kings in Jerusalem. Joseph was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and in him she was linked to all the glorious past of her nation. From the hill-top, too, of Nazareth she saw daily the peaks of Hermon, Tabor, and Carmel, and the mist above the distant sea. So wide a prospect is scarcely seen in Palestine; and as the woman walked at eventide, the beauty and glory of her land must have grown deeply into her heart, till love of country was mingled with the life-blood in her veins. And now, inspired with the thought of the blessedness coming on her nation, the whole past and future of her race, from the tents of the wandering patriarch to the church of the Messiah to come, lay before her patriotic eyes, so blessed at last through Him who should be born of her. The heart of the Virgin broke into a song of joy. She forgot her own honour in God who gave, she forgot herself in her country. And this is what we want in England—women who will understand and feel what love of country means and act upon it; who will lose thought of themselves and their finery and their pleasure in a passionate effort to heal the sorrow and to destroy the dishonour, dishonesty, and vice of England; to realize that as mothers, maidens, wives, and sisters, they have but to bid the men of this country to be true, brave, loving, just, honourable, and wise; and they will become so, as they will become frivolous, base, unloving, ashamed of truth and righteousness, if women are so; to be not content to live only for their own circles, and to be self-sacrificing and tender there, but to take upon their hearts the burden of the poor, the neglected, and the sinful, for whom many of the most influential now

exercise a dainty distant pity and no more. This is the woman's patriotism; and the first note of its mighty music—a music which might take into itself and harmonize the discord of English society—was struck more than 1800 years ago in the song of the Virgin Mary. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *The prophecy of the Magnificat*:—The Magnificat is recognized, by the judgment and the heart of Christendom, as the noblest of Christian hymns. 1. It is in the third strophe of the hymn that Mary's feeling seems to attain its highest point of elevation. She has already referred in tender, solemn, and reserved language to the great things which God has done for her. And now she is, as it were, looking out across the centuries at the mighty religious revolution which would date from the appearance of her Divine Son on the scene of human history. She uses past tenses, because she reads off what she sees intuitively, as if it were already history. Gibbon felt the power of Mary's words, when, as he tells us in his autobiography, he sat musing amid the ruins of the Capitol, while they were chanting the vesper service in what had once been the Temple of Jupiter; and the idea of writing the Decline and Fall of the city first presented itself to his mind. That which met his eye was a comment on the language of the Magnificat, as it fell upon his ear: "He hath put down the mighty from their thrones." Pagan Rome was succeeded by Christian Europe; and since that astonishing revolution, the last clause of this strophe of Mary's song has been continually fulfilling itself. The old civilizations receive nothing, century after century, from the Master of the feast; while simple and comparatively rude peoples, such as the New Zealanders and the Melanesians, are brought into the fold of Christ, and filled with the good things of the everlasting gospel. 2 But while we may thus with fair probability connect these clauses of the Magnificat with successive stages in the history of the Church, it is unquestionable that they are or may be in course of fulfilment, at any one period and simultaneously; that each and all of them is or may be realized perfectly in every age. The "proud," the "mighty," the "rich" of the Incarnation hymn are always here; to be scattered by the arm of God; to be put down from their thrones; to be sent empty away. This is true in the private and spiritual, as well as in the political and public sphere. And the question arises, why is it true? Why is there this intrinsic antagonism between the revelation of God on the one hand, and so much that is characteristic of human nature and energy on the other? The answer is, that Christianity presupposes in man the existence of an immense want, which it undertakes to satisfy; and further, that this want is so serious and imperative, that all honest natures must crave for its satisfaction. Happy they who in this world experience the sentence of the Magnificat; in whom pride and self-reliance is put down from its seat, and spiritual hunger is rewarded; who discover ere it is too late that they are poor and blind and naked, and who take the Divine counsel to buy raiment and fine gold and eyesalve from the Son of Man. 3. It would be easy to show how intimately our prospects of improvement in all departments of human activity and life must depend upon our faith in the continuous fulfilment of the words of the Magnificat. The temper which is there fore-doomed is in reality the great obstacle to the attainment of our best hopes for the future. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The hungry and the rich*:—Mary has, as she sings, two classes of persons before her—the hungry and the rich. She employs these words in their spiritual meaning. By the hungry Mary means those who have a sense of spiritual need, those who are dissatisfied with their present attainments. By the rich she means those who are conscious of no want, the self-satisfied. I. THE REWARD OF SPIRITUAL HUNGER. "He hath filled," &c. Mary touches upon a principle of very wide range, applicable to the needs of mental, of moral, and of physical life. If a living being is to benefit by nourishment in body, mind, or spirit, there must be the appetite, the desire for it. The soul must desire God as its true life, if God is to enlighten and strengthen it. Without this desire He will do nothing for it. It will be sent empty away. The one condition of true spiritual enrichment is a humble, earnest, persistent desire for the graces which God has to give. II. THE PUNISHMENT OF SPIRITUAL SELF-SATISFACTION—"Sent empty away." The "rich" were the most numerous class in the days of the Incarnation. The people did not—the mass of them—feel any sense of religious want, but were very well content with themselves. There was but a small minority who waited for the consolation of Israel. The rich still abound in the race of Israel. III. A man, to have the presence of God in his soul, must FEEL HIS NEED OF GOD—he must be hungry. God gives to every creature a sort of preliminary endowment which creates in the soul a longing for Himself. The vast differences between man and man in later life depend upon almost unobserved acts

which encourage or repress spiritual hunger in early years. Like other tastes, a hunger for spiritual things is strengthened by exercise—weakened by neglect. We cannot afford the eternal loss of God. Let us ask Him to give us a strong desire to enjoy Him for ever. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 56–80. **Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered.**—*The nativity of John the Baptist*:—That which was miraculous at the beginning became natural towards the close. This is seen in the case of Elisabeth, as recorded in the fifty-seventh verse. True also of spiritual generation. Begins in mystery and proceeds to prove itself by all that is practical in behaviour. The work of the Holy Ghost in the heart of man can never be explained; it will ever be as miraculous as the overshadowing of Mary, or the overruling of nature in the case of Elisabeth; but, as the motherhood of Mary and Elisabeth was never doubted, so Christian life in all its tempers and charities will establish itself in the confidence of men notwithstanding the miracle in which the new life began. The neighbours and cousins of Elisabeth were proceeding upon the usual plan of naming the child. They would have dragged down the miraculous to the ordinary, and surrounded this speciality of Divine favour with all that was ancient and traditional in the family. They knew not that another and better kindred was about to be inaugurated, and in fact that the whole law of kinship was about to undergo revolution and sanctification. Think of the particularity of Divine providence in giving this child's *name*. Did not God say unto Moses, "I know thee by name"? Did not Jesus call Zacchæus by name? Could not God give every child his name, as well as number the hairs of his head, and take charge of all his going in the world? Zacharias confirmed the decision of Elisabeth, and so determined the name of the child, notwithstanding the wonder and apparent opposition of the neighbours and cousins. When the mouth of Zacharias was opened, the language of praise and exultation seemed to pour from his grateful and thankful lips like a river which for a season had been impeded. This speech gives us insight into the meaning of *inspiration*, for it is distinctly said that Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied. What then is the meaning of Divine inspiration? Mark the pure and sublime *religiousness* of the speech. From beginning to end it lives and glows with the name of God. Any professed inspiration that leads men down to superficiality and contracted views of life, and to the praise of secondary causes, is presumptively false. Any inspiration that leads men to profounder reverence, to higher aspiration, to nobler charity, is presumptively true. The inspiration of Zacharias recognized most emphatically the preceding inspiration with which God had favoured His Church. Zacharias seems to be standing in the midst of that summer of which Old Testament times were but the spring. And as, on the one hand, his inspiration seemed to contract the past until Abraham lived but yesterday; so, on the other, it contracts the future, and makes John already the full-grown messenger and herald of the Messiah. This is what inspiration does for a man; when it does less it may be suspected or denied. The child grew! The child waxed strong in spirit! The child lingered in the deeper parts of the wilderness until the time of his showing forth unto Israel had ripened! "He that believeth shall not make haste." The days we spend in silence and obscurity are not wasted, for what man ought to hasten into the Lord's work as if the Lord had been waiting for him in the weakness of impatience? We shall be better prophets as we become better students. In the silent time we are gathering elements, consolidating character, and undergoing discipline, all of which will be wanted when the trumpet calls us to the battle. (*Dr. Parker.*) *The birth and training of John the Baptist*:—Such is the story of the birth and training of the Harbinger. The story suggests many lessons. I will mention but two. I. It is a fine illustration of the proverb, "COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE." It was meet that the King of kings, in making advent, should have His *avant-courier*. Yes, it was meet that the Sun of Righteousness should have His morning star. II. THE PLACE OF ASCETICISM IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. For it cannot be denied that Christ's religion demands as one of its essential conditions self-denial. Presupposing a fallen, inverted nature, where the outward has usurped the inward—the flesh, the spirit—Christianity undertakes a restoration of the primal order, proposing victory in the very sphere of defeat. Thus, St. Paul himself buffeted his own body, and brought it into bondage. It was true of Moses, of David, of Daniel. Our blessed Lord Himself went into the wilderness, and fasted forty days and forty nights. So, also, many of the noblest characters in Christian history have been

asceties: witness a Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Chrysostom, Jerome, Columba, Augustine of Canterbury. Their power lay, in part at least, in their asceticism. It certainly was so in the case of John of the Desert. His hermit-life gave him simplicity of manners, freedom from the entanglements of society and the elaborate artifices of a complicated civilization. It also gave him self-reliance, fortitude, courage. An ascetic life is ever apt to make what in some respects is a grand character. Yet an ascetic life is fraught with perils. It tempts to self-righteousness, morbid gloom, and fanaticism. We only need recall the abominable vices of the mediæval monks—their indolence, avarice, hypocrisy, and sensuality—to be certified that monasticism has no just place in the Christian economy. Happy the day for those European countries when the monasteries were suppressed! No, man was made for man. He may escape society, but in escaping society, he disowns duty. The leaven of the kingdom must be put into the meal of the world. The asceticism which Jesus Christ, alike by word and by example, demands is self-denial, not for self-denial's own sake, but for the sake of others. (*G. D. Boardman.*) *To children:*—I. THE NAMING OF JOHN. "His name IS John," not may be, or ought to be, but *is*. And why was it so clearly, fully, and inevitably settled? Simply because God had decided the matter, and good old Zacharias never dreamt for a moment of questioning that decision. The Word of God settles matters, and allows of no appeal. II. THE GODFATHER OF JOHN. "John" signifies the grace, or gift of God. And who but the eternal God Himself could give him such a name as this? III. THE CHARACTER OF JOHN. He was the "gift of God" in a peculiar sense. He was a man "sent from God," too, for a special purpose. But his character was undoubtedly "the gift of God," and an instance of His grace and mercy. How entirely he seems to have lost himself in his office! Are you showing, by a holy and consistent and unblameable walk, that your name of "Christian" has been given from above? (*Study and Homiletic Monthly.*) *These opening chapters of Luke very jubilant:*—Heaven and earth sing, angels and men. The high occasion justifies it. Song even from the dumb! Yes. He had doubted the word of the angel, and so was stricken dumb. Unbelief cannot sing. But Zacharias is rebuked; no longer of doubtful mind. Now he sings, rises into rapture. His song rather of Christ than of John. No wonder. Who ever stops thought with the herald, the ambassador? There is a psalm of life as well as song of the hour; and all hour-songs are to deepen that life-psalm. (*G. B. Johnson.*) *Naming a child:*—It was likewise not customary among the Arabs to give the children names which had never been borne by any person in the family. When, therefore, on the seventh day after Mahomet was born, his grandfather invited the members of the tribe of the Koreischites to a feast, the guests asked, after the conclusion of it, what name he would give his grandson, on whose account he had treated them so magnificently; when he said, Mahomet. They replied, "Then you mean to give him a name alien to his family." The same custom prevails among some North American tribes. Lafitua says, "Among the Hurons and Iroquois they always retain in every family a certain number of names of the ancestors of the family, both of men and women. These names are quite peculiar to them, and it is presumed to be generally known that they belong to such or such a family. Now in every family it is the custom, as it were, to revive, to call back to life, those members of it who have made themselves famous. They therefore look out at the same time the names of those whom they revere, and give them to such of their descendants as are to represent them. The latter acquire more or less consideration in proportion as those who formerly bore these names were distinguished for their qualities, virtues, or deeds. The Jews had, in the same manner, certain names in every family which they took care to preserve; and these were taken only from the father's family, as appears from what passed, according to the Scripture, at naming John the Baptist. But among the Hurons and Iroquois the names of the boys are at present taken, as formerly among the Lycians, from the family of the mother only." (*Biblical Treasury.*) *Birth and naming of the Baptist:*—Three-fourths of a year before portentous events had intimated the return of prophecy and miracles to Israel—Zacharias in the temple. One-fourth of a year since, another manifestation from heaven—Mary and Gabriel. Expectation high! Gleam of sunshine in darkness! Music in storm. Hills of Zion shining with early rays of twilight. And now "the morning star" shining bright in the cold, chilly dawn, heralds the speedy rising of the Sun of Righteousness with health and healing in His wings! For it was now to be seen that what God promised should be performed. I. THE BIRTH OF JOHN. 1. Remember circumstances of his being promised, and the astonishing testimony

to the divinity of future Jesus, when the two mothers met. 2. Now the promises begin to be accomplished. John born. Neighbours and kinsfolk rejoice with her. A subject of attention, for it was (1) miraculous; (2) promised. II. NAMING OF CIRCUMCISION. 1. Circumcision, eighth day. A duty. Analogy in baptism (Col. ii. 11, 12). Baptism also should be in infancy. 2. Naming took place then. So Christian name is given at baptism, not by registration. III. THE MIRACLE (ver. 64). Reward to faith. IV. ZACHARIAS' SONG OF PRAISE. Christ came, not to make men sullen, low, morose, desponding; but to pour out blessings in rich abundance, and to turn the captivity of His people "as the rivers in the south." Has this song been realized in you? Is God visiting you? Has darkness vanished, and the true light shone in you? Make sure! Don't grasp the shadows of time, and lose the substance of eternity. (*G. Venables, S.C.L.*) *The dumb learning to praise God*:—A beautiful incident occurred only a short time since in the school to teach mutes articulation and lip-reading, at Mystic River, Connecticut. Miss P., an interesting graduate of one of the oldest institutions for the education of deaf mutes, having a desire to learn to speak and read the lips of her speaking friends, was recommended by her old principal to try Mr. Whipple's school, and she entered it last term. She made rapid progress, and was much aided by the natural alphabet, the invention of her teacher. This alphabet curiously suggests sound, or the right position of the organs to utter sound, as well as form; and whenever a mute pupil can read and write it, he or she can generally give any of the forty sounds of our difficult language with great precision and discrimination, and often with remarkable correctness. This young lady, filled with enthusiasm at every step, mastered the alphabet with little difficulty, and one day came to her teacher with something written on her slate, which she asked him to correct, her mind being agitated with emotion. It proved to be the Lord's Prayer, put into the language of articulation. Perceiving her agitation, the teacher could scarce restrain his own tears as he corrected a few unimportant errors of pronunciation, and delicately returned it. The next morning the young lady came exultingly to her teacher, exclaiming: "I prayed last night for the first time in my life with my voice;" and neither of them could restrain their emotions. He ventured to ask her if she had ever prayed before. "Oh, yes; I have thought my prayers, but I never spoke before." "My lips shall praise Thee, O God." "Attend to the voice of my supplications, O Lord." *Praising God*:—"Praise is the rent-charge we owe to God" for His blessings. David said, "As long as I live I will praise the Lord." In ancient places of Christian worship it was arranged that one set of worshippers should keep on praising God, till another set came, so that praise might always be going up to heaven, night and day. Commodore Good-enough, when dying, said, "I have not breath left to praise God for all His mercies." Mr. Wesley's last words were, "I'll praise! I'll praise!" Swiss herdsmen at sunset call forth, "Praise ye the Lord!" This shout is repeated from one to another till every valley, peak, and hill reverberates with the ascriptions of gratitude to the Giver of all good. In the last four Psalms, how many exhortations we have to praise God! In the last verse of the last Psalm we read, "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." (*H. R. Burton.*)

Ver. 66. **What manner of child shall this be?**—*Great expectations*:—When a child is born (as we say) "to the purple;" when an heir to the throne is announced; or when we stand beside the cradle of some unconscious little successor to a great historic title, to a vast estate, or to accumulated wealth of other kinds—how do we busy ourselves with speculations as to what may be in store for such a child? Descending to lower strata in social life, how common it is to forecast a great future, if the child should early display great ability, high intellectual gifts, special aptitudes for a particular branch of study! Yet very often, in such cases, the thoughts we harbour are but the most foolish "castles in the air." We direct our hopes to external things; we dazzle our imagination with splendid prospects of a great career; and by "greatness" mean publicity, honours, wealth, rank, and a frequent mention in the newspapers. Ah, how mistaken, how ill-judged, how far below (not above) the true mark are our fond anticipations for our children. Let us try to learn this lesson from the text. What was it, probably, that the friends and neighbours of this distinguished priestly family expected for the new-born child? We can hardly doubt what it would be, when we reflect on the circumstances of the time. So pious a circle, and one so conversant with the Temple and its services, as these familiar friends of the priest Zacharias, would be sure to tinge

all their thoughts with religion. And, therefore, in their answers among themselves to this question, we may confidently assume that a high spiritual destination would be assigned to him as a champion of Israel against the world. "Surely this child," they may have said, "will become—as Joab was to David—a mighty and unconquered captain in the armies of the coming Messiah; his sword will be red with the blood of Jehovah's enemies; and, like the heathen before Judas Maccabæus, so the hated Roman legions will go down before his avenging onset." Or, should their thoughts take a more peaceful turn, "The child," they might say, "will be (like his father) a faithful priest of God; and will fulfil, in the future history of our nation, as prominent a part as Zadok and Jehoiada in the days of old. At the very least, he will be a writer of books—such as 'Daniel,' or 'The Book of Enoch'—books that will touch the heart of Israel to the very quick; or, it may be, a preacher, a prophet, an Elijah—a prominent, a powerful, a striking, an impressive personage, ever to the front when some conflict shall be imminent with the false priests of Baal, or when the modern Jezebels and Ahabs are to be publicly smitten with the curse of an avenging God." But if such dreams were among their sanguine anticipations for this wonderful child, we know how utterly they were mistaken. The event has taught us how much more spiritual, how much more worthy of all these wonderful antecedents, was the result than these pious Jews had been able to imagine. The result was this: first, for many long years no publicity at all, but a quiet and meditative life in the wilderness; and after that preparation was complete, even then no protracted public ministry amid obedient and awe-stricken crowds, but a brief mission to prepare the way for Him who was to come, abruptly closed by imprisonment; and after that, no dramatic execution, while tearful multitudes pressed around the scaffold to dip their handkerchiefs in the martyr's blood, but only a swift stroke amid the dungeon's gloom, a ghastly comedy of horror when a dancing-girl brought in upon a charger the prophet's head, and a secret burial by a handful of terrified disciples. Such is the irony of history. Such is the answer to the question of the text. (*Canon G. H. Curteis.*) *Internal history of the Baptist:*—There are, for every man that lives upon this earth, two histories unfolding simultaneously. There is the external history of his career; and there is the internal history of his character, of his soul. In the case of the Baptist, as in every other case, we can only read the mysterious secrets of the "hidden man," by the few visible tokens that are given us. Now, in the Gospels we have five tokens given, by the help of which we can reconstruct the whole character of the man. I. WE HAVE THE FACT OF HIS FAITHFUL, UNSELFISH SURRENDER OF PRIVACY AND OF SWEET, SERENE MEDITATION ALONE WITH NATURE AND WITH GOD, AT THE CLEAR CALL TO IRKSOME PUBLIC DUTY. It is no easy task to preach repentance to swaying and restless crowds. It is not pleasant to stand as a public target for questioners of every kind, and casuists of every degree, to shoot their arrows at. Yet thus stood John the Baptist. His answers in public show that he had not misused his opportunities in retirement. II. ANOTHER TOKEN OF HIS PERSONAL CHARACTER, WHICH IS FURNISHED IN THE GOSPELS, IS HIS LOYALTY. "Look not to me, but to another who is greater than I." A sign of the noblest self-devotion. This worship of a higher Being guards the heart against all approaches of vanity and self-worship, and repels every base thought of self-interest. III. THERE IS YET ANOTHER CHARACTERISTIC IN THE BAPTIST, WHICH BRINGS HIM INTO VERY CLOSE CONTACT WITH MANY LOYAL YET TROUBLED SOULS AT THE PRESENT DAY. It seems that, at one time, he was even afflicted with doubt (Matt. xi. 2, 3). Most kindly, gently, and patiently was that question answered by our Lord. And we may, therefore, gather encouragement for ourselves under any similar difficulties. We may be sure that if we, in like manner, take an honest and straightforward course, not letting our doubts withdraw us from our Saviour, but rather bring us nearer and closer to Him, we shall receive the same gentle and sufficient reply, an appeal to personal experience, to what we have ourselves "heard and seen." IV. ANOTHER CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS SAINTLY MAN IS TO BE FOUND IN HIS COURAGEOUS REBUKE OF SIN, EVEN WHEN IT WAS DRAPED AND GILDED AND DISGUISED UNDER WELL-SEEMING NAMES, IN THE PALACES OF KINGS. V. BUT THE MOST STRIKING FEATURE OF ALL IN HIS CHARACTER WAS HIS SELF-EFFACEMENT. We know too well that even self-denial is a virtue of high and difficult attainment. Much more difficult is a genuine and unaffected self-humiliation. But most difficult of all is self-effacement in Christ—that spiritual depth, attained also by St. Paul, which says (feeling what it says) "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The Baptist is a type of those who resolve, at all risks, to discharge their duty and to deliver the message

entrusted to them by God, without one single thought of self, or one transient wish to appear themselves in the matter. No indolence; no cowardice; but they are content to be only "a voice"—to preach God's Word, not their own, to pursue some truth which is not to enhance their own reputation; to advocate some cause which is not to redound to their own advantage. (*Ibid.*) *The future of a child*:—Stars have been interrogated and thought to prophesy and proclaim the future of a child, so that to this day "born under an unlucky star" is passed into a proverb. I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDHOOD. "What, then, shall this child be?" 1. What God designs it. God had a plan of life for this child of Zacharias and Elisabeth. 2. What training makes it. The fashioning power of parents and teachers is very great. God's plan may be marred in our hands. The life of John Stuart Mill proclaims the wonderful power that a parent can wield over the plastic nature of the child, and how instruction and training may shape a life. Great men owe much to pious parents like Zacharias and Elisabeth. II. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD WITH CHILDHOOD. "For the hand of the Lord was with him." This stimulated the question. Curiosity as to the future of a child becomes greater when there are—1. Marks of the supernatural. This was the case with John. 2. Tokens of the Divine protection. The myth of Romulus and Remus, suckled in their infancy by a she-wolf, enshrines a truth—those destined for greatness are under the special protection of the Almighty. The apostolic John Wesley was miraculously saved in childhood from a burning house. 3. Early evidences of greatness. Providence is shown in such evidences, leading, as they often do, to special care in education. This is what all should desire for their children, that the hand of the Lord may be with them. (*Canon Vernon Hutton, M.A.*) *A question and answer at the birth of a child*:—1. The natural question—"What manner of child shall this be?" 2. The satisfactory answer—"The hand of the Lord will be with him." (*Van Oosterzee.*) *"What manner of child shall this be?"*:—1. How far above our asking is the Divine gift very often! 2. How wonderful are the possibilities for weal or woe in a child! Shall our children prove John Baptists, voices for Christ? or shall they falsify our own allegiance to Him? 3. How blessed it is to have a child associated with Christ from the outset! I covet for our children this association with the Lord. I would have His name, His story, His words, His gospel, their earliest memories and their dearest child-experiences. 4. What of kindred dedication of children to-day? Where are the Abrams, Hannahs, and Zachariases of this age? How few Christian parents yield their children up to the service of God? 5. How many of those who "feared" and asked "What manner of child?" &c., received him and received the Lord? One asks wistfully, whether, when the thirty years were passed, and John the Baptist, and then the Lord came forth, many or any watched for their coming and welcomed their manifestation. I gladly believe that some would, some must. (*A. B. Grosart, DD.*) *A sermon to parents*:—"What manner of child shall this be?" Will it grow up to manhood or womanhood, or will the flower be nipped in the bud? And if it grow to man's estate, what kind of a man will it make? Wise, virtuous, useful; or foolish, vicious, profligate? Such questions as these associated with the birth of childhood. The true parent will not be content simply with asking "What manner," &c., but realizing that the answer to that question depends very largely upon home-training and influence, will set to work to make that training and influence of such a character as will, under God, produce the best results. To assist you in this work will now be my aim. I begin by reminding you that your child is fearfully and wonderfully made. It is a "Trinity in Unity." It is made up of three parts. And each of these parts must be cultivated and developed in order to a complete and noble manhood. I. YOUR CHILD HAS A BODY THAT REQUIRES TO BE BUILT UP AND PERFECTED. II. YOUR CHILD HAS A SOUL THAT NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED AND CULTURED. By the soul I mean that moral and intellectual part of your child's nature which distinguishes it from, and raises it above, the brutes that perish. III. YOUR CHILD HAS A SPIRITUAL NATURE WHICH NEEDS TO BE ENCOURAGED AND FOSTERED AND CAREFULLY AND PRAYERFULLY WATCHED OVER. Observe—1. This threefold development should be simultaneous. 2. We should begin early, should look for signs of early piety, and should interpret these as indications that God Himself is at work in their young hearts. Our children have visions of God much earlier than we are accustomed to think. Let us encourage them to foster these visions, to listen to the voice of God within, to respond to the wooings of His love. This done, we need not trouble ourselves with the question, "What manner," &c., but may safely and joyfully leave our children in God's hands, feeling assured that

His grace will prove more than sufficient for all their needs, that His love will never see them want any good thing, and that His spirit, which has begun the good work in their souls, will carry it on to perfection. (*W. Fox.*) *A sermon to children*:—Every boy and girl might well ask about himself or herself, "What manner," &c. I want you to think about what you are going to be. It is not chance that decides. The fruit comes out of the blossom; the flower out of the bud; the man out of the child. You are beginning now to be the men and women that you will be. Here are some things that you can do, or get done for you. For we can go for help to One who is able to do very much more than we ask or think. I. MEND THE LITTLE FAULTS NOW. II. BE NOW WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE WHEN YOU ARE GROWN UP. 1. Be truthful. 2. Be kind and pleasant. III. TAKE WITH YOU TWO THINGS MORE WONDERFUL THAN ANY OTHER GIFTS THAT YOU EVER READ OR HEARD OF. 1. A golden key—PRAYER. 2. A charm which I would have you wear not next to your heart, but in the heart itself. The charm is this—try always to please Jesus. IV. And yet the most wonderful part remains, that if we come to Jesus, and seek Him as our Saviour and Helper, the child will become an angel of God. (*Mark Guy Pearse.*) *Indications in childhood*:—"Childhood shows the man as morning shows the day." Moses, Joseph, Samuel, David, Obadiah, Josiah, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, John the Baptist, John the Apostle, Timothy, Washington, John Wesley, and mulitudes of other goodly children have lived to be men famous for their godliness and usefulness. The Arabians put an ant into the hand of a new-born infant and say, "May the boy turn out clever and skilful." We pray that from the childhood blossoms we have in our homes and schools there may develop flowers which will fill every circle where they move with fragrance, spiritual beauty, and joy; or that, in other cases, the buds now attaching themselves to some branch which is joined to the True Vine, may be twigs or branches themselves in years to come, bearing fruit for the glory of God and the benefit of mankind. (*H. R. Burton.*) *A child misjudged*:—A poor doctor, who had met with great misfortunes, lay on his deathbed, saddened by the thought that he was leaving a large family behind him, without any provision for its maintenance. Not long before his death, his youngest child was born, a scrawny, puny babe, weighing five or six pounds. The mother was worn out, and was apparently to be left poor, friendless, and alone, with her great family of little ones. But—that baby! Every one said: "What a mercy if that child should die! What can she do with it? What a blessing if it should die!" The poor mother almost thought so too. But the unwelcome babe would not die. He made a struggle for life, and won the battle. To-day his memory is revered as that of Dr. John Todd, the author of "The Student's Manual," and of other works of eminent usefulness, by means of which, "being dead, he yet speaketh." No mother knows what she has in her cradle. (*Baxendale's Anecdotes.*) *The mystery of moral development*:—The beginning of Nero's reign was marked by acts of the greatest kindness and condescension; by affability, complaisance, and popularity. The object of his administration seemed to be the good of his people; and when he was desired to sign his name to a list of malefactors that were to be executed, he exclaimed, "I wish to heaven I could not write!" He was an enemy to flattery, and when the Senate liberally commended the wisdom of his government, Nero desired them to keep their praises until he deserved them. Yet this was the wretch who assassinated his mother, who set fire to Rome, and destroyed multitudes of men, women, and children, and threw the odium of that dreadful action upon the Christians. The cruelties he exercised towards them were beyond description, while he seemed to be the only one who enjoyed the tragical spectacle. Oh, human depravity, what a monster! Divine grace alone can change it and make it holy. (*Handbook to Scripture Doctrines.*)

Vers. 67–79. **And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost.**—*The song of Zacharias*:—I. Preliminary questions. In the opening portion of St. Luke's Gospel, there is a definiteness of time, place, and circumstance, which makes us feel that we are not breathing in the air or looking through the deceptive light of legend. We are not travelling in dreamland, for we can measure distances. The objections which have been made in modern times to this statement are derived from two elements in the narrative—(1) from the account of various angelic appearances; (2) from the recorded bursts of ecstatic or prophetic song. 1. As to the angelic appearance in these opening chapters. Unquestionably here, as elsewhere, throughout, and to its very close, St. Luke's is the Gospel of the holy angels. The existence of

angels rests upon the same witness as the whole supernatural life. There must be something of fitness in the times of their manifestation, and in the persons to whom they make themselves known. In a material age they cease to appear. There must be a certain saintly second-sight—a something angelic in the angel seen. All depends upon the initial point of view. From ours it is not incredible, but rather probable, that Gabriel should have come to Zacharias and Mary; that songs of acclamation should have rung out over Bethlehem. We are come to an innumerable company of angels. Well, too, may we be impressed by the gravity and reserve of the scriptural account of angelic appearances. Man receives no random invitation to a heedless intimacy on the one hand; to a Socinian heresy of angel *cultus* on the other. Of all the countless hosts of heaven, Scripture condescends to make but two known to us by name—Gabriel and Michael. 2. But, in reference to these opening scenes of St. Luke's Gospel, it has further been objected that these sacred songs, these bursts of Hebraic poetry, are unmistakably like art, or legend; that the critic is irresistibly impelled to see them in a piece of fancy work, like the songs in Tennyson's "Queen Mary." There are a few considerations which remove this obstinate prejudice of modern criticism. If labour and genius are the only possible creators of any form of literature, these songs, of course, can scarcely be genuine. But if, as a matter of fact, prophecy exists; if Jesus Christ be its chief and central subject, it is only natural that, after an interval of 400 years, it should awaken again, just as He was about to visit the earth; that the father of God's chosen servant, who was to go as a messenger before Messiah's face, should be filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesy. (1) The Benedictus was, no doubt, formed in the heart of Zacharias during the long months of enforced muteness, when he was dumb, and not able to speak. After nine months of silence it came streaming out like the molten metal when issue is given to it. (2) The pious Hebrew would have no such material difficulties as those which have been suggested above. For Hebrew poetry was not fettered by the laws of an inexorable prosody. It did not exact the exquisite and severe modulation of classical scansion. Psalm-like strains rushed spontaneously to the lips of those who lived in the circle of the Old Testament writings, and spake its language. Moreover—and this is most improtant of all—the whole substance and tenor of the Benedictus shows that it was not moulded by art; that it does not bear the same relation to the gospel history as the speeches of Pericles or Hannibal to the narratives of Thucydides and Livy. From what point of view must Zacharias have spoken? The sight of Christ which he enjoyed was far beyond that of any of the psalmists in clearness. Yet the picture which he drew must have been painted in Hebrew colours, and set in a Jewish framework. A later writer, in an age pre-eminently without critical tact and subtlety, would never have contented himself with putting these oracular utterances into the lips of Zacharias. No doubt the Christian Church has, almost from the beginning, used these songs in daily worship. By doing so she interprets them of Jesus. But the question is not, in the slightest degree, how the Christian Church understands this and the other songs, when they have been permanently committed to writing. The question is whether, after the cross and resurrection, after all things were fulfilled, she could, by any conceivable self-restraint, have managed to write them in such a strain? These songs would rather have been like the Apocalyptic strains, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." The mind which wrote the Benedictus, under the condition of a full historical knowledge of the gospel, must either have been an earnest or a deceptive mind. For an earnest mind, such reserve upon the subjects which were in the front rank of its affections, would have been unnatural; for a deceptive mind it would have been, *ex hypothesi*, impossible. Thus, the Benedictus is impossible at a date either earlier or later than that to which it is assigned by the third evangelist. Such visions of the light just dawning, such a conception of the general character of the approaching redemption, with such reserve—rather such silence—as to the mode in which it was to be carried out in detail; such silver brightness on the edge of the mist, such dimness in its heart; such strange eloquence and reserve—could only have come from one who stood on the thin border-line between the two dispensations—on the infinitesimal space between the two vast ranges before and behind. A little more, and the song would have been purely Christian; a little less, and it would have been purely Jewish. II. We proceed to draw some lessons from the song itself. 1. It is well to remember who and what Zacharias was. Zacharias was a holy and religious priest. The employment of Zacharias was that of a minister of a Divinely-ordained ritual. Now true revelation does not deal with the spirit of man mechani-

cally. The thought and utterance take the mould and colour of the mind, which the spirit freely uses. The form of the revelation is adapted to the natural tendencies and whole condition of him who is the Holy Ghost's voice or pen. The prophet-priest Ezekiel views the Church under the image which would naturally occur to one who had been trained in such an element—the image of a temple. The priest-prophet Zacharias views the life of all the emancipated children of God as one continuous worship, one endless priestly service—"That we, fearlessly, having been once for all delivered from hand of enemies, should continually do Him worship. In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days that we have." This is the essence and use of all the true ritualism of God. One word summed up the whole meaning and purpose of the priestly life of Zacharias—to do God service, to be worshipping Him. This word, this *Ich Dien* of the faithful priesthood, he makes the *Ich Dien* of every child of God. The one true priest, whose coming is so near, shall enable all the redeemed people to perform the true service of priests, to celebrate God's worship in the long festivity of a perpetual freedom. The motto of Christ's kingdom of priests comes fitly from the lips of an inspired priest. The meaning of the Old Testament ritual is given, as best became the fitness of things, by one who was "of the order of Abia." These words are sung in hundreds of churches. It is well that singers should be taught to sing "gracefully," as well as heartily, to the Lord. But both choirs and congregations should keep the words of Zacharias ever before them, "Without fear to do Him the worship and service of a life." 2. The place which is occupied by the Benedictus in the reformed Prayer Book is significant and interesting. It is placed immediately after the second lesson at morning service, which is always from one of the Gospels, Epistles, or the Apocalypse. Zacharias was the first New Testament prophet; and this is almost the first gospel hymn. The voice and song of such a one may fitly be heard immediately after our first reading from the New Testament. It does not, perhaps, seem a mere fancy to see in the contents of the Benedictus a reference to the work of the Christian ministry. Zacharias was a father as well as a priest. He turns, with a burst of joy, which was not merely natural, to his babe, and places him among the goodly company of the prophets—"And thou too, child, shalt be called prophet of the Highest. For onward thou shalt go, on, in front of the Lord, to prepare His ways; To give knowledge of salvation to His people." But what was to be done by the child of Zacharias is to be done by Christ's ministers, who "prepare and make ready a people for His second coming." And the simple reading of the simple gospel in the second lesson is a specimen, as it were, and epitome of all this work. III. This utterance of Zacharias is something more than a song or poem. It is a treatise on salvation. 1. Its Author—"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He hath raised up a strong salvation for us." 2. Its cause—"On account of the tender mercy of our God." 3. Its essence—"Salvation, consisting in remisssion of sins." 4. Its blessedness and privileges—"Being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, to serve Him without fear." 5. Its consequence—"In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days." All who have ever understood the Psalmist's deeply pathetic cry, "Make the reproach which I am afraid of to pass over," will also understand the preciousness of the privilege. We conclude by citing the image with which the song concludes. It is derived from a caravan which has lost its way, when the wayfarers "sit down" in the darkness, which is like the shadow of death, to perish in their helplessness. Then, in the high heavens, a glorious star makes its Epiphany. So often as we sing this hymn with true spiritual worship, with hearts full of the sense of that salvation which consists in remission of sins, the old song may be as full of life and joy as any new hymn. The Hymn of Zacharias is the strain of the "Pilgrims of the Night." (*Bishop Willliam Alexander.*) *Zachariah's canticle*:—1. Observe that no sooner was Zachary recovered and restored to his speech, but he sings the praises of his Redeemer, and offers up a thanksgiving to God. The best return we can make to God for the use of our tongue, for the giving or restoring of our speech, is to publish our Creator's praise, to plead His cause, and vindicate His honour. 2. The subject matter of Zachary's song. What is the particular and special mercy which He praises and blesses God for? It is not for his own particular and private mercy, namely, the recovery of his speech, though undoubtedly he was very thankful to God for that mercy; but he blesses and praises God for catholic and universal mercies bestowed upon His Church and people. 3. In this evangelical hymn there is a prophetic prediction, both concerning Christ and concerning John. (1) Concerning Christ, he declares that God the Father had sent Him of His free mercy and rich grace,

yet in performance of His truth and faithfulness, and according to His promise and oath which He had made to Abraham and the fathers of the Old Testament. Where note—(*a*) He blesses God for the comprehensive blessing of the Messiah—"visited," *i.e.*, in the incarnation of Jesus. (*b*) The special fruit and benefit of this gracious and merciful visitation—the redemption of a lost world. (*c*) The character given of this Saviour and Redeemer—"horn of salvation," *i.e.*, a royal and glorious, strong and powerful, Saviour to His Church and people. The horn in Scripture signifies glory and dignity, strength and power; as the beauty, so the strength of the beast lies in his horn; now Christ being styled a horn of salvation intimates that He Himself is a royal and princely Saviour, and that the salvation which He brings is great and plentiful, glorious and powerful. (*d*) The nature and quality of that salvation and deliverance which the Son of God came to accomplish for us. Not a temporal deliverance, as the Jews expected, from the power of the Romans; but spiritual, from the hands of sin and Satan, death and hell; His design was to purchase a spiritual freedom and liberty for us, that we might be enabled to serve Him without fear, *i.e.*, without the servile and offending fear of a slave, but with the dutiful and ingenuous fear of a child. Learn hence, that believers, who were slaves of Satan, are by Christ made God's freemen; and, as such, they owe God a willing, cheerful, and delightful service without fear, and a constant, persevering service all the days of their life. (*e*) The source and fountain from which this glorious Saviour and gracious salvation arose and sprang, viz., from the mercy and faithfulness of God. (2) Concerning John, he prophesies—(*a*) The nature of His office. (*b*) The quality of his work. He was to be a herald and harbinger to the Most High; as the morning star, foretelling the glorious arising of the Sun of Righteousness. 4. Zachary, having spoken a few words concerning his son, returns instantly to celebrate the praises of the Saviour, comparing Him to the rising sun, which shone forth in the brightness of the gospel to enlighten the dark corners of the world. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Deliverance at hand:*—When an English garrison, during the Indian Mutiny, was besieged at Lucknow, and was almost momentarily expecting the fall of the city, a sick woman started up from her slumber, crying, "We're saved! Don't you hear the music? They're coming! They're coming!" No one else could hear that music; yet, in a few hours, a relieving force arrived, and the garrison was saved. This prophecy of Zacharias is like the far-off music of the coming salvation. Compare in Motley's "Dutch Republic" the account of the relief of Leyden. The state of the world before the coming of Christ may be compared to that of shipwrecked men clinging to a rock in the midst of the sea. There is no safety for them where they are, and no safety in themselves. With what joyous eyes is it that they behold a boat coming to their rescue from the distant land! So in the case of lost humanity, salvation had to be brought. A man crossing a heath one dark night fell into a pit. He tried in vain to get out, calling loudly for assistance all the while. Soon people gathered to his assistance, and a rope was lowered to him. He grasped it, and was drawn up into the light. So mankind cannot be uplifted from the pit of sin, except by salvation brought from above. (*Sunday School Times.*) *God's faithfulness:*—Like the song of Mary, this prophecy of Zacharias tells of God's faithfulness in His promises. In ancient times there was a beautiful rite of hospitality. Friends residing in different countries gave each other emblems, on the presentation of which each could claim the hospitality of the other. And when they both were dead, the son of one could call upon the son of the other for the same hospitality by presenting his emblem. The promises made to the father were fulfilled to the son. So down through the ages the Jews waited for the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham. But to us it is given to see in clearer light their complete fulfilment, and how that came neither too late nor too soon. (*Ibid.*) *The song of Zacharias:*—I. Let us join Zacharias in his song of praise for that great deliverance of which John was the harbinger. The blessings here celebrated were not confined to Jews, but are common to all God's people. Salvation is ever the same in substance, and much the same in its form and means. II. It becomes us to be thankful that the light of the gospel has visited our own land in particular. Through God's mercy we have been lifted out of idolatry, impurity, and misery, into the knowledge of the truth. Let us see that the "light" is shining into our hearts, and that we are walking in it. III. Deliverance from enemies through the gospel. Saved from sin; taken out of the power of our spiritual foes. IV. Serving God without fear. 1. External peace and security. 2. Internal state of mind produced by religion. At peace with God; delighting in Him as a Father and Friend. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *The parental relationship:*—

There are men and women known in history chiefly by their relation to their children. They were godly men and women; men and women of ability and usefulness in their day; but their pre-eminent place in the world is as parents. This fact should be a stimulus and a source of hope to every parent. Whatever a father or a mother may have done or have failed to do up to the present hour, there is that child to be looked after, to be loved and cared for, to be trained and prayed over, to have faith in behalf of. In that child there may lie the hope and the joy of multitudes, and the hope and the joy of the parents as well. How this ought to nerve us and give us cheer as we toil and pray for the child of our hearts. That child may rise up to call us blessed, and, for his sake, all generations may call us blessed. It is for us to do our duty by our children. It may be for us to have a reward in them beyond all other rewards we have in and for our earthly course. You are the father, or the mother, of that child. How much of good does that portend to him? How much of good it may portend to you! (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *The source of true power*:—"Filled with the Holy Ghost"—*that* was fitness for praising God acceptably, and for proclaiming His truth acceptably, in the days of Zacharias. It was not that Zacharias was filled with enthusiasm, filled with earnestness, filled with knowledge, filled with poetic fervour; but that he was filled with the Holy Ghost. That gave his words power, and, because of that fact, his words are in our ears and on our lips to-day. There is no other source of true power in God's service in this age, or in any age. To be a good parent, a good teacher, a good preacher, a good Bible student, a good man, or a good woman, one needs to be filled with the Holy Ghost; there is no substitute for this. (*Ibid.*) *Songs composed under stress of deep feeling*:—On the night before her execution, Mary Queen of Scots composed a short prayer, and sang it over by herself because she could not sleep. The words are very musical in the Latin which she used, expressing the passionate wish of a captive to escape:

"O Lord God Almighty! my hope is in Thee!
O Jesus beloved, now liberate me!
In durance the drearest, in bonds the severest—
My desire is to Thee!
In sighing and crying, on bended knees lying,
I adore—I implore Thou would'st liberate me!"

When Madame Guyon and her faithful maid were imprisoned, she composed songs for her comfort. "And then," says she, "we sang them together, praises unto Thee, O our God! It sometimes seemed to me as if I were a little bird, whom the Lord had placed in a cage, and that I had nothing to do now but sing!" *Religious value of song*:—Bishop Jewel, writing to Peter Martyr, March, 1560, says: "Religion is now somewhat more established than it was. The people are everywhere exceedingly inclined to the better part. Ecclesiastical and popular music has much conduced to this result. For as soon as they had once commenced to sing publicly in only one little church in London, immediately not only the other neighbouring churches, but even the towns far distant, began to vie with each other in the same practice. At times you may see at Paul's Cross, after sermon, six thousand persons, old and young, of both sexes, singing together and praising God. This sadly annoys the priests and the devil, for they see that by these means the sacred discourses sink more deeply into men's minds, and that their kingdom is shaken and shattered at almost every note." *The song of Zacharias*:—It is emphatically the song of a man whose tongue is unloosed; who for the first time has entered into the meaning of the books which he has been reading since his childhood, of the services in which he has been engaged ever since he became a priest. A speech may be invented with tolerable success for a general on the eve of a battle, though such as have really come down to us stir the blood far more; but the mimicry of this kind of feeling must have been odious and contemptible. I know not where you could find the stamp of fraud more clear and ineffaceable than on a document which attempted it. If the words of Zacharias have lasted to our day, and have been accepted by men of different races as vital and true words—as words which speak to and speak forth the human heart within them—I cannot persuade myself that they bear that stamp of insincerity. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *Spontaneous spiritual song*:—One can't help thinking that the mind and heart of Zacharias during all those nine months had been filling with this song. And now it bursts forth at once—as a flower suddenly bursts out where there was but a green-sheathed bud

yesterday. This song is as spontaneous as that of a lark, and as lyrical. As David found a prayer in his heart (2 Sam. vii. 27), so Zacharias found a song in his. (*A. B. Grosart, D.D.*) It is a wonderful scene in the house of the old priest Zacharias that we are permitted to witness. The priest's lips had long been sealed. In silence he had awaited the fulfilment of the Divine promise. His tongue was not to be loosed till the word of the Lord had been fulfilled, that his first utterance might be praise to God for His wonderful works. It was manifest that a new era was beginning—the era of the long-expected redemption of Israel. This is the strain of Zacharias' hymn of praise. Just as a mountain stream, which, after being long hemmed in, finds at last an outlet, leaps along in tumultuous gladness, so does the long pent-up emotion of Zacharias' heart flow forth in a rapture of praise, "Blessed be the Lord," &c. We feel that this is not the expression simply of his own personal, fatherly gladness. It is the rejoicing song of all who looked for redemption in Israel, thus finding utterance through him. We observe that it was—I. A TIME OF FULFILMENT (vers. 67–70), and—II. A TIME OF SALVATION (vers. 71–79). (*Professor Luthardt.*) *Emotion breaking out into speech*:—A vivid emotion of love and gratitude is very apt to break out into speech, either in the form of a public testimony for Christ, or in the voice of song. I have known a prayer meeting, at a time of awakening, to become like an aviary, for God had put a new song into scores of mouths. (*T. L. Cuyler.*) *Changed by the Spirit*:—No man or woman amongst you knows what he might be if he were filled with the Spirit. What is that rough Luther? He is only fit to have been a killer of bullocks, or a feller of oaks in the forest; but fill Luther with the Holy Spirit and what is he? He takes the bull of Rome by the horns, slays wild beasts of error in the great arena of the gospel, and is more than a conqueror through the might which dwelleth in him! Take John Calvin—fit naturally to be a cunning lawyer, cutting and dividing nice points, judging this precedent and that, frittering away his time over immaterial niceties; but fill him with the Holy Ghost and John Calvin becomes the mighty master of grace, the reflection of the wisdom of all past ages, and a great light to shed a brilliant ray even till the Millennium shall dawn! Chief, and prince, and king of all uninspired teachers, the mighty seer of Geneva, filled with the Spirit of God is no more John Calvin, but a God-sent angel of the Churches! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 68. **Visited and redeemed His people.**—*Visited*:—1. To visit is the work of one that comes to do a charitable office to a sick person, according to that place (Matt. xxv.), "I was sick and ye visited Me." So Christ came into this world because it languished of a sore disease. 2. To give a visit to another is a voluntary courtesy, an act of kindness that hath no compulsion or unwillingness in it: for he that visits any place or persons, if he did not like them he might keep away; but you cannot imagine more promptness and readiness in any one than there was in our Saviour, to be humbled to that baseness to take our nature upon him. 3. There is not only willingness, but friendliness in the appellation: no man visits another but in the profession of a friend; therefore St. Paul says upon the Incarnation (Tit. iii. 4), "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared." (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Redeemed*:—1. Now captivity must be presupposed on our part, because we did await and expect redemption. 2. As his goodness is amplified from our captivity, so the redemption is the more valuable, because none else could have plucked us out of those fetters but the Holy One, our Lord and Master. 3. And let it make a third animadversion, that the manner of our redemption doth greatly exaggerate the most meritorious compassion of the Redeemer; there hath been redemption wrought by force and victory, so Moses brought the Israelites with an high hand out of the slavery of Egypt: there is a redemption which is wrought by intercession and supplication; so Nehemiah prevailed with King Cyrus, to dismiss the Jews out of the Babylonish captivity: or thirdly, either gold, or silver, or somewhat more precious is laid down to buy out the freedom of that which is in thraldom; that's the most costly and estimable way when value for value is paid; or fourthly, the body of one is surrendered up for the ransom of another, life for life, blood for blood; and greater charity cannot be shown than to bring redemption to pass by such a compensation. So St. Peter extols that act in our Saviour; says he, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the blood of Christ, as a lamb undefiled." So out of His own mouth (Matt. xx. 28). 4. As all mankind that is flesh and blood in every man and woman is honoured by His visitation, so all without exceptions are beholden to His redemption. Zachary the priest with all his innocency, who is said to have

been blameless and righteous before God, yet he blesseth God that he was redeemed. Having thus spoken of the benefits of visitation and redemption, I should leave my treatise very imperfect if I should not speak of the receivers; very briefly therefore concerning them upon whom all was conferred, "He hath visited and redeemed His people." It is certain that the generations of mankind are meant by this word, the sons and daughters of Adam, and none others. (*Ibid.*) *Difficulty of defining redemption:*—If you should expect from me a discourse in which I should explain redemption, I must follow the example of that philosopher of ancient times who, when some asked a definition of God, said I must first ask for a week to prepare my reply; after that week is passed I must ask a second, and again a third, and so on till I had at last declared that I never could end my demand for time. For the more that philosopher meditated on God, the less was he able to give a definition; and the more I meditate on redemption, the less can I explain it. (*Adolphe Monod.*) *Realizing redemption:*—Dean Stanley tells us that Dr. Arnold used to make his boys say, "Christ died for me," instead of the more general phrase, "Christ died for us." "He appeared to me," says one whose intercourse with him never extended beyond these lessons. "to be remarkable for his habit of realizing everything that we are told in Scripture." (*Life of Dr. Arnold.*) *God's great redemption:*—John Frederick Oberlin put off all earthly comfort to redeem a barren district of France from poverty and ignorance, with his own pickaxe beginning the building of a high road from Ban de la Roche up to the city of Strasburg. But here was a highway to be constructed from the squalor of earth to the heights of heaven. Clarkson pleaded before the English Parliament, and the Russian Emperor, against the slave trade. But here was the question of deliverance for a hundred thousand millions of bondmen. Aye! it was the pounding off of an iron chain from the neck of a captive world. I think it was the greatest and most absorbing thought of God's lifetime. I do not think that there was anything in all the ages of the past, or that there will be in all the ages of the future, anything to equal it. The masterpiece of eternity! There were so many difficulties to be overcome! There were such infinite consequences to be considered! There were such gulfs to bridge, and such heights to scale, and such immensities to compass! If God had been less than omnipotent, He would not have been strong enough; or less than omniscient, I do not think He would have been wise enough; or less loving, would have been sympathetic enough. There might have been a God strong enough to create a universe, and yet too weak to do this. To create the worlds, only a word was necessary; but to do this work required more than a word. It required more than ordinary effort of a God. It required the dying anguish of an Only Son. (*Dr. Talmage.*)

Ver. 70. **As he spake.**—*All God's promises are fulfilled:*—Look over your lives, O Christians! and you cannot find one hour when God's promises have failed you. Look over the history of His people, and it is full of promises fulfilled; but there is not a fragment of a broken promise to be found. When Elisha's servant was afraid because the armies of Syria were besieging them in Dothan, Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened; and the servant saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots round about Elisha. If God touches our eyes, we too shall see all our own life and all history full of God's fulfilled promises round about us. As when Milton's archangel spoke—

> "To confirm His words, out flew
> Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
> Of mighty cherubim."

So God speaks a promise, and out fly millions of facts and experiences to confirm His words. *Faithfulness of God:*—Far, far above all comprehension is the truth and faithfulness of God. He never fails, nor forgets, nor falters, nor forfeits His word. Afflictions are like clouds, but the Divine truthfulness is all around them. While we are under the cloud we are in the region of God's faithfulness; when we mount above it we shall not need such an assurance. To every word of threat, or promise, prophecy or covenant, the Lord has exactly adhered, for He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Mercy of God boundless:*—Like the ethereal blue, it encompasses the whole earth, smiling upon universal nature, acting as a canopy for all the creatures of earth,

surmounting the loftiest peaks of human provocations, and rising high above the mists of mortal transgression. Clear sky is evermore above, and mercy calmly smiles above the din and smoke of this poor world. Darkness and clouds are but of earth's lower atmosphere: the heavens are evermore serene, and bright with innumerable stars. Divine mercy abides in its vastness of expanse, and matchless patience, all unaltered by the rebellions of man. When we can measure the heavens, then shall we bound the mercy of the Lord. Towards his own servants especially, in the salvation of the Lord Jesus, He has displayed grace higher than the heaven of heavens, and wider than the universe. O that the atheist could but see this, how earnestly would he long to become a servant of Jehovah! (*Ibid.*) *Immovableness of the Divine promises*:—A swallow having built its nest upon the tent of Charles V., the Emperor generously commanded that the tent should not be taken down when the camp removed, but should remain until the young birds were ready to fly. Was there such a gentleness in the heart of a soldier toward a poor bird which was not of his making, and shall the Lord deal hardly with His creatures when they venture to put their trust in Him? Be assured He hath a great love to those trembling souls that fly for shelter to His royal courts. He that buildeth his nest upon a Divine promise shall find it abide and remain until he shall fly away to the land where promises are lost in fulfilments. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 73. **The oath which He sware.**—*The purpose of God's oath*:—God doth not give it to make His word or promise sure and steadfast, but to give assurance and security to us of their accomplishment. Every word of God is sure and certain truth itself, because it is His; and He might justly require of us the belief of it, without any further attestation. But yet, knowing what great objections Satan and our own unbelieving hearts will raise against His promises, at least as to our own concerns in them, to confirm our minds, and to take away all pretences of unbelief, He interposes His oath in this matter. (*John Owen.*) *God's covenants*:—A covenant is a contract, or a compact, between two agreeing parties, that, on certain conditions being observed by one party, the other will do as specified. God made a covenant of works with our first parents, that if they obeyed His commands they should enjoy His favour and blessings. Since the fall, God has made a covenant of grace by faith with mankind, that, trusting in Him, through atonement, they should be saved and blessed. God entered into covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. xvii. 2–14). God covenants with us that He will answer our believing prayers; that He will teach and guide those who are willing and obedient; that He will fulfil to us all His exceeding great and precious promises, if we perform the simple, easy, reasonable conditions attached to them. Then God will ever be faithful to His engagements. "Suppose," said one, "God were not to fulfil His promises to you." "Then," was the reply of the Christian lady addressed, "He would lose more than I should." This would be the fact, for in such a case God would lose the glory of His Divine faithfulness, truth, holiness, justice, mercy, love, &c. But this is an utter impossibility. God "cannot lie," therefore we may each say, with David, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." (*H. R. Burton.*)

Ver. 74. **Being delivered out of the hand of our enemies.**—*Delivered from the hand of the enemy*:—While labouring among the wild tribes of the Druses, a messenger from one of their chiefs, whose influence it was important to secure, sent a message entreating Mr. Gobat to visit him. The latter, however, was unable to do so in consequence of indisposition. A second messenger repeated the invitation, but still, contrary to Mr. Gobat's expectations, he was prevented from complying with the chief's wishes. A third messenger prevailed on him to set out, by the assurance that if he went at once he might spend the night with the chief, and be ready to return in the morning, so as to join a ship about to sail for Malta, in which Mr. Gobat was anxious to embark. On their journey the guides lost themselves in the mountain paths. Having at last, with some difficulty, regained their route, they suddenly saw by the light of the moon that a hyena had laid itself down across the path exactly in their way. They threw stones to frighten it, when the animal sprang up and ran along the path which the party were to travel. A superstition is prevalent among the Druses, that "the way a hyena goes is an unlucky one." The natives refused, accordingly, to go farther, and Mr. Gobat had to retrace his steps, greatly perplexed at the obstacles which had hindered a journey

apparently of so much consequence to his mission. When in Malta he received a letter from a friend in Lebanon, stating that he had been visited by the chief, who, with much agitation, had spoken to him as follows:—"Your friend is truly a servant of God, and God has preserved him; for I wished to draw him to my village in order to murder him. Therefore I sent message after message to him; but God has delivered him from the hand of his enemies." (*Memoirs of the late Bishop Gobat.*) *God's interposition:*—In a Western cabin, far away from all other residences, there sat a Christian mother rocking her babe to sleep. The husband and the father had been called suddenly off on business, and there had been no defence provided for that house that night in the wilderness. As the mother sat there in the cabin rocking her babe to sleep, miles away from any other tenement, glancing to the floor she saw a ruffian's foot projecting from under the table. Having rocked her child to sleep she put him in the cradle, and then knelt down and said: "Oh! Lord, keep this child; keep me. Oh! Thou who never slumbereth, watch over our cabin to-night. Let no harm come to us. If there be those abroad who wish us ill, bring them to a better mind. The Lord have mercy upon all wanderers, all who do deeds of violence and death. Bring them to Thyself—bring them to pardon and to heaven." As she arose from the prayer the ruffian came out from under the table and said: "There will be no harm to you to-night. Pray for me, I am the wanderer that you spoke of. Pray for me." Years passed on, and that Christian woman sat in a great meeting called in the interest of reform. There was a great orator that day to be present, and as he preached righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, his eye fell upon the countenance of that woman. His cheek was blanched and he almost failed in his speech. At the close of the meeting they joined hands, and a few words of conversation passed, and some one said: "Why, where did you form the acquaintance of that orator?" "Never mind," she said, "I have known him many years." Who was it watching the mother that night? Who was it watching the babe? Who was it that brought the ruffian to God in repentance for his sin? Who is it that watches all our cradles, and all our tables, and all our homes, and all our way? Blessed be His glorious name for ever. He is a shelter to which we may all run. He is a fortress in which we may all be safe. (*Dr. Talmage.*) **Might serve Him without fear.**—*Serving the Lord in holiness:*—I. The conveyance made in this covenant—"That He would grant unto us," &c. II. The benefits secured to us in this conveyance. Let us then attend—I. To THE CONVEYANCE MADE IN THIS COVENANT. In this two things may be observed. 1. The parties in whose favour this conveyance is made. Us, the seed of Abraham. So in this gospel, the covenant is held out to you all, as heaven's blank bond for grace and glory, that whosoever will, may fill his own name in it, by applying the same to himself in the way of believing. 2. The manner of the conveyance. It is by way of grant or gift, for so the word is. But observe the gift is to us, and so it is to be understood in respect of us, to be a free gift. In respect of the Lord Jesus, it is not so. All the benefits of the covenant, to be bestowed on His spiritual seed, are made over to Him on a valuable consideration. God gives us to serve our Redeemer, because Christ served Him perfectly in our room and stead. II. To THE BENEFITS SECURED TO US IN THIS CONVEYANCE, even the sum of the benefits of the covenant of grace. 1. The principal benefit, which stands here under the notion of the end, namely, serving the Lord. "That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve Him." O that men would learn this lesson, that any service we do to God, if right service, it is a benefit of the covenant, bestowed on us, for Christ's sake. Then would they learn that God is not debtor unto them for it, but they are debtors to free grace on that very account. And the more they do for God, and the better that they do it, they are always the deeper in debt to free grace, (Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10). This benefit of the covenant, that we might serve Him, imports three things: 1. The privilege of God's service. God is a master of infinite glory and power, so that to be admitted into His service is the greatest privilege. How do men value themselves, in that they are of an earthly king's household, servants to one who wears a crown? But what a small thing is that, in comparison of this, to be the fellows of angels, in being taken into the service of Jehovah, the Lord of heaven and earth. It is a great part of heaven's happiness. "For there His servants shall serve Him." 2. Strength and ability for His service. "And I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in His name, saith the Lord." "He that abideth in Me, and I in him," saith Jesus, "the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing." "For His grace is

sufficient for us, and His strength is made perfect in weakness." 3. Acceptance of the service. For without faith it is impossible to please God. Concerning this covenant service, two things are further to be remarked. 1. The kind of service to God, in which sinners are instated by the covenant of grace; for there is a great difference of services. Now—(1) This is not bond service, the service of slaves, who work their work for fear of their master's whip. "Wherefore we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father." (2) It is not hired service, so much work for so much wages. But—(3) It is an honorary service. So the word used by the Holy Ghost, in the text, signifies to minister, which is an honorary kind of service, such as kings and priests had when put into their office. Thus Christ hath made His people kings and priests unto God. They are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ. Let us now attend—2. To the qualities of the service. They are these: (1) It is universal, which the service of these remaining under the first covenant never is. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments." We are to serve Him in holiness and righteousness. These answer to the whole holy law as a rule of life. That grace is held forth in the covenant, which you are to embrace for sanctification, as well as justification. And it is a full covenant for that purpose, as for all other purposes of salvation. (2) It is a perpetual and lasting service. The first covenant required a lasting service, but secured not man from breaking the service. But the second covenant secures the perpetuity of the service, that, however fickle the believer is, yet he shall serve the Lord all the days of his life. It imports that he shall serve the Lord for ever and ever, in heaven, after death. We are now to consider, secondly, the subordinate benefit, namely, deliverance from our enemies, which stands here as a mean in order to the end, namely, God's service. "That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve Him." It is evident from the structure of the words, both in our version, and in the original especially, that the service is the end of the deliverance, and the deliverance the means of the service. As God said of Israel in Egypt, so doth He say of all His people; "Let My son go, that he may serve Me." They cannot serve the Lord till once they be delivered. This may also direct you in your management of this solemn occasion of grace and salvation. 1. If ever you would be capable to serve the Lord, seek that you may be delivered from your spiritual enemies, taken out of their hands who keep you in bondage. 2. If ever you would obtain that deliverance from your spiritual enemies, seek it in the covenant, in a way of believing. "And if the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." Lastly, Seek that deliverance, that you may serve the Lord. Many seek deliverance by Christ, that they may live at ease in the embraces of their lusts, free from the fear of hell. (*T. Boston.*) *Serving the Lord in holiness*:—I. THE COVENANT DELIVERANCE BESTOWED. We, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies. I shall reduce these to four. 1. They are delivered from the law. Not from the law as a rule of life in the hand of a Mediator, standing in the covenant of grace; but from the law as a covenant, under which all men are in their natural state (Rom. vi. 14, 15). They are delivered from the curse of it. From the commanding power of it. For how can it have a commanding power over them who are not under it? But they are as completely freed from it, as death can make a wife free from her husband. 2. From sin. Though they are not free from the indwelling of it in this life, and molestation by it, yet they are freed from its guilt of eternal wrath, by which it binds over the sinner to the revenging wrath of God. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." They are freed also from the dominion of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." 3. From death. Our Lord's words are, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep My saying, he shall never see death." Lastly, from Satan, though not from molestation by him in this life; yet from under his power and dominion. Let us now—II. Take notice of the covenant service, WHICH IS THE DESIGN OF THIS DELIVERANCE; and not only the design of the deliverance, but also of the deliverer: which, therefore, shall certainly take effect in the delivered. I take it up in three things, according to the text. They shall serve the Lord—1. As sons serving their Father. Love to their Father will set them to work. 2. They shall serve Him universally. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all Thy commandments." They will serve the Lord internally and externally. 3. They will serve Him constantly. "I have inclined my heart to perform Thy statutes alway, even unto the end." Let us—III. SHOW THE NECESSARY CONNECTION

BETWIXT THE COVENANT DELIVERANCE AND COVENANT SERVICE. 1. None can serve the Lord in this right manner, till once in the first place, they are delivered: no more than a dead corpse can rise and serve you (Eph. ii. 1–10). 2. The soul being once thus delivered, will certainly serve the Lord "in holiness and righteousness before Him." Use 1. The sanctification of sinners is the chief subordinate end of the covenant of grace, or of the gospel, standing next to the glory of God. Use 2. They in whom the spirit of legalism, hypocrisy, and apostasy reigns, have no part nor lot in this matter. Lastly, as ever you would evidence yourselves God's covenant people, partakers of this deliverance, serve no more the devil and your own lusts. (*Ibid.*) *The practical nature of Christianity*:—I. The first blessing resulting from the Incarnation of Christ is DELIVERANCE FROM OUR ENEMY. Man's worst enemy is the devil and sin. In one sense it may be said we are not freed from these, for temptation besets the path of the Christian all through life; and the best and holiest men must with shame confess that they day by day offend. Yet is it true that since the coming of Christ the power of the devil on earth is much diminished, our Lord having seen him like lightning fall from heaven, and having by His descent into hell triumphed over the dismal powers of despair and hell. Strong as temptation is, we know that no one is tempted beyond what he is able to resist, and if he have recourse to the passion of Christ he will obtain not only a victory but a crown. II. The next result of Christ having come in the flesh is, THAT WE MAY SERVE HIM WITHOUT FEAR. To every son of Adam sufficient grace is given to save him, though, alas! we see too many neglect so gracious a gift. But if the work of Christ be thus enabling, what an obligation it lays on all to occupy with that precious talent. God has done all this to enable you to render to Him that service, which is not only perfect freedom, but the true end and happiness of the creature, the very purpose for which all things were called into being. And this service is without fear. The relation with God into which we are brought through His Divine Son is a filial one. We have received the adoption of sons, and therefore the more we act as dutiful children, the more we shall love our kind parent; and when love is perfect, then, we are told, it casts out fear. The feor thus cast out is distrust of God's goodness and mercy, or the dread of ever being separated from His holy care. But we are not for a moment to believe that any supposed advance in the spiritual life entitles us to take liberties with the honour of Him, at whose sight the whole earth trembles. III. THIS SERVICE IS IN HOLINESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. Holiness has been defined to be purity and strength, the clean heart and the strong will dedicated as an offering to God; and righteousness is the same as justice, and may be taken either for that one great quality, whereby we render both to God and to man what is due, or else for that habitual charity, which contains the whole cycle of the Christian duties. IV. THIS SERVICE IS PROGRESSIVE AND CONTINUOUS—"All the days of our life." 1. No man is really safe till his trial is over. A blight may come over the soul; temptation, hitherto successfully resisted, may at length be succumbed to; conscience drugged, the soul may finally be lost. (1) This thought should make us all humble. (2) Watchful. (3) Prayerful. (4) Thankful for the merciful warning, "Be not high-minded, but fear." 2. We must be ever advancing. It takes a long and a weary time to destroy the traces of old sin, and form ourselves upon the model of the new man. Even at the end we shall be far short of the ensample proposed to us, but there is comfort in the thought that even if we are not now what we ought to be, there is no necessity for staying as we are. God is ever calling us, and aiding us in our faintest efforts to obey that call. He mercifully deals with us both by prosperity and by adversity, if we only will submit to His loving discipline. (*Bishop A. P. Forbes.*) *Delivered from fear*:—How safe Noah, his family, and all the creatures in the ark were when God shut them in, and took them under His protection! A man dreamed that he was enclosed in a steel house, and though enemies came with guns, bayonets, and swords to kill him, he was perfectly safe. How much more secure are those who have God for their Refuge, Shield, and Protector. During a terrible storm at sea, a Christian officer was perfectly calm and fearless. His wife expressed surprise at this, when he drew his sword, and placing the point close to her breast, said, "I could kill you." "But," she replied, "I am not afraid, because I know you love me, and you won't hurt me." "So I fear not," responded he, "because God loves me, and He won't hurt me." Knox was said never to have feared the face of any man. Chrysostom said once, "Go, tell her," (Queen Eudoxia) "that I fear nothing but sin." (*H. R. Burton.*) *Serving God and the fear of man*:—"When in my deep distress I determined to call on God I wanted to be sure that

no one should hear me. I went to the woods, where, at the foot of a large tree, I had pled alone a thousand times without the least fear of intrusion. But now I could not feel alone. Some one was on the other side of the tree. I walked round it, but still felt that some listener, eluding me, was on the other side. In this way I actually walked several times around the tree. Stopping, I said: What are men or devils that I should quail before them when seeking Jehovah? Then I prayed, and if the assembled universe had been there I should have prayed." (*Dr. Finney.*) *Tormenting fear of God:*—And as I was brought up under the influence of fear of my parents, so I was also brought up under the influence of fear of God. I do not believe that there is any creature in India that goes before monstrous-mouthed idols with more quaking than I felt when I thought of Jehovah. I used to read those hymns of Watts, where he threw blood on the blazing throne, and quenched indignation, and brought forth love and mercy; and if I have not been through purgatory under the experience bred by the view presented in those hymns, nobody has! That which I hungered for and needed from the beginning was not terror. I was terrified enough. I had too much fear. And I remember perfectly—all eternity will not burn it out—when a change came over my feelings. I was walking near Lane Seminary (where I studied theology without a hope), and was working over a lesson that I was to hear recited; and the idea dawned on me, not that there had been a covenant formed between God and His Son, but that Christ revealed the nature of God, whose very soul was curative, and who brought Himself and His living holiness to me, because I needed so much, and not because I was so deserving; and that instant the clouds rose, and the whole heaven was radiant, and I exclaimed, "I have found God!" and it was the first time I had found Him. Good His name was; and I went like one crazed up and down through the fields, half crying, half laughing, singing and praying and shouting like a good Methodist. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 75. **All the days of our life.**—*The holy and their heavenly prospects:*—True, all our lives long we shall be bound to refrain our soul and keep it low; but what then? For the books we now forbear to read, we shall one day be endued with wisdom and knowledge. For the music we will not listen to, we shall join in the song of the redeemed. For the pictures from which we turn, we shall gaze unabashed on the beatific vision. For the companionship we shun, we shall be welcomed into angelic society and the communion of triumphant saints. For the pleasures we miss, we shall abide, and evermore abide, in the rapture of heaven. It cannot be much of a hardship to dress modestly, and at small cost, rather than richly and fashionably, if, with a vivid conviction, we are awaiting the "white robes of the redeemed." And, indeed, this anticipation of pure and simple white robes for eternal wear may fairly shake belief in the genuine beauty of elaborate showiness, even for such clothes as befitted in the present distress. (*Christina G. Rossetti.*) *Holiness:*—What is the base line of the Bible? It is sin. And it is not one of the chief reasons why the Bible is made so little of that men do not realize what sin is—how dreadful and how fatal it is? What is the horizontal line of the Bible? It is holiness. That is where earth and heaven meet. But on that horizon line there is only one point of sight, it is where God and man meet in Christ, in whom alone holiness can be found. (*John Munro Gibson.*) *Ambition to excel in holiness:*—"There is nothing," it might have seemed when the first settlers of Massachusetts established the English race on the cheerless shores, the barren rocks, the trackless forests of this continent. Yet there was everything; there was the hope of a new world; there were the elements of a mighty nation, if only those who followed after sustained the high spirit and great resolves of those who had gone before. It was but two days ago that I read in the close of a volume written by the founder of the venerable village of Concord, a sentence which ought to bring at once the noblest encouragement and the sternest rebuke to every citizen of this Commonwealth. "There is no people," says Peter Bulkley, in his Gospel Covenant, in the year 1646, to his little flock of exiles, "There is no people but will strive to excel in something. What can we excel in if not in holiness? If we look to numbers, we are the fewest; if to strength, we are the weakest; if to wealth and riches, we are the poorest of all the people of God throughout the whole world. We cannot excel, nor so much as equal, other people in these things; and, if we come short in grace and holiness, we are also the most despicable people under heaven. Strive we therefore to excel, and suffer not this crown to be taken away from us. (*Dean Stanley.*)

Ver. 77. **To give knowledge of salvation.**—*Source of salvation:*—All great rivers, unlike some great men who have begun life in lowly circumstances, boast a lofty descent. It is after the Alpine traveller has left smiling valleys beneath him, and toiling along rugged glens and through deep mountain gorges, reaches at length the shores of an icy sea, that he stands at the source of the river, which, cold as the snows that feed it, and a full-grown torrent at its birth, rushes out from the cavern of the hollowed glacier. Yet such a river, in the loftiness of its birth-place, is but an humble image of salvation. How high its source! "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *God a great forgiver:*—Mr. Fleming, in his "Fulfilling of the Scriptures," relates the case of a man who was a very great sinner, and for his horrible wickedness was put to death in the town of Ayr. This man had been so stupid and brutish a fellow, that all who knew him thought him beyond the reach of all ordinary means of grace; but while the man was in prison the Lord wonderfully wrought on his heart, and in such a measure discovered to him his sinfulness, that, after much serious exercise and sore wrestling, a most kindly work of repentance followed, with great assurance of mercy, insomuch that when he came to the place of execution he could not cease crying out to the people, under the sense of pardon and the comforts of the presence and favour of God, "Oh, He is a great forgiver! He is a great forgiver!" And he added the following words: "Now hath perfect love cast out fear. I know God hath nothing to lay against me, for Jesus Christ hath paid all; and those are free whom the Son makes free." (*Arvine.*) *Nature silent concerning salvation:*—On one occasion the late Dr. Newton was travelling in a railway carriage, when he found himself in the presence of an infidel, who soon began to obtrude his opinions upon his fellow passengers, declaring his contempt for the Bible, adding that he did not need it; the book of nature affording him all the information that he required on religious and moral subjects. Dr. Newton, observing a young man in the company who might receive some injury from these remarks, deemed it his duty to interfere. Looking at the infidel, he said, "The book of nature, sir, that you have mentioned, is a large volume, and he is a very learned man that is acquainted with all its contents. Yet there is one subject on which I think it gives no information." "Indeed," said the infidel, "what is that?" "What is that," rejoined Dr. Newton, "it is salvation." "Salvation!" exclaimed the infidel. "Aye, salvation," rejoined the Doctor. "Every man is sensible from what passes in his own conscience that he has done wrong, and that that which all people confess to be morally wrong, everywhere meets our sight. To do wrong renders us liable to punishment, and therefore we need salvation. But where do you find anything about salvation in the book of nature? Do you find it in the grass of the fields, either when it grows or when it fades away? Do you find it in the ever-varying surface of the sea? or in the clouds as they pass over your head? The book which you too exclusively admire was written too soon for the purpose of instructing men with respect to the nature and method of salvation. It was written before there was sin in the world, and therefore before salvation was needed." The infidel stood aghast, and said not a word.

Ver. 78. **Through the tender mercy of our God.**—*Christ's advent:*—I. A VERY AFFECTING VIEW OF THE STATE OF MANKIND BEFORE CHRIST CAME. "Darkness and the shadow of death." 1. Ignorant of the moral character of God. 2. Ignorant of the purity of God's law. 3. Ignorant as to the evil nature and dreadful consequences of sin. 4. Ignorant as to the true source of happiness. 5. Ignorant regarding the future state. II. A VERY INTERESTING DESCRIPTION OF THE SAVIOUR. "The Dayspring." 1. The great source of light; (1) Natural; (2) intellectual; (3) rational; (4) spiritual. 2. The dayspring is gradual and progressive. (1) Revelation has waxed fuller and fuller throughout the ages. (2) The increasing enlightenment of individuals. 3. The dayspring is certain and irresistible. The darkest moral clouds must eventually succumb to the bright beams shed by the Sun of Righteousness. 4. The dayspring is free, and common to all. III. A VERY ENCOURAGING REPRESENTATION OF THE DESIGN OF CHRIST'S MISSION. 1. To give light. He has shown Himself—(1) in the dignity of His person; (2) in the perfection of His atonement; (3) in the fulness of His grace; (4) in the willingness to save which He has manifested; (5) in the discovery He has made of the means of cleansing from moral guilt. 2. To give peace. (1) Peace with God; (2) peace with our fellow-men; (3) peace with ourselves. Notice in conclusion: 1. The infinite condescension of Jehovah in interposing on our behalf. 2. The Christian's duty and privilege. (1) His duty is to

trust in the Lord in time of darkness. (2) His privilege sometimes is to walk in the light of God's countenance. 3. The miserable state of those who hear the good news, and yet hold aloof. 4. If the pleasures of religion be so great upon earth, what must be the enjoyment of believers in the upper world? (*Dr. Scott.*)

The tender mercy of our God:—The original is, "The mercy of the heart of our God." This seems to mean not only tenderness, but much more. The mercy of the heart of God is, of course, the mercy of His great tenderness, the mercy of His infinite gentleness and consideration; but other thoughts also come forth from the expression, like bees from a hive. It means the mercy of God's very soul. The heart is the seat and centre of life, and mercy is to God as His own life. Mercy is of the Divine essence; there is no God apart from His heart, and mercy lies in the heart of God. Nor is this all; the mercy of God's heart means His hearty mercy, His cordial delight in mercy. Remission of sins is a business into which the Lord throws His heart. He forgives with an intensity of will and readiness of soul. God made heaven and earth with His fingers, but He gave His Son with His heart in order that He might save sinners. The eternal God has thrown His whole soul into the business of redeeming men. I. God shows His tender mercy in that HE DEIGNS TO VISIT US. He has not merely pitied us from a distance, and sent us relief by way of the ladder which Jacob saw, but He has Himself visited us. 1. God's great visit to us is the incarnation of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2. The proclamation of the gospel in a nation, or to any individual, is a visit of God's mercy. 3. He has visited some of us in a more remarkable manner still, for by the Holy Spirit He has entered into our hearts, and changed the current of our lives. He has turned our affections towards that which is right by enlightening our judgments. He has led us to the confession of sin, He has brought us to the acceptance of His mercy through the atoning blood; and so He has truly saved us. II. God shows His tender mercy in that HE VISITS US AS THE DAYSPRING FROM ON HIGH. He does not come to us in Christ, or by His Spirit, as a tempest, as when He came from Paran, with ten thousand of His holy ones, in all the pomp of His fiery law; but He has visited us as smiling morn, which in gentle glory floods the world with joy. He has come, moreover, not as a blaze which will soon die down, but as a light which will last our day, yea, last for ever. After the long dark and cold night of our misery, the Lord cometh in the fittest and most effectual manner; neither as lightning, nor candle, nor flaming meteor, but as the sun which begins the day. 1. The visitation of the Lord to us is as the dayspring, because it suits our eye. Day, when it first breaks in the east, has not the blaze of burning noon about it; but peeps forth as a grey light, which gradually increases. So did Christ come; dimly, as it were, at first, at Bethlehem, but by and by He will appear in all the glory of the Father. So does the Spirit of God come to us in gradual progress. The revelation of God to each individual is made in form and manner tenderly agreeable to the condition and capacity of the favoured one. He shows us just so much of Himself as to delight us without utterly overwhelming us with the excess of brightness. 2. The visits of God are like the dayspring, because they end our darkness. Our night is ended once for all when we behold God visiting us in Christ Jesus. Our day may cloud over, but night will not return. 3. Christ's coming into the world is as the morning light, because He comes with such a largeness of present blessing. He is the Light which lighteneth every man. There is other light. 4. Christ's coming is as the dayspring, because He brings us hope of greater glory yet to come. The dayspring is not the noon; but it is the sure guarantee of it; and so the First Advent is the pledge of the glory to be revealed. III. There is another instance of great tenderness in this, that THE LORD VISITS US IN OUR VERY LOWEST ESTATE. God comes to us as the morning, which does not wait for man, nor tarry for the sons of men. He gives with gladness to those who have no deservings of any kind (Rom. v. 6, 8). He comes to us when we are—1. In our sins. 2. In darkness. 3. In ruin. IV. Our God shows His tender mercy, in that HE VISITS US WITH SUCH WONDERFUL AND JOYFUL RESULTS. Imagine a caravan in the desert, which has long lost its way, and is famishing. The sun has long gone down, and the darkness has caused every one's heart to droop. All around them is a waste of sand, and an Egyptian darkness. There they must remain and die unless they can find the track. They feel themselves to be in a fearful case, for hungry and thirsty, their soul fainteth in them. They cannot even sleep for fear. Heavier and heavier the night comes down, and the damps are on the tents, chilling the souls of the travellers. What is to be done? How they watch! Alas, no star comforts them! At last the watchmen cry, "The morning cometh!" It breaks

over the sea of sand, and, what is better, it reveals a heap which had been set up as a waymark, and the travellers have found the track. The dayspring has saved them from swift destruction by discovering the way of peace. Conclusion: If the tender mercy of God has visited us; let us exhibit tender mercy in our dealings with our fellow-men. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The gradual development of redemption*:—Our subject matter is the gradual development of redemption, like the sun, "shining more and more unto perfect day." I. THERE IS A GRADUALNESS IN ALL THE WORKS OF GOD. In the physical sphere, gradual development is a universal law. At first, all was a chaos of lifeless matter, then vegetable life appeared, then low forms of brute life, then the mammal, and then the man. The world did not reach its present state in a few seconds—the chaos did not become a cosmos in an hour. In the first day's work we only see power; but in the second day's work we see wisdom; and in the third day's work we see goodness; and thus from step to step we advance, until the sixth day brings forth the crowning glory, man, the lord of creation, filled with the harmonies of the skies. Creation is not a fungus-growth, but a gradual oak-growth In the intellectual and moral spheres there is gradualness. Even our consciousness develops. Natural consciousness develops gradually, and the reflective consciousness of the profound thinker is only a further development of the natural. We grow step by step. Our education proceeds gradually. The prince and the pauper must begin with the alphabet and the multiplication table, and then onward, "line upon line, and precept upon precept." Our great discoveries have been gradual. How slowly did the astrology of the ancients develop into our nineteenth-century astronomy! How gradually did the alchemy of the fathers grow into the modern chemistry of a Faraday! And, again, in the moral sphere there is gradual development. The new man in Christ Jesus is not made of full stature all at once. For a time, he is "a little one in Christ," then he "grows in grace," and, finally, he reaches unto "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." II. WE REASON FROM ANALOGY THAT THE GRADUALNESS WE FIND IN NATURE AND MAN MAY ALSO BE EXPECTED IN THE PROGRESS OF REDEMPTION, FOR GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF BOTH. The God of the rock and star is also the God of the Bible, and we are not surprised to find this gradual development in Revelation—four thousand years intervening between the fall of the first Adam and the advent of the second Adam. Redemption grew as the world grew—it grew as the human grace grew—slowly. As far as we know, God was powerful enough to bring about redemption sooner; but for some wise purpose, He left the world in the dim starlight for forty centuries. Why this slowness? He is never in a hurry, for He "seeth the end from the beginning." The march of the Hebrews from Egypt to Canaan, if they had taken a direct route, would have only occupied them a few months; but the Lord kept them in the lone desert for forty years. The Divine is never in a hurry. Jesus Christ spent thirty years on earth before He performed one miracle—no hurry! And, indeed, we rejoice in this gradualness. We cordially thank God for it. And why? Simply because a full-orbed revelation all at once would overwhelm us. If the natural sun were to reach its meridian at once, the tender green of earth would be reduced to ashes. "O God, how gracious Thou art to reveal Thyself gradually unto us in a manner adapted to our weak capacities. It is no punishment to withhold these mighty mysteries from us, but a mercy." And, besides, friends, we would not be satisfied with a little Christ, that could be fully and completely revealed in a century or two. We are great sinners, and we need a great Christ to save us—a Christ that demands, not six thousand years, but all the countless years of eternity to reveal Him to the full. And, blessed be God, that Christ is to be found in our glorious gospel. And let us not think that the development of relation is yet at an end. No, far from it. III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF REDEMPTION FROM STAGE TO STAGE. (*J. O. Davies.*) *Waiting for the dayspring*:—Many a hoary seer longed for the dayspring, but saw it not. A sweet Welsh evangelist has a very striking illustration on this point. About Christmas time, John the elder brother is expected home from London by the midnight train. All the younger children are in ecstasy, and they all wish to stay up until his arrival. "Pray, father, let us stay up to wait John home," is the universal petition. But the reply is, "No, my dear ones, it will be too long for you to wait; you must go to rest; you shall see John in the morning—not sooner." Friends, the ancient prophets expected a Saviour—their Elder Brother Jesus. How delighted they would be to see Him in the flesh; but they were compelled to enter the cold bed of the grave before His arrival. David cried, "Father, let me see the Horn of Salvation of which I sang so well." "No, My child, you must retire."

Job implored, "Father, let me see my living Redeemer." "No, My child, you must retire; but you shall see him after you awake on the resurrection morning." Malachi cried, "Father, I am about the last of them all; do let me see the Sun of Righteousness of which I sang so sweetly." "No, My child, you must retire to rest; it will be too long for you to wait." And they silently retired into their cold graves to rest. But at last, hoary-headed Simeon advanced, and earnestly implored, "Oh! my Father, the train is nearly in, according to my brother Daniel's table; do let me stay up to see the Consolation of Israel." "Yes, My child, thy request is granted," said the Father, and the old saint was allowed to see the day-break, and so delighted was he with its splendour that he prayed for death—(what a strong saint!)—"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people—a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel!" Thank heaven, the Sun has risen, and the world is now enveloped in a glorious day! (*Ibid.*) *The mercy of God*:—A living sense of the tender mercy of God should actuate us in the path of duty, and on the way to heaven. In what respects the tender mercy of God is displayed towards His creatures. I. IN THE CHARACTER WHICH GOD HAS THOUGHT FIT TO ASSUME TOWARDS HIS DEPENDENT CREATURES. He feels towards us as a parent for His offspring. Who but a father would have devised such a scheme of redemption? II. IN THE TEMPORAL GOOD HIS TENDER MERCY IS MANIFEST. The merciful arrangement which marks the course of human life. For instance, an infant is more dependent upon the aid of others than any other creature; to meet this necessity, God has graciously made the strongest of all human instincts that of a mother's affection for her child. Here His tender mercy is abundantly shown. Again, as we advance in life, God's mercy is no less exhibited. It was necessary for Him to mark His disapprobation of sin by what is called a curse. Instead of bodily deformity and constant pain, the curse was that we should *labour*, which is at once a great source of health and happiness. Even death is so introduced to us that he ceases in his approach to wear the aspect of the king of terrors, and is regarded as a kind friend come to relieve us of weariness and pain. The mercy of God is evident in the affections incident to life; saints, apostles, and martyrs have experienced the blessedness of suffering. Then think of the *positive* blessings with which God has, in His mercy, chosen to sweeten the cup of mortal existence. We are born in a Christian land; health, &c. How improving to our souls must be a right consideration of the Divine mercies. (*A. Gatty, M.A.*) *God's mercy towards a dark world*:—I. THE CONDITION OF THE WORLD PREVIOUSLY TO THE ADVENT OF CHRIST. 1. A state of ignorance. 2. A state of danger. II. THE MERCY OF GOD TOWARD THE WORLD IN THAT CONDITION. 1. Undeserved. 2. Unsolicited. 3. Seasonable. III. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MERCY OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED. 1. He sent His son to enlighten it in its ignorance. 2. He sent His son to guide it in its danger. (*G. Brooks.*) *Darkness and danger*:—There are beneath the suburbs of the ancient city of Rome many dark and narrow passages, excavated in the soft stone. These are called the catacombs, and were used as burial places by the early Christians. These passages are very many, crossing and re-crossing each other, and stretching for an immense distance underground in a most bewildering manner. So complicated and puzzling is this labyrinth of subterranean galleries that it is most dangerous to explore them without a guide. A young artist once ventured to visit them *alone*, taking with him a few candles, and ensuring his safe return by a ball of twine, one end of which he fastened securely outside. After a time, he sat down to sketch in one of the gloomy recesses, having, as he thought, made his end of the clue safe under a stone. But rising suddenly to alter his sketch, he overturned and extinguished his candle. He hastened to strike a match, but found that through some forgetfulness only two or three remained, and in his nervous haste he failed to get these to ignite. He now hurriedly sought the line to guide him back to the entrance, but he could nowhere find it. It had slipped from its place. In vain he sought for it; casting himself on the ground, he felt for it in every direction, but could nowhere discover it. He despaired of ever again reaching the daylight; he thought he must die of hunger, wandering through the hopeless maze of those dark passages; but just as he threw himself in utter despondency once more on the earth, he felt something beneath his hand. It was the twine—and he was safe! Thus the Gentiles "sat in darkness"; thus the heathen world groped after truth. They were lost in the gloomy recesses of ignorance and doubt. But the good news of a Redeemer came like a guiding clue, leading them into the warmth

and light and sunshine of Christianity. (*W. Hardman, LL.D.*) *The necessity and glory of Christ*:—The dayspring signifies the sun. The worship of the sun was the greatest of the heathen worships. How glorious the sun is! How necessary! An apt emblem of the necessity and the glory of Christ. Without Him we could have no check, no conscience, and therefore no peace, and no confidence. But then, if Christ be so necessary, how is it that men can live in ignorance of Him? Are there not blind men in the world? They are very apt images of unbelievers. The sun brings up corn and fruit for them as for us. They feel his warmth, and seek it out, not to see him, but because it is warmer. So men of the world are helped and comforted by the virtues of Christians, and what goes on unseen by themselves. And so they are honest, and so forth, because it is the best policy, and sheds a sunny glow over their lives. And all the while they have never seen or known Him, and have only heard of Him with the hearing of the ear. The blind do not see the sun in summer rising higher in the heavens; they only feel that it is warmer. So these do not see Christ's kingdom enlarging itself, but only rejoice that there is more honesty and kindliness abroad. In this way the world feels and knows that it is the better for Christ's coming. Very different is it with those whose eyes are opened, and who really see. They know in whom they have believed. They are guided into the way of peace. (*Bishop E. Steere.*) *The dayspring from on high*:—We may notice three things in the text:—I. A DECLARATION OF A MOST BLESSED FACT—"The dayspring from on high hath visited us." II. THE SOURCE AND ORIGIN OF THAT BLESSED FACT—"Through the tender mercy of our God." III. ITS DIVINE FRUITS AND CONSEQUENCES—"To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace." I. In looking at these three points connected with, and springing out of the text, I shall rather invert their order; and consider, first, the original spring and source of the blessings mentioned in the text. This is set forth in the words, "Through the tender mercy of our God." Mercy is the source and fountain of all our spiritual blessings. But what is mercy? It embraces several particulars. 1. It embraces a feeling of pity and compassion. But pity and compassion do not fill up the whole idea of mercy; for we read, that God's "tender mercies are over all His works" (Psa. cxlv. 9). Thus the Lord, in sparing Nineveh, "remembered even the cattle" (Jonah iv. 11). And when He caused the waters of the deluge to assuage it was because he "remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark" (Gen. viii. 1). There is in the bosom of their Creator mercy and pity even for the brute creation. As full of mercy, He also "relieveth the fatherless and widow" (Psa. cxlvi. 9); and "loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment" (Deut. x. 18). 2. We must, therefore, add to the idea of pity and compassion, another mark, that of pardon, in order to show what mercy is as extended to the family of God. For the Lord's people are sinners; and as such, being transgressors of God's holy law, need pardon and forgiveness. 3. But in order to complete the full description of mercy, we must ever view it as flowing through the blood and obedience of Immanuel. Mercy, was not, like creation, a mere display of an attribute of Jehovah. If I may use the expression, it cost the Godhead a price: "Ye are bought with a price" (Cor. vi. 20). But there is an expression in the text that heightens, and casts a sweet light upon this mercy. It is there called tender mercy; literally, as it is in the margin, "bowels of mercy." Not mere mercy; but "tender mercy." Not cold and naked mercy; but mercy flowing forth out of the bowels of Divine compassion. Now nothing but "tender mercy" could ever look down with compassion upon the sons of men, or pluck out of the depths of the fall such ruined wretches. But to view mercy in its real character, we must go to Calvary. II. But we pass on to consider that solemn declaration, that blessed fact contained in the words—"Whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us." There is a connection, you will observe, betwixt the "tender mercy of God," and the visiting of "the dayspring from on high." The "tender mercy of God" is the fountain, and the "visiting of the dayspring from on high" is the stream. Let us then endeavour, if God enable us, to unfold the mind of the Spirit in the words. First. What is meant by the expression "dayspring?" By "dayspring" is meant the day-dawn, the herald of the rising sun, the change from darkness to light, the first approach of morn; in one word, the spring of the day. But what is this "dayspring" spiritually? It is the intimation of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness. It is not the same thing as the Sun of Righteousness; but it is the herald of His approach; the beams which the rising sun casts

upon the benighted world, announcing the coming of Jesus, "the King in His beauty." This expression was singularly applicable in the mouth of Zacharias. The Lord of life and glory had not then appeared; He was still in the womb of the Virgin Mary. But His forerunner, John, had appeared as the precursor, the herald of His approach, and was sent to announce that the Sun of Righteousness was about to arise. But there is another, an experimental meaning, connected with the words. "The dayspring from on high" is not to be confined to the approach of the Son of God in the flesh; but it may be extended to signify the appearance of the Son of God in the heart. Now, "the dayspring from on high" visits the soul with the very first Divine intimation dropped into the conscience respecting the Person, work, love, and blood of the Son of God. Until this day-dawn beams upon the soul, it is for the most part ignorant of the way by which a sinner is to be saved. But the first "dayspring from on high" which usually visits the soul is from a view by precious faith of the glorious person of Immanuel. Until we see by the eye of faith the glorious Person of "Immanuel, God with us," there is no day-dawn in the heart. But, in looking at the glorious Person of the Son of God, we catch a faith's view of His atoning blood, and see it to be of infinite dignity. So also with respect to the glorious righteousness of Immanuel. But what a sweetness there is in the expression, "visited us!" What is conveyed by it? One idea contained in it is, that it is the act of a friend. If I have a friend, and I visit him, my visit is a mark of my friendship and affection. But another idea connected with the word "visit," is that of unexpectedness. Is it not so sometimes naturally? We have an unexpected visit. We may have been looking for our friend to call; but the time passes away, and no well-known rap is heard at our door. We wonder why our friend delays his coming so long. But perhaps, when we are least expecting it, the form of our friend appears. So spiritually. We may be longing and languishing, hoping, and expecting the visit of the day-spring from on high;" but it does not appear; the Lord delayeth His coming; there is no intimation of His appearing, no putting in of His hand by the hole of the door, no looking in through the lattice, no glimpse nor glance of His lovely countenance. But perhaps, when least expected, and least anticipated; when the mind is so deeply sunk as scarcely to dare to hope, so shut up in unbelief as hardly able to vent forth a sigh, "the dayspring from on high" will visit the soul, and be all the more precious for coming so suddenly and unexpectedly. III. But this "day-spring from on high" visits the soul to produce certain effects. Two of them are specified in the text. "To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death;" that is one: "to guide our feet in the way of peace;" that is the other. 1. "To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death." Is this what "the dayspring from on high" visiting us is to do? Must we not then know something of the experience here described to be blest with the visit? But let us look at the words a little more closely. "To such as sit in darkness." What is the darkness here spoken of? Is it merely what I may call moral darkness? Natural darkness? No; it is not the darkness of unregeneracy; it is not the darkness of sin and profanity; nor is it the darkness of a mere empty profession. These things are indeed darkness, gross darkness; but those who are thus blinded by the god of this world never sit experimentally in darkness. They are like the Jews of old, who said, "We see; therefore their sin remaineth." "We dark? we ignorant? we scorn the idea." Such is the language of empty profession. But the Lord's own quickened, tender-hearted family often painfully know what it is to sit in darkness. But whence does this darkness arise. Strange to say, it arises from light. Darkness as darkness is never seen. Darkness as darkness is never felt. Light is needed to see darkness; life is required to feel darkness. There are children in Hungary born and bred at the bottom of a mine. Do these children ever know what darkness is, like one who comes down there out of the broad light of day? Were they not told there was a sun above—did not some tidings of the light of day reach their ears, they might live and die ignorant that there was a sun in the heavens. So spiritually. Man, born and bred in the depths of nature's mine, does not know that he is dark; but when Divine light enters into his soul, that discovers to him his darkness; for it is the light which makes manifest all things; as the apostle says, "But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Eph. v. 13). Thus, it is the light of God's teaching in a man's conscience that makes him know his darkness; and Divine life in his soul makes it felt. But what does darkness imply? The absence

of everything that brings light and peace into the heart. But there is one word in the text which conveys to my mind much, that is, "sitting in darkness." They are not represented as standing; that might imply a mere momentary transition from light to darkness. They are not represented as running; that might imply they would soon get out of the darkness. They are not represented as lying down; that might lead to suppose they were satisfied with their darkness. But they are represented as sitting in darkness. Then surely they are not dead. Nor do they sit at ease and at rest; but are in that posture, because they can neither move backward or forward, nor turn either to the right hand or to the left. In ancient medals that were struck when Jerusalem was led captive by the Romans, she is represented as sitting on the ground. The same thing is intimated in Psalm cxxxvii. 1, 2. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof." Sitting was with the ancients the posture of mourning. Job "sat down among the ashes;" (ii. 8); and his friends "sat down with him upon the ground" (verse 13). "Her gates," says Isaiah (iii. 26), "shall lament and mourn; and she, being desolate, shall sit on the ground." Sitting implies also a continuance in the state; a waiting, a watching, a desiring, a looking out for the light to come. But again. There is another word added, which throws light upon the character of those who are visited from time to time with "the dayspring from on high." They sit not only in darkness, but in the shadow of death. How expressive this word is—"the shadow of death!" There are several ideas, in my mind, connected with the word. We will look, first, at the idea contained in the expression "death." Death with respect to the family of God wears two aspects. There is death experimental in their hearts, that is, deadness in their frames; and there is death temporal—the separation of soul from the body. Each of these kinds of death casts at times a gloomy shadow over the souls of God's people. The word is very expressive. They are not sitting in death: were they sitting there, they would be dead altogether; but they are sitting in the shadow of death. Observe, death has lost its reality to them; it now can only cast a shadow, often a gloomy shadow, over their souls; but there is no substance. The quickening of the Spirit of God in them has destroyed the substance of death spiritually; and the death and resurrection of Jesus has destroyed the substance of death naturally. Yet, though the gloomy monster, deadness of soul, and that ghastly king of terrors, the death of the body, have been disarmed and destroyed by "Immanuel, God with us;" yet each of them casts at times a gloomy, darkling shadow over the souls of those that fear God. Is not your soul, poor child of God, exercised from time to time with this inward death? Deadness in prayer, deadness in reading the word, deadness in hearing the truth, deadness in desires after the Lord, deadness to everything, holy, spiritual, heavenly, and divine? Do you not feel a torpidity, a numbness, a carnality, a worldliness, that seem at times to freeze up every desire of your soul? I do. O how this cold, clammy monster death seems to wrap its benumbing arms around a man's soul! I have read of a voyager, who, whilst looking for shells on a desert rock, was suddenly caught in the arms of a huge polypus, a sea monster. The sickening sensation produced by this cold and clammy monster clasping him with his huge suckers, and drawing him to his jaws to devour him, he describes as being unutterable, and he was only rescued by the captain's coming to his aid with a knife. I may compare, perhaps, our frequent deadness of soul clasping its arms around every desire of our heart, to the clasping of this poor man in the clammy arms of the sea monster. How it benumbs and paralyzes every breathing of our soul Godward! How all prayer, all panting desire, all languishing affection, all spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, all solid worship, all filial confidence, all the fruits and graces of the Spirit are blighted and withered by the deathliness that we so continually feel! 2. But there is another word added, another result of the visiting of "the dayspring from on high"—"to guide our feet into the way of peace." The way of peace? Does not that comprehend all? Do those that fear God want anything but peace? What do we want? The way of war, of enmity, of rebellion, of restlessness? No. We want the way of peace. But what is implied in the expression? Peace implies two things. It implies, first, reconciliation from a state of enmity; and secondly, the felt enjoyment of this reconciliation in the heart. But we want guiding in the way. And when "the dayspring from on high" visits the soul, it guides the feet into the way. There is something very sweet in the expression. It does not drive, does not force, but opens a door, and enables the soul to enter

in: discovers the way, and gives the soul faith to walk in it. (*J. C. Philpot.*) *The tenderness of God*:—God is not only energetic, but tender also in action. He is the God of the dewdrops, as well as the God of the thundershowers; the God of the tender grass blade, as much as of the mountain oak. We read of great machines which are able to crush iron bars, and yet they can touch so gently as not to break the shell of the smallest egg; as it is with them, so it is with the hand of the Most High: He can crush a world, and yet bind up a wound. And great need have we of tenderness in our low estate; a little thing would crush us; we have such bruised and feeble souls, that unless we had One who would deal tenderly with us, we must soon be destroyed. There are many soul diseases to which a tender hand alone can minister; just as there are many states of body which need tender and patient nursing, and which cannot otherwise be successfully dealt with, even by any amount of skill. This tenderness we see continually in action, in woman's ministrations in ordinary life. Her voice has notes more sweet and soft than can be distilled from any instrument of music; her hand has a touch more delicate and fine than ever the breath of any summer's breeze; it is to her that man carries the stories of his sorrows; it is she that has to soothe his heavy, aching head; well as he thinks he can do without her, in the more exciting scenes of life, he finds he is not independent when the time comes for suffering and grief. And what makes woman equal to sustaining the heavy burden thus cast upon her? How comes the ivy to be able to sustain the oak around which it used to cling, ornamenting it, while it owned its lordship and strength! She does all in the power of the tenderness of her nature; rugged and uncouth would life indeed be if such tenderness were withdrawn. But pass away to Divine things—from woman, to Him that was born of woman, and what do we find but tenderness of action in Him? That tenderness which in any of mankind is but a spark from the fire, is perfect in His bosom; its fulness is there; and it is continually being shown to them. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*) *Explanation of the imagery*:—A caravan misses its way, and is lost in the desert; the unfortunate pilgrims, overtaken by night, are sitting down in the midst of this fearful darkness, expecting death. All at once a bright star rises in the horizon and lights up the plain: the travellers, taking courage at this sight, arise, and by the light of this star find the road which leads them to the end of their journey. (*F. Godet, D.D.*) *The night of humanity*:—It may seem strange that we should call the condition of our race before Christ's appearance *night*—darkness and shadow of death. But what is the meaning of its being night? It is night where the light is wanting that lightens our way, in whose brightness we are able to distinguish and understand the value of the things around us; that light that shows us where there are ways to walk in, the aims which we should pursue, and the means by which we may attain them. Where there is such certainty of knowledge and work there is day; where that is wanting, the light can only be a dim one; even with open eyes, all knowledge is only fancy, all work only groping in the dark. There no life can bring forth fruit; it may be filled with all kinds of beautiful dreams, but only with dreams; but upon the dream follows an awakening with more bitter pain the more beautiful the dreams were. . . . Was it really night upon the earth, before the Saviour came? Yes, we dare not judge otherwise: it was night. Men had indeed attempted to make artificial light, but it did not really illuminate. The focus in which at last all rays must converge, in order to show themselves as truth, was wanting. It was really night—cold, dark, unlovely night. (*R. Röthe, D.D.*) *The Dayspring from on high: Christ as the Dawn*:—This splendid figure of speech is taken from the dawn of morning on the night. And in order to understand fully the force of the rhetoric, we must bear in mind one of the natural phenomena of those eastern regions. So pure is the atmosphere there, so far south, that clouds in the sky are not usual save in the rainy season. There seems really nothing to hinder the sun's going down, nothing to get in the way of his rising again. When he sets, he goes abruptly behind the adjacent hill; when he rises, he comes up unannounced, and in a quick moment is altogether on hand for his daily work—that is to say, there is positively no twilight, as we describe it, in those latitudes. The instant the day reaches its natural close, the sun appears to slide down the sky without any leave-taking. Just so when the dawn starts. When yesterday's monarch dismisses himself, and it is time for to-day's to succeed him, there he is, unheralded and serenely unhurried, calmly seated in his shining pavilion of clear air. Zacharias seizes this astonishing figure, and turns it to account. For four centuries it had been dark—dark with sin, ignorance, oppression—and now in one excited instant of disclosure, the Sun of Righteousness had

risen with healing in His wings. No wonder his heart was full; no wonder his dumbness gave way, and his glad voice lifted such a song! Let us keep singing on, and always singing on about the dayspring from on high which has visited us. The light of the gospel is a gleam of the light of heaven. Oh, what will the full splendour of the noon be by and by? When the Gauls had tasted the wine of Italy, they began to ask where the grapes grew, and they would never be quiet till they came there. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The sun an emblem of Christ:*—The sun is the fountain of light to this lower world. Day by day it rises on us with its gladdening beams, and with the return of light is connected the sense of reviving power in ourselves; invigorated health and cheerfulness; renewed and willing application to appointed duties. God Himself has made it the ruler over the day. All nature seems to own its influence. The flowers that drooped, or closed their leaves during the night, expand themselves again when the sun arises. The gorgeous colours with which the clouds that were lately dark are now illuminated, bespeak the return of the absent king; and the clouds themselves are scattered at his approach. The loathsome or savage creatures that love darkness now "get them away together, and lay down in their dens. Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." Christ is to the moral world what the sun is to the natural world; the source of life, and health, and motion. He is the "Sun of Righteousness," because the robe of righteousness in which His people "shine" is the light from Him which they reflect; and on this account His Church is said to be "clothed with the sun." And the inward righteousness also, in which they are created anew after the image of God, is derived from His illuminating presence in their hearts. And He rises on us "with healing in His wings," because He brings with Him, day by day, spiritual health to those who are diseased in soul, comfort to those who mourn, rest to the weary and heavy-laden. The world had long lain in darkness and the shadow of death, waiting with earnest expectation for the first tokens of the "dayspring from on high," even as travellers in a starless night, or as they that watch in loneliness and weariness, wait with eager longing for the burst of morning. At length the Sun of Righteousness arose, when He who was with the Father from all eternity was born at Bethlehem, and took our nature upon Him. And as the light from the morning sun travels with inconceivable speed to the remotest corners of the earth, and penetrates into the darkest recesses, so did the light from the Sun of Righteousness penetrate the dark places of the earth. It scattered the mists of ignorance and sin, and called forth from the garden of God's Church those fruits and flowers which it could never otherwise have borne. Nor is His power to heal and comfort diminished by the lapse of years. As the sun in the heavens has the same quickening and cheering power over the material world, as in the day when God first formed it and set it in the heavens; so have the beams of the Sun of Righteousness the same efficacy to heal the wounded conscience, and to comfort the afflicted soul, as when they first shone upon His humble followers. (*Bishop Trower.*) *Safety in the light of day:*—A band of fugitives were crossing an eastern desert. The night was dark, but they determined to push on. Soon they lost their way, and had to spend the night in anxiety and fear. It seemed as if the night would never pass. But almost all at once the sun arose, bringing daylight and showing the way of safety. Not one of them ever forgot that sun-rising. So to us, in our wanderings, the Dayspring has arisen, pointing out the way of safety. Illustrate by the case of a man in an open boat, or a traveller crossing a moor at night, and uncertain of his way A cloud passes from the sky, and the polestar is seen. Then he knows the way of safety. (*Sunday School Times.*) *Christ our Dayspring:*—How pertinent is that question of the Almighty as it breaks from the whirlwind, "Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days, and caused the dayspring to know his place?" He who has adjusted the movements of all the orbs of light, brings the glow of the new-born day to gladden those who wait for the retiring darkness. Christ our dayspring burst upon the world in the prophetic period of the Divine arrangement. Our spiritual sun-rising, so long waited for, came for the banishment of sin, and the introduction of all righteousness. Christ is the only dayspring of light to the darkened soul. The visible creation, conveying by symbols and material manifestations the thoughts of God, can bring no rest to a soul in which there is a constant strife between conscience and passion The political aspects of society will afford little hope; success in measures of reform will seem hardly valuable enough to compensate for their outlay of exertion, science, in all its departments, will appear but as a perplexing maze, till our dayspring, knowing its place in the

counsels of Infinite Wisdom is seen above them all, heralding the splendours of redemption. Agnosticism would be the sad inheritance of all, just leading us to know that we could not know; that the secrets of the universe could never be explained; that we, ourselves, were but perplexities and contradictions, if our dayspring, shining above all science, over all human wants and industries, above all human ignorance, will, and pride, could not be seen by faith, verified by fact, and relied upon by experience. (*John Waugh.*) *God's tender mercy*:—My proclamation certifies to thee, O trembling heart, that this mercy is tender mercy. Thy bones are broken to-night, thy heart is wounded, thy spirits are dried up, and thou art ready to despair; but I tell thee that God has tender mercy for such as thou art. As I sat in the hospital, yesterday, and saw the many cases of maimed limbs and gushing wounds, I could but think how tender the nurses ought to be, and how downy should be the surgeon's finger as he set the broken bone or bound up the sore. Doubtless there are some persons who have iron hands and hard hearts, and so, while they are bone-setting or binding up wounds, they do it roughly, and cause the patient much pain. But, O sinner, therein is the tender mercy of our God set forth, which, like a dayspring from on high, hath visited us; "a bruised reed will He not break, nor quench the smoking flax." He crowneth us with loving-kindnesses, and with tender mercies; He bindeth up the broken in heart, and healeth all their wounds. Like as a mother comforteth her children, even so doth the Lord comfort His people, and like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. My Lord is as gracious in the manner of His mercy as in the matter of it. Glory be to His name! O sinner, come to the gentle Jesus and live. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Sunshine*:—We think that all our city folk ought somehow to get every week a few hours in the clear, unmixed sunshine as the Lord pours it out of the heavens. Last Sabbath was a day of unusual duties, and Monday morning, with loud-clamouring work all about us, we said our call this morning is to the fields. We made a bold dash, and at a speed that no one dared halt, we were soon beyond the city limits. As we hastened past, a brother clergyman shouted, "Whither away?" We answered—"In quest of sunshine!" And was there ever a brighter luxury? The cup of the morning had been washed out by a shower; the leaves, autumn-turned, shivered their fiery splendour across the path; the hum of the city became fainter, and we found what we wanted floating on the lake, tangled in the bushes, rippling among the green grass, dripping from the sky—sunshine. Glorious sunshine! With it we filled our eyelids, our mouth, our hands. We opened our entire physical capacity to take it in. We took out our soul and saturated it in the lush light. We absorbed it in all our pores, and rolled it around our nerves; and after we could hold no more inside, lifted our face and held it so aslant that it ran down over us—the sunshine. What do the blind do without seeing it? How can the factory employees get on without feeling it? Let all the ministry on Monday morning be turned out into it. By the following Saturday night it will ripen all the acidity out of the sermons. The world wants more sunshine in its disposition, in its business, in its charities, in its theology. For ten thousand of the aches, and pains, and irritations of men and women, we commend the sunshine. It soothes better than morphine. It stimulates more than champagne. It is the best plaister for a wound. The good Samaritan poured out into the fallen traveller's gash more of this than wine and oil. Florence Nightingale used it on Crimean battle-fields. Take it into all the alleys, on board all the ships, by all the sick-beds. Not a phial full, nor a cup full, nor a decanter full, but a soul full. It is good for spleen, for liver complaint, for neuralgia, for rheumatism, for failing fortunes, for melancholy. We suspect that heaven itself is only more sunshine. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Philosophy and Christianity*:—Philosophy, in the night of Paganism, was like the fire-fly of the tropics making itself visible, but not irradiating the darkness. But Christianity, revealing the Sun of Righteousness, sheds more than the full sunlight of those tropics on all that we need to see, whether for time or eternity. (*Coleridge.*) *Beholding the sun*:—I have read that near the North Pole, the night lasting for months and months, when the people expect the day is about to dawn, some messengers go up on the highest point to watch; and when they see the first streak of day they put on their brightest possible apparel, and embrace each other and cry, "Behold the sun!" and the cry goes through all the land, "Behold the sun!" Some of you have been trudging on in the darkness of sin. It has been a long and wearisome night for your soul; but now I cry, "Behold the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in His wings!" or, to quote from the chapter that I read at the beginning,

"The Dayspring from on high hath visited us to give light to them that are in darkness." Behold the sun! Behold the sun! Would God that every blinded eye might now see it! (*Dr. Talmage.*) *A light in a dark place:*—A steamboat was once carrying a load of passengers up one of the Western rivers. It was a very dark night. The waters were dark, the soil was black, and not a star was to be seen. The air was full of sleet and mist, and altogether it made a night when "the darkness could be felt." The steamboat had struck a snag, and was leaking very fast and beginning to sink. The captain at once ran her ashore and lashed her to the bank. The plank was thrust out, and everybody was requested to go ashore just as quickly as possible. It was thought that if all could only lighten the boat they might save it, while if all remained on board, all would soon go down together. But it was so dark, the passengers could not see either the plank or the shore. The sleet was falling thick and covering everything with ice. The cold wild waters of the river were rushing past beneath, and not offering a very warm reception to any who might fall over. So the company all stood still, not daring to move. Like Paul, they chose "to stay with the ship." They seemed to feel that it was better to stay and share the fate of the boat than to step off—they knew not where; "better to endure the ills they had, than to fly to those they knew not of." The captain was as much perplexed as the people. To urge them to hurry off might produce a panic, and make them rush off and push one another into the river. Yet he knew they could not remain long on deck without danger. But he was equal to the emergency. Calling from the upper deck, he told them to be quiet and wait, and he would land them all safe on shore. He then leaped on to the bank with some of his men, and, taking a basket of pitch coal and arranging it in a proper place, he struck a match and lit it. In a few moments it blazed up bright and clear, and, in the words of John Hay—

"Burnt a hole in the night."

The whole hillside, and bank, and boat, and river, just glowed in the brightness. It was a wild but beautiful scene—darkness everywhere but just there where they needed light. All excitement and fear ceased, and the people calmly and safely passed one by one over the plank to the solid shore. Never did light seem so grateful and so beautiful as it did shooting up there in that dark place. The expression, "light in a dark place," gained a new meaning to all who felt its blessedness on that dark and perilous night. The Bible speaks of Christ as a "light to them that sit in darkness," and His truth as a "light that shineth in a dark place." There are a great many dark places in our life, but there is no darker place than our sins. Everybody has been troubled about these, and nobody ever knew what to do with them. A great many people don't think anything about them. So those men on that steamboat might have lain down and gone to sleep. They might say, "We cannot see the way off, and we may just as well take our ease." So men often forget their sins and feel easy about them. But whenever they do think of them, they are troubled and don't know what to do with them. They don't know how to get rid of them, and the wisest men have been just as much in the dark as the most ignorant. This has always been a very dark place. The river is very wild, the shore is unseen and the way to it is unknown. A great many people have stood here, like those men on the steamboat, waiting for light and not knowing what to do. Christ lets light shine right on this dark place. He shows how men can get rid of their sins and be forgiven. He shows us the way. He is the way. The river is just as deep, and the shore is just as far off as it was before, but we can see it all, and find our way to where it is safe and solid. When we come to see how fearful it is to be in the dark, and not know what to do, we can then know how beautiful and grateful it is to have a "light shining in a dark place." (*R. Cordley, D.D.*) We notice then—I. THE ORIGIN OF OUR REDEMPTION—"the tender mercy of our God." But though it be true that all the attributes of God were engaged in planning and in executing the work of our redemption, it must be observed, that the mercy of God appears by far the most conspicuous. What is its nature? Mercy is the pity of the heart; that I believe will be admitted by all to be a fair and correct rendering of the word. Is there not misery enough on the part of man to excite the mercy and compassion of God? We ask, again, to what extent was the mercy of God exercised in the work of human redemption? It extends to the utmost limits of the human family. Mercy then, originated the plan of human salvation. Let us consider—II. ITS PROGRESS.

This plan was not developed all at once; it was communicated under different dispensations and by progressive degrees, as the minds of men were prepared to receive it. The dayspring from on high, the great light, the great luminary of our world, is come. Now, light is remarkable for the power of communication: everything, you know, is tinged and irradiated by the light of the sun. The light which the sun sends forth, as the great medium of light, diffuses itself everywhere; and here we have a fair representation of the power of communication which Jesus Christ possesses, in reference to the knowledge which is essential to the happiness of man; for wherever He is, there is light; wherever His word is, there is truth; and it is said of this word of His, "the entrance of it giveth light." Light, again, is remarkable for the rapidity of its flight. Display but a glimmering taper on the summit of a mountain, and it reaches the eye, placed at any given distance, in a moment. And here we may be reminded of the rapidity of the flight of mercy, to meet the misery of man. And we may be reminded here, too, of another important fact, connected with this part of our subject—the disposition there ever is, on the part of the Saviour, to meet the case of a poor penitent sinner, or an afflicted believer. But again, light is remarkable for its purity and grateful influence. The influence of light is the most agreeable, notwithstanding the velocity with which it moves, to that most delicate of all our organs, the eye. It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun. When this light directed you to the Lamb of God, and when, in the exercise of your faith, you availed yourselves of the benefits resulting from His redeeming acts, how grateful was its influence! It communicated light to your understanding, and peace and joy unspeakable to your hearts. But the text tells us that it came "from on high." Why, then, Jesus Christ Himself must have existed before He came into this world; and if He existed before He came into the world. He must have existed as God Almighty. Now, that this was the case, is very clear, from various parts of Scripture. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." But, in the text, we read of Him in regard to His human nature. The dayspring from on high assumed the nature of man below, and in that nature became man's suffering substitute. He came from on high—He visited us for this purpose. I stated before, and I must now recur to it, that the light to which our text alludes, was gradual in its communication. There was a ray of it to shine on the patriarchs, a brighter ray still shone on the minds of the prophets; but it was when the types received their accomplishment in the plains of Bethlehem—that the words of this text were literally verified. "The dayspring from on high visited us," coming to this world of ours to diffuse His light and life, and liberty, and salvation, from one end of the earth to another. III. THE GRAND DESIGN OF THIS AMAZING EVENT—"To give light," says the inspired writer—to whom? "to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." By this darkness we are to understand the ignorance which is common to man; and, by death, we are to understand that moral death which reigns in the minds and spirits of men, together with that eternal death, to which, as sinners, we are exposed. Now, where a shadow is, the substance cannot be far off. We need not here go into the state of the heathen world, at the time of our Saviour's advent, for it must be generally known to every one now hearing me: it was indeed a state of darkness and death; nor into the state of the Jewish people, for it, too, was a state of ignorance. But, on what subjects does He enlighten men? First of all, touching the being and perfections of God. If you go into the records of the wisest and best of the heathen philosophers, whether of Egypt, Greece, or Rome, you find no clear and distinct revelation existing respecting God. He came, next, to enlighten men touching their own moral state and condition. Now, that all is not right with man must be obvious. Is man happy? He is not—he is miserable as well as wicked. Well, then, there must be something wrong; something must have happened to our world. Let us, then, thank God that, in the midst of darkness and misery, we have the great light shining upon us, telling us how sin entered our world, the end to which it would lead, and the extent to which it would prevail, if we were not delivered from its power. But He came to give light upon another subject—He came to give the light of salvation. If He had merely discovered to us our disease and left us to perish in it, we should have been the worse, in place of being bettered, by our knowledge. But we come, brethren, to the light; and here we find mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace embracing each other—truth inflexible as a rock, and mercy, tender as a parent's tears,

yearning over you with infinite compassion. He came to give light upon another subject—namely, the rule of our duty. What, then, must be the rule? Take it, first, in reference to God, it commands us to love Him supremely; take it in reference to man, and it enjoins thus much upon us—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." But Christ came to give light on another subject—a future state. But Jesus Christ came to give more than light: He came to give peace—"to guide our feet into the way of peace." I can merely mention particulars here. To procure peace was the grand object of our Saviour's advent. He was to be called "the repairer of the breach—the restorer of the paths to dwell in." And as He came to procure peace, He came also to apply it. You will easily perceive a difference between peace procured and peace applied. He came to give peace—He came also to maintain it in the hearts of His people, causing it to grow and increase more and more, until the subject of it is, at last, brought home to himself to be one with the Lord. Did our salvation, then, originate in the mercy of God? Let us learn from it a lesson of humility. But again, were the developments of this mercy gradual? Did it not all shine out at once? What lesson ought we to derive from this circumstance? Mark this, then; your Christianity ought to be progressive—purer, and having more of principle to-day than yesterday; and more of principle, purity, and disinterestedness to-morrow than to-day. It should be gradual and progressive in its progress, both as to principle and practice. Lastly: Was this light sent for the good of the whole world? Then let us endeavour to diffuse it universally throughout the world. (*W. Toase.*)

Ver. 80. **And the child grew.**—*John's secluded life:*—Not in sandy deserts like those of Arabia, but in the wild, waste region south of Jericho and the fords of Jordan to the shores of the Dead Sea. This was known as Araboth or ha-Arabah. This region, especially where it approached the Ghôr and the Dead Sea, was lonely and forbidding in its physical features, and would suit the stern spirit on which it also reacted. In 1 Sam. xxiii. 19, it is called Jeshimon, or "the Horror." John was by no means the only hermit. The political unsettlement, the shamelessness of crime, the sense of secular exhaustion, the widespread Messianic expectation, marked "the fulness of time." Banus the Pharisee also lived a life of ascetic hardness in the Arabah, and Josephus tells us that he lived with him for three years in his mountain cave on fruits and water. But there is not in the Gospels the faintest trace of any intercourse between John or our Lord and His disciples, with the Essenes. The great Italian painters follow a right conception when they paint even the boy John as emaciated with early asceticism. In 2 Esdras ix. 24, the seer is directed to go into a field where no house is, and to "taste no flesh, drink no wine, and eat only the flowers of the field," as a preparation for "talking with the Most High." (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Satisfactions of solitude:*—Charles the Fifth, after a life spent in military exploits and the active and energetic prosecution of ambitious projects, resigned, as is well known, his crown, sated with its enjoyment. He left these words, as a testimony, behind him:—"I have tasted more satisfaction in my solitude in one day than in all the triumphs of my former reign. The sincere study, profession, and practice of the Christian religion have in them such joy as is seldom found in courts and grandeur." (*Baxendale's Anecdotes.*) *Solitude a good teacher:*—St. Bernard said, in writing to a pious friend, "If you are seeking less to satisfy a vain curiosity than to get true wisdom, you will sooner find it in deserts than in books. The silence of the rocks and the pathless forests will teach you better than the eloquence of the most gifted men." (*Fénélon.*) *Solitude helps to mature thought:*—Whenever Michael Angelo, that "divine madman," as Richardson once wrote on the back of one of his drawings, was meditating on some great design, he closed himself up from the world. "Why do you lead such a solitary life?" asked a friend. "Art," replied the sublime artist, "is a jealous god; it requires the whole and entire man." During his mighty labour in the Sistine Chapel he refused to have any communication with any person, even at his own house. (*I. D'Israeli.*) *The youth of John the Baptist:*—I. INQUIRE INTO THE REASONS WHY THE YOUTH OF JOHN WAS SPENT IN OBSCURITY. 1. Purity of his mind shrank from a society so devoid of true religion 2. Privations fitted him for the self-denial with which he afterwards attracted the people. 3. Arrangements also well adapted to prevent any such intimacy with Christ in His youth, as might have excited suspicion of a collusion betwixt them. 4. In such retirement John enjoyed, undisturbed, that communion with the Deity

so delightful to eminent piety like his. II. CONSIDER THE INSTRUCTIONS WHICH THIS ACCOUNT OF JOHN'S YOUTH HOLDS OUT TO THOSE WHOSE VIEWS ARE POINTED TO THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. Entire seclusion not required of them, but let them retire as often as they can, and prefer the calm of solitude to the bustle of dissipation. III. CONSIDER THE LESSONS HELD FORTH BY THE YOUTH OF JOHN TO THE YOUNG IN GENERAL. The wisdom and advantage of frequent retirement. 1. What opportunities of improvement solitude will present to you. 2. From what temptations it will detach you. 3. To what solidity of character it will form you. 4. How it will prepare you for the seclusion of days of darkness. (*Dr. Belfrage.*) *The retirement of John* was—I. A RENUNCIATION OF HIS PRIESTLY RIGHTS. II. A BREAKING-OFF FROM THE THEN JUDAISM. III. A UNIQUE REALIZATION OF THE TRUE NATURE OF GOD. He believed that there, in the desert, as really as in the Temple, was the "God of the Temple" to be found and worshipped. IV. Observe that GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT MINISTERED TO HIM IN THE DESERTS. (*A. B. Grosart, LL.D.*) *Every life has its desert period:*—Those grand solemn days when God calls us out of the world's noises to commune in deep consultation with Him until the soul's purposes are shaped, and the characters of our immortal spirits formed. These are the days of destiny, the birth-hours of all that is really great in us, times when we are truly born again, if we will be, or when we rush back and plunge into the troubled sea of unregenerate existence, never to find rest. If we look back down the long line of God's heroic ones, each had his wilderness. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, dwelt all their lives in the grand deserts of existence, and tabernacled with God. Moses, David, Daniel, Elijah, Jeremiah, yea, all God's great ones, were caused to turn their backs on a world and face the truths of the living God, until those truths rose up to them to march in triumph, through the opposition of men and devils, to glorious victory. Now, as then, God calls us to the wilderness-school—calls us out to uncover the great purposes of truth before us, and sends us back to stand up for Him, regardless of all the surgings of sin, applause, fear, or death. Here, and here alone, is the safety of any Church, age, or man, in "the kingdom of God within," trueness to the ideal of life realized, as the soul in its lone consecration stretches itself on the naked will of God, and feels the strong beatings of His eternal purposes of truth, justice, and love. (*Bishop Penrick.*) *Waxed strong in spirit:*—We need strong men—Elijah-like, John-the-Baptist-like men in these "perilous times," and "spiritual" strength is incomparably the strongest, the most celestial, the most Christly of all strength. (*A. B. Grosart, LL.D.*)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1–7. **A decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.** —There is no grand reason, you see, given why Mary and Joseph should go to Judæa. The angel who is said to have announced the coming birth does not appear again to tell them that they must travel, since otherwise the Son of David will not be connected with His ancestral dwelling-place. They go because every one else is going. A decree of the Cæsar obliges the man to register himself in the village, whatever it is, to which he belongs. It may be an awkward contrivance, as a modern writer says it is, to make the conception of royalty fit with the facts. Assuredly the critic, or any ingenious man in this day, could have invented a better tale. And if forgers of that day had, as he supposes, an unlimited command of supernatural incidents, these poor peasants might have been transported by any kind of celestial machinery to the spot in which they were required to be. Nor can we doubt that a Frenchman now, or an Oriental then, would have introduced such an event with becoming pomp. If it was part of the scheme that the birth should be humble, he would have taken pains that we should observe that part of it. There would have been starts of surprise, exclamations at the stooping of the Highest of all to the lowest place. Here is nothing of the kind. Events, the belief of which has affected all the art and speculation of the most civilized nations in the modern world, are recorded in fewer words, with less effort, than an ordinary historian, or the writer of a newspaper, would deem suitable to the account of the most trivial transaction. Such marvellous associations have clung for centuries to

these verses, that it is hard to realize how absolutely naked they are of all ornament. We are obliged to read them again and again to assure ourselves that they really do set forth what we call the great miracle of the world. If, on the other hand, the mind of the evangelist was possessed by the conviction that he was not recording a miracle which had interrupted the course of history, but was telling of a Divine act which *explained* the course of history and restored the order of human life, one can very well account for his calmness; if that conviction was a true one, we might account for the impression which his brief sentences have made on later ages. That the poll-tax of the first emperors should be the instrument of bringing forth the King before whom the Cæsars were to bow, would then seem one of those incidents in the drama of the universe which discover a God who is not suddenly interfering to untie knots that are too difficult for human hands, but who is directing all the course of the action, from the beginning to the catastrophe; not crushing the wills of the persons in the drama, but leading them on, by methods which we cannot see or conjecture, to fill their places in it. And the birth in the manger would be felt, not as an embellishment of the narrative, but as a part of the revelation. The King, who proves His title and His Divinity by stooping to the lowest condition of His subjects, is brought into direct contrast with him who had risen by intrigues, proscriptions, and the overthrow of an ancient order, to be hailed as the Deliverer and highest God of the earth. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *The child and the emperor*:—Was that infant at Bethlehem no more than a subject of the Roman emperor? Was Christianity the mere product of these outward favouring circumstances? Not so. It is true that from these circumstances the fulness of time took its shape and colour. Without that shelter it would not have been, humanly speaking, what now it is. But the spark of life itself was independent of any local or national state. The very characteristic of the life of Christ is that which soared above any such local limit. Therefore it is that He was born, apart from all the stir and turmoil of the world, in a humble stall, in a dark cavern, in a narrow street of an obscure mountain village. Therefore it is that He lived for thirty years in the secluded basin of the unknown, unconsecrated Nazareth; that He passed away without attracting a single word of notice from any contemporary poet or philosopher of that great court, which has made the reign of Cæsar Augustus proverbial to all time as the "Augustan age." Born under the empire, there was in Jesus Christ nothing imperial, except the greatness of His birth. Born under the Roman sway, there was nothing in Him Roman except the world-wide dominion of His Spirit. From Cæsar Augustus comes out a decree that all the world should be taxed, subdued, civilized, united. All honour to him for it! All vigilance, all exertion, all prudence, be ours to watch and seize all the opportunities that are given to us. But it is from God that there come these flashes of life and light, of goodness and of genius, which belong to no age, but which find their likeness in that Divine Child, which was born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. This, then, is the double principle of which the birth of Christ is the most striking example; external circumstances are something, but they are not everything. The inward life is the essential thing; but for its successful growth it needs external circumstance. There are a thousand ways in which this double lesson is forced upon us, but the most striking illustration is still to be found in the contrast of the same double relation to the circumstances of world, century, country, or Church in which we live. And, on the other hand, there is our own separate existence and character with its own work to do—its own special nourishment from God. (*Dean Stanley.*) *A political era associated with high religious experiences*:—It was remarkable that the birth of Christ should take place in connection with the process of a great political engagement. Whilst men were moving from all quarters, in response to the decree of Cæsar Augustus, the angels of heaven were gathering around the world's greatest event. We need historical landmarks to help our memory of the best things. Blessed is that nation whose political eras are associated with the highest religious experiences. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Historical difficulties of the census*:—Great as are the historic difficulties in which this census is involved, there seem to be good independent grounds for believing that it may have been originally ordered by Sextius Saturinus, that it was begun by Publeius Sulpicius Quirinus, when he was for the first time legate of Syria; and that it was completed during his second term of office. In deference to Jewish prejudices, any infringement of which was the certain signal for violent tumults and insurrections, it was not carried out in the ordinary Roman manner, at each person's place of residence, but, according to Jewish custom, at the town to which

their family originally belonged. The Jews still clung to their genealogies and to the memory of long-extinct tribal relations; and though the journey was a weary and distasteful one, the mind of Joseph may well have been consoled by the remembrance of that heroic descent which would now be authoritatively recognized, and by the glow of those Messianic hopes to which the marvellous circumstances of which he was almost the sole depositary would give a tenfold intensity. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *The empire of Rome and the stable at Bethlehem*:—I. 1. Consider the decree that went forth from the emperor. How important it must have appeared to the Roman authorities! 2. Consider also the scene that night at Bethlehem. Little knew the people who were filling that inn whom they were turning out! II. 1. Learn that God is working in all the events of life, great or small; bringing out of them issues very different from the issues intended by the actors in those events. Emperors are but officials in God's Temple, and their decrees are but means by which He carries out His. 2. Learn that God's work does not appeal to the outward senses. It is born at lowly Bethlehem rather than in powerful Rome or in self-righteous Jerusalem. Yet it lasts to eternity. 3. Learn also how the work of Christ in us is like His work in the world. He has to be born in each one of us. (*Canon Vernon Hutton, M.A.*) *God overrules*:—Augustus, while sending forth his edicts to the utmost limits of the East, little knew that on his part he was obeying the decrees of the King of kings. God had foretold that the Saviour should be born in Bethlehem. In order that this might be accomplished He made use of Augustus, and through this prince the order was given for the census of the whole people. At the sight of those wars and revolutions that upset the world you feel inclined to imagine that God no longer governs the world or those in it. You are mistaken. God permits that these awful catastrophes should take place, just for the salvation and perfection of this or that person whom the world knows not. (*De Boylesve.*) *God's time arrives*:—I. DIVINE POWER IN THE INCARNATION. II. WISDOM (1) in the time; (2) place; (3) circumstances. III. FAITHFULNESS. IV. HOLINESS. Hiding His wonders from unbelievers. V. LOVE (John iii. 16). (*Van Doren.*) 1. Cæsar Augustus. Son of Octavius and Atia; licentious and treacherous. Superstitious—oft borne to the temple before day, for prayer. Generous, vain, ambitious, warlike, another Louis XIV. Cruel—three hundred senators and two hundred knights murdered with his consent. Defeated at sea, he dragged Neptune's statue into the sea. His daughter Julia, by her infamy, embittered his last days. Reigned 44 years, died aged 76. A long and splendid reign. In Augustus, see man's nothingness, amid earthly splendour. In Mary, see highest destiny, amid earthly meanness. (*Ibid.*) *The birth of Jesus Christ*:—There is a fine propriety in celebrating once a year the nativity. Our ignorance of the date is no valid objection. We do not hesitate to date our letters and documents *Anno Domini* 1887, although in doing so we commit an error of at least four years, and perhaps six. The all-important thing here is not the time of the nativity, but the fact of the nativity. And, if one day in every week the Church of Immanuel celebrates the resurrection of her Lord, is it unbecoming that she should one day in every year celebrate that nativity without which there had never been either resurrection or redemption, or even the Church herself? And now let us attend to the story of the birth of Immanuel. More than seven centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, the prophet Micah gave utterance to the following remarkable prophecy:

> Thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah,
> Which art little to be among the thousands of Judah,
> Out of thee shall One come forth unto me
> Who is to be ruler in Israel;
> Whose goings forth are from of old,
> From everlasting.

That same Almighty God who, through the restlessness of a Persian monarch, had rescued from annihilation the national stock from which His Anointed was to spring, prepared a birthplace for His Anointed through the edict of a Roman emperor. For, when the fulness of the time had come, and the Christ was to be born, Cæsar Augustus issued a decree that all the world should be enrolled. And thus a minute prophecy, a thousand times imperilled in the course of seven centuries, was at last minutely accomplished. Oh, who does not feel that a God is here? Who can resist the conviction that this God has had from the beginning His purposes, and actually controls every movement of every human will? Yet there is no reason

for supposing that Augustus Cæsar, in issuing his decree for a universal census, was conscious that in so doing he was preparing the way for the accomplishment of an ancient prediction. A Roman, he cared nothing for the Hebrews. A pagan, he knew nothing of Messianic prophecies. His issuing a decree of enrolment was nothing unnatural or extraordinary; it was one of the commonest acts of a political ruler, and he himself was one of the most methodical of men. Yet who can doubt that Cæsar Augustus, in issuing this decree, was accomplishing a predetermined purpose of the Ancient of Days? Nevertheless, nothing is clearer than this: Cæsar Augustus, in publishing this edict, and Joseph and Mary, in visiting Bethlehem in accordance with its requirements, acted as perfectly free, voluntary beings. Now, I have not alluded to this matter for the purpose of attempting to solve a frequently propounded problem—namely, the reconciliation of Divine sovereignty and human freedom. Considered practically in its matter-of-fact aspect, this subject presents no difficulty. It is only when we pry into that domain of infinite problems which God has not opened to us that we become bewildered and lost. Duty, not metaphysics, is our rule for life. Let me conclude with three reflections. I. THE BIRTH AT BETHLEHEM CONSECRATED AND GLORIFIED ALL INFANCY. As Athena was fabled to have sprung full-grown and panoplied from the cloven brow of Zeus, so the Christ and Son of God might have descended into humanity an unborn, adult Adam; for the distance between babe and man is infinitely less than the distance between man and God. But, no; He descended into humanity through the avenue of birth and babyhood, coming, like any other infant, under the law of growth, and so consecrating all life from cradle to grave, hallowing birth as well as death. The birth at Bethlehem made babyhood a sacred thing. And so the very infancy of Jesus is a gospel. II. THE TREATMENT OF THE HOLY FAMILY AT BETHLEHEM'S INN WAS A PROPHECY OF THE WORLD'S TREATMENT OF JESUS CHRIST EVER SINCE. It is, I repeat, a picture of the world's treatment of Jesus Christ ever since. It does not repulse Him; it simply has no room for Him. The world seizes the inn; Christianity must put up with a stable. (*G. D Boardman.*)

Ver. 4. **Which is called Bethlehem.**—*Description of Bethlehem:*—The town is picturesque in the highest degree. Its fortified walls have long vanished, but its position on a long, narrow ridge, has confined it to the limits of three thousand years ago, and its houses, very probably, are just the same in appearance as those of the time of David, or even earlier. In fact, we have before us an old Jewish city such as men inhabited in the Bible ages. But its picturesqueness is the best of it, for the streets are as far from being clean as those of other Eastern towns. Rivulets of abomination run across them or stand in puddles, for scavengers are unknown, and the masterless, homeless dogs cannot eat all the garbage. The main street is largely occupied by workshops, or rather arches, with no window, which is not much loss in such a climate. Looking in, one sees that the floor is covered with men sitting cross-legged, hard at work making carved rosaries from the stones of the Dom palm, or the common date, or olive wood; crosses from fig-wood, stained black; fancy trifles from the asphalt of the Dead Sea; endless souvenirs of the town in olive-wood; but, above all, cutting medallions from the mother-of-pearl oyster-shells of the Red Sea, or engraving them with the story of our Lord from His birth to His death. In this one art alone there are, perhaps, 500 workmen engaged. The staple industry of the town is in fact the manufacture of endlessly varied mementos of Bethlehem to be sold, after they have been blessed by the priests, to the pilgrims. This being a Christian town, the wives and daughters often sit with their husbands or brothers: a strange sight in the East, but one that goes far, by what it suggests, to account for the general prosperity. The buildings show that no masons could be better than the Bethlehemites, though there are not many good houses except in the front street, and even this has its better and its worse end. Inside, some are, of course, very superior to others, and it is the same with the workshops. Here is one, where men and women are busy making beads for rosaries. All the men are on the ground, cross-legged; the women sit on low pieces of wood, their bare feet visible outside their dress. Mat baskets, or large wooden bowls, of beads cut from olive rods, are on the ground; one man saws a small piece of wood fixed upright in a vice, another turns the beads at a most primitive lathe, driven by a cord stretched on a bent fiddle-stick arrangement. The work-bench consists of some beams on the ground, but one man has a vice fixed in the earth, and is filing something vigorously; the women have fiddle-bows of their own, but the string is a fine saw to cut the beads apart. The long stick which they

diss et with this tool rests on an upright, and is held straight by the left hand. The workshop of Joseph at Nazareth could not have been simpler, or, I might say, ruder, for this one seems originally to have been a small cavern in the hillside, the front being filled in, except the door, with masonry, to fit it for its present purpose. The roof is ceiled with a coating of reed-stalks, which sadly needs repair; the walls are in their natural roughness; the floor is the limestone; the door might have been made by one of Noah's carpenters, so roughly is it put together. A woman outside, with a nearly naked child astride her shoulder, her forehead and neck bright with coins, is looking in, with ourselves, at the busy scene. Turning up one of the short, steep side lanes, I found a second street parallel with the principal one, but dirtier. At some points, on the lower side of the main street, houses extend a short way down the hill, with stairs outside. One I noticed with the stone wall built on the edge of the limestone, so that the view was uninterrupted to the bottom of the valley. A very rickety hand-rail guarded the inner side; such a rail as the whole West could not match; made of natural wood, rough, bent, gaping, set on the steps, held in its place one knew not how. Stairs and house alike were built in arches; the wooden railing alone vindicating the rude backwardness of the East. Two women sat grinding corn on the landing above the first flight; a young woman and a young man were enjoying an interview lower down, and a miserable-looking old woman surveyed the world from above. (*C. Geikie, D.D.*) *The Church of the Nativity*:—The entrance to the Church of the Nativity faces an open space; the promenade of older Bethlehemites, and the playground of younger. Old marble pillars lie side by side in one part of it, and serve as a seat for the weary or idle, and a centre of activity for urchins, who must clamber over something, even in the city of David. The old arched gateway into the church has been long ago filled up with heavy square stones, to resist attack, and now the only entrance is by a small door, less than three feet broad, and hardly four feet high; but it is well that the proudest have to stoop in entering a building so venerable. Contemporary evidence proves that it was built by order of Constantine, so that it is the oldest church in Palestine, perhaps in the world. Within, you are in the presence of sixteen centuries, and tread ground hallowed by the footsteps of nearly fifty generations of believers in the Crucified One. You find yourself in a small, bare porch, once approached through a spacious quadrangle on the open space outside, with covered ways, lined with rows of pillars, in front and at the sides, and provision for baptism and oblation in the centre, From this, three spacious arched gates led into the ancient porch, which ran along great part of the west end of the church; but two of the gates have been entirely built up, and, as we have seen, only a very small doorway is left in the third, for fear of the Mahommedans. The porch is dark, and is divided by walls into different chambers. Inside, the venerable simplicity is very impressive. You face the east end, which is 170 feet from the western wall, and, proceeding to the centre, find yourself under a nave which rises in a pointed roof about thirty feet over the capitals of the great pillars, nineteen feet high, which support an aisle on each side. A clerestory, with five arched windows at each side, admits abundant light. The aisles are flat-roofed, supported in the centre by a row of eleven massive pillars, while another row of the same number holds up the straight beams of the lofty nave, the windows over which correspond to the spaces between the columns below. Once elaborately painted, there is now little ornament left on them, except some faint indications of former pictures of saints, and armorial bearings and mottoes, left eight hundred years ago by the Crusaders, with whose greatest chiefs it was a great matter to have their names emblazoned in the church of the Nativity. The columns, each one mighty whole, are of reddish limestone with white veins, and rest on great square slabs, the capitals being Corinthian, and the architraves very simple. The pointed roof of the nave was once richly painted and gilded, but this glory has long ago departed; and the spaces between the high windows at its sides were formerly covered with marbles and mosaics, but though the marbles remain, the mosaics survive only in fragments. When perfect, these represented, on the south side, the seven immediate ancestors of Joseph, the husband of the Holy Virgin. Above them, concealed by curtains, are niches containing altars, on which books of the Gospels rest; and on a line with these is a strange mosaic of coloured glass, on a gilded ground, representing a huge plant, the creation of some one's brain long ago, not the imitation of any natural growth. A short way down the aisle stands the ancient baptismal font, eight-sided, with an inscription in Greek on a table below, over a small sculptured cross "(Given) as a memorial, before God, and for the peace and forgiveness of the sinners (who presented it), of whom

the Lord knows the names." Humble enough! But all the more likely to be noted above. It brings one in mind of the dying request of the once imperious Alfonso de Ojeda, erewhile the haughtiest knight of Castile, yet in the end lowly before his Saviour—that they should bury him at the entrance to the Cathedral at Havana, that every one, as he went in, might tread on the dust of so unworthy a worm. A wall on the east side of this many-pillared square space, runs across aisles and nave alike; the former ending here, though the nave really extends beyond this line to the east end of the church, which is rounded into a projecting half-circle, or apse; the secret chamber of the Greek altar and choir, for in Greek worship both are hidden from the congregation by a screen. This apsidal end, with two similar semi-circles at the two ends of the transept, gives the shape of a Latin cross to the whole building. Descending the steps from the raised floor of the eastern part of the nave, and turning sharply to the left, a half-sunk arched doorway leads you down by thirteen steps to the Chapel of the Nativity; once a rude cave; now paved and walled with marble, and lighted by thirty-two lamps. About forty feet from east to west, it is only sixteen wide and ten high, and, of course, would be totally dark but for the artificial illumination, for it lies immediately under the great choir, at the very east of the church. The roof is covered with what had once been striped cloth of gold; three huge candlesticks, with candles rising higher than your head, stand at the back; and in front, between two marble pillars, a large picture of the Nativity, and some small ones below it, rest on a projecting shelf of marble, forming the altar. Below this is a shrine unspeakably sacred to millions of our fellow Christians. It is semi-circular, arching outwards above, and at most only four feet high. Fifteen silver lamps burn in it, night and day, lighting up the painted marbles which encrust it; and in the centre of its small floor is a silver star—marking the spot, it is believed, over which the Star of the East once rested—with an inscription, at the sight of which, I frankly confess, I wept like a child: "Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est." A Turkish soldier, gun in hand, and fez on head, stood a few steps behind, but I forgot his presence. Pilgrims kneeled down and kissed the silver which spoke a story so infinitely touching, and I did the same. There is no reason, so far as I can see, to doubt that in this cave, so hallowed by immemorial veneration, the great event associated with it actually took place. Nor is there any ground for hesitation because it is a cave that is regarded as the sacred spot. Nothing is more common in a Palestine village, built on a hill, than to use as adjuncts of the houses, the caves with which all the limestone rocks of the country abound; making them the store-room, perhaps, or the workshop, or the stable, and building the dwellings before them so as to join the two. (*Ibid.*) *Illustrious pedigree in obscurity*:—It need not surprise us that the representatives of such an illustrious ancestry should be found in a station so obscure. In the book of Judges, we find a grandson of Moses reduced to engage himself as family priest, in Mount Ephraim, for a yearly wage of "ten shekels, a suit of apparel, and his victuals." At the present day, the green turban which marks descent from Mahomet is often worn in the East by the very poor, and even by beggars. In our own history, the glory of the once illustrious Plantagenets so completely waned, that the direct representative of Margaret Plantagenet, daughter and heiress of George Duke of Clarence, followed the trade of a cobbler in Newport, Shropshire, in 1637. Among the lineal descendants of Edmund of Woodstock, sixth son of Edward I., and entitled to quarter the royal arms, were a village butcher, and a keeper of a turnpike gate, and among the descendants of Thomas Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester, fifth son of Edward III., was included the late sexton of a London church. The vicissitudes of the Jewish nation for century after century; its deportation to Babylon, and long suspension of national life; its succession of high priestly rulers, after the return; its transition to the Asmonean line, and, finally, the reign of the Idumean house of Herod, with all the storm and turmoil which marked so many changes, had left, to use the figure of Isaiah, only a root in a dry ground, an humble citizen of Nazareth, as the heir of its ancient royalty. (*Ibid.*) *Subsidiary lives*:—Hence, sometimes one life will appear to have been almost solely devoted to the mere selecting, developing, and energizing another. For example, remember Hannah. Her lot was an exceedingly humble one. It seemed linked with a purpose no more extraordinary than that of a hundred other Hebrew mothers. She came to Eli at least twice in the temple; yet so unobtrusive and so unremarkable was she, that she had each time to introduce herself to the busy man, and repeat her name and errand. To wean the infant Samuel, and bring him a little coat every year, was about all we know of the purpose for which Hannah's life was set

in the infinite counsels of heaven. So of Andrew: he was one of the chosen twelve, and there is one pattern of cross that bears his name, because he was martyred upon it. But all we positively read about a man so true and good, is that he brought Simon Peter to Jesus. So of Joseph, the Nazarene carpenter; he shows himself in the early history of the Bethlehem babe; but Scripture, after it has exhibited how useful he was in guarding the reputation of the Virgin-Mother, dismisses him so suddenly that nobody knows where he was buried, or even where he died. (*R. Robinson.*) *Christ born in Bethlehem*:—1. The place where Christ was born is observable. Not Nazareth, but Bethlehem, in accordance with Micah's prediction. We may suppose that the Blessed Virgin little thought of changing her place, but to have been delivered of her Holy Burden at Nazareth, where it was conceived. Her house at Nazareth had been honoured by the presence of the angel; yea, by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost; that house there, we may suppose, was most satisfactory to the Virgin's desire. But He who made choice of the womb where His Son should be conceived, it was fit He should also choose the place where His Son should be born. And this place, many hundred years before, was foretold should be Bethlehem. 2. How remarkable was the providence of God in bringing the Virgin up from Nazareth to Bethlehem, that Christ, as it was prophesied of Him, might be born there. How the wisdom of God overrules the actions of men, for higher or nobler ends than they aimed at. The emperor's aim by this edict was to fill his coffers; God's end was to fulfil his prophecies. 3. How readily Joseph and Mary yielded obedience to the edict and decree of this heathen emperor. It was no less than four days' journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem; how just an excuse might the Virgin have pleaded for her absence! What woman ever undertook so hazardous a journey, when so near her delivery? And Joseph, no doubt, was sufficiently unwilling to draw her forth into so manifest a hazard. But as the emperor's command was peremptory, so their obedience was exemplary. We must not plead difficulty for withdrawing our obedience to supreme commands. How did our Saviour, even in the womb of His mother, yield homage to civil rulers and governors! The first lesson which Christ's example taught the world, was loyalty and obedience to the supreme magistrate. 4. After many weary steps the holy Virgin comes to Bethlehem, where every house is taken up by reason of the great confluence of people that came to be taxed; and there is no room for Christ but in a stable; the stable His palace, the manger His cradle. Oh, how can we be abased low enough for Him who thus neglected Himself for us! (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Christ's lowly birth*:—The lowly birth of the Saviour of the world is—1. Surprising, when we consider who He is that comes. 2. Intelligible, when we ask why He comes. 3. A cause of joy, when we see for whom He comes. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *Christ's threefold birth*:—The threefold birth of the Son of God. 1. Begotten of the Father before all worlds. 2. Born of flesh in the world. 3. Born of the Spirit in us. (*F. W. Krummacher, D.D.*) *Birth of the Son of God*:—It is necessary for a due celebration of Christmas, that we should recognize the Son of God in the new-born child; for, without this recognition, we should lack—(1) the full reason for and due appreciation of, this celebration; (2) we should observe it without the right spirit; and (3) fail to obtain its true blessing. (*Kuchler.*) *Christ's birth in Bethlehem*:—The Son of God born in the little town of Bethlehem, a proof—(1) that the Lord certainly performs what He promises; (2) that with God nothing is impossible; (3) that nothing is too mean or too lowly for God. (*Fuchs.*) *Christmas a children's festival*:—The festival of Christmas a children's festival; for—1. It leads us to a Child. 2. It fills the world of children with joy. 3. Its due celebration demands a childlike spirit. (*Florey.*) *Christ's birth in an inn*:—Christ was born in an inn, to intimate—(1) That He was homeless in this world; (2) that He was a pilgrim on earth, as we ought to be; (3) that He welcomes all comers, and entertains them, but without money and without price. (*Matthew Henry.*) *The birth of Jesus the new birth of the human race*:—1. Without the birth of Jesus, the new birth of mankind is impossible. 2. With it, the new birth is begun. 3. By it, the new birth is assured. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. **The days were accomplished.**—*The birth of Christ*:—The whole of the world's history led up to this night. It is the hinge on which the history of man turns. The whole of mankind from Adam waited for this night. All the prophets, from righteous Enoch to John the preacher of repentance, laboured to prepare the way for Him who came on this night. The Word was made flesh to sanctity human nature. God descended to man, to raise man to God. Christmas is the

feast of salvation for all mankind. The heathen were at this time celebrating their Saturnalia, in remembrance of the Golden Age, which indeed had never been since sin was in the world, an age when, they said, all the world was full of light, and joy, and innocence. But these were times for ever gone by, times from which every century was removing them further morally, as well as actually. Yet, see! how Christmas comes to turn the vain and wistful backward look into a look forwards. The evening and the morning form the day according to the Divine reckoning, not the morning and the evening. First comes darkness, and then light; first sadness, then joy; first desire, then fulfilment. Christ came to bid the old heathens turn away from contemplation of the past, and through Him look to the coming of the true Golden Age, the age when, from the new heavens and the new earth, sin and sighing shall have fled; when He, who is the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, shall reign in righteousness, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Christ has not, indeed, founded on earth the Golden Age such as the Gentiles lusted after, any more than He came to be the Messiah such as the Jews longed for; He did not come to give peace to the world itself, but an inner peace, a peace that is hid with Christ in God—not such as the world giveth—a peace which cannot be broken and taken away, a peace to be won through conflict and storm and anguish. He came not to give earthly riches and prosperity, but the true riches, which are spiritual. The Incarnation has made that possible which before was impossible. The heathen looked back to the reign of Peace and Innocence and Plenty as something past and unattainable. Christ shows it as future, and opens the kingdom of the Golden Age to all. Earth and heaven are united. Man is made a citizen of Heaven, a member of the Golden Kingdom that is preparing and awaiting its manifestation. On earth man is subject to temptation, with the world ever striving to stamp out and destroy the spiritual kingdom, as Herod, its type, sought to destroy the infant Messiah; on earth, but not of it, man waits and prepares himself, and prays, "Thy kingdom come," knowing that the manifestation of the sons of God in the coming Golden Age cannot be till God's will is done by His subjects on earth as it is done by the denizens of heaven. At the heathen Saturnalia all distinction between slave and master was done away, to return into full force when the feast was over. Christmas shows us Him who is very God made the servant of all, taking on Him the form of a servant, made in the likeness of flesh, that He might redeem men from slavery, and set them free in the glorious liberty of childhood to God. And as on this day the birth of the visible sun was kept, because the days have been shortening, and now appear to lengthen again, Christ calls the Gentiles to look away from the sun that rules the day to Himself, who is the true Light of the world, the Sun of Righteousness, rising with healing on His wings, who comes with promise of a day eternal, in which there will be no created sun or moon, or humanly-made candle, but the Lord God will be the light, and there shall be no night more. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*)

The joy of Christmas:—Christmas Day is characteristically different from other festivals, such as Easter or Whitsunday. It has a softer, tenderer, more domestic interest about it. It falls in with other feelings, and blends with some of the closest and dearest associations of family life. A first-born child in common life—born, it may be, after a season of gloom and distress; an heir, it may be, of a throne, or born in the humblest life, what is a first-born child but the sweet and happy embodiment of hope and promise, of happy days, of daily developing delight, of good and noble manhood? So it is in our common everyday life; and those who do not know it of their own, know it well for their friends, how deeply, thankfully sinks into the heart of man the delight of a newborn, a first-born child. So, I say, of common life and ordinary families. But this day saw the birth, not of the first-born of ordinary human parents, but of the Child of heaven and earth, the Child of God and man, the Child for whom both heaven and earth were waiting in anxious expectation of redemption and restitution, the Child of hopes unspeakable—hopes that could not be frustrated to those who would hold them fast; the Heir of heaven, the Heir of earth, the Heir in whose inheritance all men might regain the inheritance of their Father's kingdom. . . . Then let us keep this holy day with peaceful, happy, Christian thankfulness. Let it be a day of sober joy, of outpouring charity, of mutual Christian love, of deepminded peace. It is a day of family concord; a day for special parental love, and special filial duty and obedience; a day on which the internal affection of families should be warmest and brightest; a day that should know of no bickerings or irritations between those of the same household, brothers and sisters, fellow-servants, and all others. It is a

day for neighbourly kindness, mutual forgiveness, interchange of all friendly offices. It is a day which, opening our hearts in grateful love to God, should open them also in brotherly kindness to one another, and help us all on towards that blessed goal which we all hope to reach, and which none will reach so surely as those who are doing their best to enable others to reach it also. (*Bishop Moberly.*) *The greatest event on the smallest of scales*:—And in speaking of the greatness of the event of Christmas Day, let us observe further one peculiarity of its outward circumstances that conveys to us a special lesson concerning greatness of all kinds. This decisive world-historical birthday took place in a small inn of a small village of a small province of a small nation. It was the greatest of events on the smallest of scales. There are some who think that all events and characters are to be measured by the magnitude of the stage on which they appear; there are some who are perplexed by the thought that this globe, on which the history of man is enacted, is now known to be a mere speck in the universe: there are some who are startled on learning for the first time that the heathen world far outnumbers the Christian, and that the famous Indian teacher, Buddha, counts myriads more worshippers than Christ. But the moment we go below the surface we find that the truth conveyed to us by the birth of the world's Redeemer in the little village of Bethlehem is the likeness of a principle which ramifies far and wide. It was once said to me by a distinguished American, "The truth which needs especially to be impressed upon us Americans is that bigness is not greatness." It was a truth which a well-known English philosopher had already impressed upon his American audience with a courage which they were honest enough to appreciate. The fact is that the great nations of the world have almost always been amongst the smallest in size. Europe is diminutive compared with any of the other continents, and yet Europe is certainly the seat and centre of the world's history. Athens in its greatest days was as nothing compared with Babylon and Nineveh, and yet Athens was the eye of the world's civilization. Palestine was not nearly half the size even of our own little island, and yet Palestine is the cradle of the world's religion. (*Dean Stanley.*) *On the most striking circumstances that distinguished the birth of the Redeemer*:—I. HIS IMMACULATE AND MYSTERIOUS CONCEPTION. Ancient mythology teems with instances of a fictitious correspondence between Divine and human kind. In that credulous age, whoever had the good fortune to excel his competitors in wisdom, arts, or arms, boasted an alliance with heaven. Even the best among them did not scruple to blast maternal honour for the sake of this imaginary distinction. But, fantastical as it was in them, it is an evidence to us, that the idea was then sufficiently popular to warrant and protect the fact from implicit reprobation when it happened. Indeed the various impostures of this kind, which mark the annals of paganism, most probably resulted from some of the earliest predictions of the Messiah's birth, which might be propagated among the heathen by tradition, as it was preserved among the Jews by Scripture. II. The era of Christ's nativity, interesting as it was to the children of men, was NOT ANNOUNCED BY ANY OF THOSE FULSOME FORMS OF OSTENTATIOUS SPLENDOUR WHICH MARK THE BIRTH OF THE GREAT. His kingdom was not of this world, and He deigned not to borrow its rites. But His insignia are stamped in the heavens (Matt. ii. 2). Angels announced His advent with strains of highest rapture. III. THE WORLD WAS LITTLE AFFECTED by this event so essential to its welfare. This, perhaps, is the most extraordinary circumstance of all, that dignified and distinguished that occasion. Those already specified were evidently adapted by Providence to assert the importance, and attest the truth of His character. But what shall we say of the meanness, the ignominy, the contempt to which the Son of God condescended in taking upon Him the form of a man? The gospel accounts sufficiently for this. It is intended to suppress the arrogant, and elevate all the milder sensibilities of the heart. Christ came to inculcate the principles of virtue and religious wisdom; not to swell the passions, or stimulate the wishes of ambition, but to refine fallen and degraded human nature; not to pamper the appetites of men, but to wean them from the sensual and temporary enjoyments of this life, by those of a rational, spiritual, and immortal kind. It was, indeed, one capital object of this Divine embassy, to set the insignificance of those things which dazzle our senses, and mislead our hearts, in the strongest and most affecting point of view. And how could He do it more effectually than by the poverty and abjection in which He made His appearance and progress through life? The most likely means of detaching His disciples from the world, was giving them in this manner an example of living above it. They cannot consistently be covetous of dis-

tinctions, which are so uniformly despised by their Master. CONCLUSION: Do not imagine that this festival requires no preparation of you. Let one and all "prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight His paths." Come, ye miserable sinners, laden with the insupportable burden of your sins; come, ye troubled consciences, uneasy at the remembrance of your many idle words, many criminal thoughts, many abominable actions; come, ye poor mortals, condemned first to bear the infirmities of nature, the caprices of society, the vicissitudes of age, the turns of fortune, and then the horrors of death, and the frightful night of the tomb; come, behold the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; take Him into your arms, learn to desire nothing more when you possess Him. (*B. Murphy.*)

Ver. 7. **Her first-born Son.**—*Birth of Christ the Lord*:—I. CHRIST'S RELATION TO THE POOR. 1. When He came in so lowly circumstances, consenting to lay His head in a manger, none of the pomps of royalty about Him, how touchingly and tenderly He spoke to the vast majority of the world. There is a bond of sympathy between Him and the multitude whose condition is one of struggles, deprivations, and anxieties. Here is a warrant of His love; here is something to secure their confidence, draw out their hearts, lead them to admiration. 2. How plain, in the light of this event, is the folly of estimating men by their birth or surroundings. What a rebuke on the worldliness of earth, on our unseemly regard for temporal surroundings. If Christ, the King of kings, the Saviour of the world, the Son of the Highest, could take so lowly a station, we are weak indeed, if we judge men hereafter by the canopy on their cradles or the jewels on their swaddling-bands. II. THE IMPORTANCE OF INFANCY. Why was Christ a babe? To link Himself at every stage with humanity; to indicate the sweetness and preciousness of infant life. In that quaint, fragile casket—a babe—is the jewel of an immortal soul. There lie the germs of immense possibilities. The soul is as yet in embryo, but it is there. He turns against his better nature, against the teachings of Christ's life, who has no interest in the new-born babe. III. THE SUPERIOR IMPORTANCE OF THE SPIRITUAL TO THE MATERIAL. How little do we know of the material circumstances of Christ's life! Even this great event, His birth, is shrouded in comparative darkness. God would show us the comparative insignificance of temporal things. Christ came to teach spiritual truth. IV. Christ's coming was THE PIVOTAL EVENT OF THE WORLD'S HISTORY. From Bethlehem shall go forth an influence that shall move the world. That Divine Babe is the salvation of a ruined earth! (*A. P. Foster.*) *The miraculous conception not unreasonable*:—Let me dispute the case with a mere natural man, How doth the harvest of the field enrich the husbandman? It is answered, By the seed which is sown in the ground. Say again, How came seed into the world to sow the ground? Surely you must confess that the first seed had a Maker, who did not derive it from the ears of wheat, but made it of nothing by the power of His own hand; says St. Austin, "then God could make a man without the seed of man in the Virgin's womb, who made seed for the corn before ever there was earing or harvest." Nay, there is an instance for it in the little bees, as the poet doth philosophize, they do not bring forth their young ones, as other creatures do, by the help of male and female together; but they gather the seed which begets the young ones from the dew of leaves, and herbs, and flowers, and so they bring them forth. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Christ born without the curse of the flesh*:—The Virgin conceived our Lord without the lusts of the flesh, and therefore she had not the pangs and travail of women upon her, she brought Him forth without the curse of the flesh. These be the Fathers' comparisons: as bees draw honey from the flower without offending it, as Eve was taken out of Adam's side without any grief to him, as a sprig issues out of the bark of the tree, as the sparkling light from the brightness of the star, such ease was it to Mary to bring forth her first-born Son; and therefore having no weakness in her body, feeling no want of vigour, she did not deliver Him to any profane hand to be dressed, but by a special ability, above all that are newly delivered, she wrapt Him in swaddling clouts. (*Ibid.*) *Christ wrapped in swaddling clothes*:—Now these clouts here mentioned which were not worth the taking up, but that we find them in this text, are more to be esteemed than the robes of Solomon in all his royalty; yea, more valuable than the beauty of the lily, or any flower of the field or garden, which did surpass all the royalty of Solomon. I may say they are the pride of poverty, for I know not in what thing poverty may better boast and glory than in the rags of Christ. (*Ibid.*) 1. The strange condition of the mother, that she brought forth a Son, who by nature was no bearer,

for she was a virgin. 2. The strange condition of the Babe, the first-begotten Son of God was the first-born Son of flesh and blood. 3. The strange condition of the place, that she laid Him in a manger. 4. The strange condition of men, that there was no room in the inn for Jesus and Mary. (*Ibid.*) *The Christ-child* :—Mother and child! What more beautiful sight, and what more wonderful sight is there in the world? What more beautiful? That man must be very far from the Kingdom of God—he is not worthy to be called a man at all—whose heart has not been touched by the sight of his first child in its mother's bosom. The greatest painters who have ever lived have tried to paint the beauty of that simple thing—a mother with her babe: and have failed. One of them, Rafaelle by name, to whom God gave the spirit of beauty in a measure in which He never gave it, perhaps, to any other man, tried again and again, for years, painting over and over that simple subject—the mother and her babe—and could not satisfy himself. Each of his pictures is most beautiful—each in a different way; and yet none of them is perfect. There is more beauty in that simple everyday sight than he or any man could express by his pencil and his colours. And as for the wonder of that sight I tell you this: That physicians, and the wise men who look into the laws of nature, of flesh and blood, say that the mystery is past their finding out; that if they could find out the whole meaning, and the true meaning of those two words, "mother" and "child," they could get the key to the deepest wonders of the world—but they cannot. And philosophers who look into the laws of soul and spirit say the same. The wiser men they are, the more they find in the soul of every new-born babe, and its kindred to its mother, wonders and puzzles past man's understanding. This then we are to think of—God revealed, and shown to men, as a babe upon His mother's bosom. It was only in the Babe of Bethlehem that the whole of God's character shone forth, that men might not merely find Him and bow before Him, but trust in Him and love Him, as one who could be touched with the feeling of their infirmities. A God in need! a God weak! a God fed by mortal woman! a God wrapt in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger! If that sight will not touch our hearts, what will? God has been through the pains of infancy, that He might take on Him not merely the nature of a man, but all human nature, from the nature of the babe on its mother's bosom, to the nature of the full-grown and full-souled man, fighting with all his powers against the evil of the world. All this is His, and He is all; that no human being, from the strongest to the weakest, from the oldest to the youngest, but may be able to say, "What I am, Christ has been!" (*C. Kingsley.*) *The Advent exalts human relations* :—Why was it that the Eternal Son, when He abandoned that "glory which He had with the Father before the world was," and determined to be "the Man Christ Jesus," was pleased to make His apparition on the scene of the world even as others do; to be the infant and the child before He was the man; to be subject to the filial obligation in the fulness of its legitimate extent; and to be all this in a situation in which such ties were stripped of all that could recommend them, apart from their own intrinsic value—a situation in which wealth could not adorn, nor authority dignify them? Assuredly one prominent reason was that, separating, by means so much more intelligible than argumentative statements, what was essentially excellent in human nature from its depravations and corruptions, He might bestow a special dignity upon those primary connections of human life upon which the rest so mainly depend, and in which the tenderer and better affections of the heart find, and were meant by our Creator to find, their peculiar sphere of exercise. Nothing can more truly show that nature and revelation came from the same hand, than the assumption into revelation of all that is innocent in nature. When God, as Creator of the world, bound together all the variety of human connections by all the variety of corresponding affections, He wrought a work destined for everlasting. Dispensations may change, but these things are not meant to change. And thus it is that, when from the perusal of the New Testament a man descends into the charities of social life, things do not seem changed in their position, but wonderfully beautified in their complexion; a Diviner glow rests upon them and a holier sanctity. There is a change, but it is a change that adorns without disturbing. It is as if a man who had lived in a twilight world, where all was dimly revealed and coldly coloured, were suddenly to be surprised with the splendour of a summer noon. Objects would still remain, and relations be still unbroken; but new and lovely lights and shadowings would cover them: they would move in the same direction as before, but under an atmosphere impregnated with brighter hues, and rich with a light that streamed direct from heaven. I. Then, by what means could this high result have

been attained with such force, directness, and certainty, as has been effected in the adoption by our God of those very connections? So far, you can perceive a strong reason for the manner of Christ's incarnation—for His advent among us in the simplicity of our ordinary manhood. You can perceive that it conferred an inexpressible dignity upon the relation, above all others, of the mother and the child. II. I would add that of His design to exalt this as well as the other natural relations, to make them high and sacred elements in the religion He was about to establish, a most lovely proof is insinuated in the constant employment of all these connections and feelings to symbolize the eternal realities of the spiritual world. III. The passage before us speaks not merely of the "first-born," but of her who bore Him, and whose mysterious agonies were unsupported by the aids of wealth and the appliances of luxury; who was rejected when she would have given to the Immortal Infant the common comforts of that trying hour; and who had to place among the beasts of the field, less insensate than man, the "life of the world" thus cast forth to die. How wondrous, how unfelt before or since, the communion of that mother and that Son! With the full remembrance of His supernatural descent, to sit at the same daily table for all those long and untold years that preceded the public ministry of the great prophet; to recognize in Him at once the babe of her bosom and the God of her immortality; to catch, ever and anon, those mystic echoes of eternity which the deeper tones of His converse would reveal, and to behold, plainer and plainer, as He grew, the lineaments of the God impressed upon the wondrous inmate of her humble home; surely these were experiences to dignify that mother in our thoughts; yea, to give a glory and a hallowing to maternity itself for ever. IV. One point, above all others, added a peculiar interest to that wondrous connection. The virgin and her Son stood alone in the world! alone in the long line of the human race! He, with whom she was so awfully, yet endearingly connected, could acknowledge no earthly father, no author of His humanity, but that overshadowing Spirit by whose mysterious operation He had been invested with our nature. In that awful hour of Bethlehem there must have mingled with the sorrows of the outcast Virgin the trembling joys of one who knew herself the supernatural channel of the Hope of the human race. And though she might own to the feebleness of the woman in that hour of trial, and deplore amid the unworthy accompaniments of such a scene that "low estate" of "the handmaid of the Lord" which had reduced her to them, yet as she gazed upon that Eternal Child in whom was bound up the regeneration of Israel, of the world, "her soul could magnify the Lord and her spirit rejoice in God her Saviour." (*W. Archer Butler.*) *The Saviour and the manger*:—For ourselves Christmas Day is one of universal joy; for Jesus Christ's sake, who as on this day was born, there is a loving sadness. His birth overshadowed His life. His very coming into the world was a heavy prophecy of sorrow. I. BORN A HELPLESS UNKNOWING BABE. Unable to do anything; He was mocked in the hour of His Passion; as being weak and foolish; as one unable to reply to Herod and to Pilate (Isa. liii. 17). The burden of our nature was laid upon Him all through His earthly life, which was one long course of sacrifice for others. The weak and suffering are often the workers of the world. II. BORN WITHOUT A DWELLING. "No room for Him in the inn"; whilst living, no home for Him in Jerusalem or elsewhere (Matt. viii. 20). In death He had no tomb or sepulchre of His own. Quite possible to do a mighty work for the world, and yet have no lot or portion in it. III. BORN IN DARKNESS. Just after midnight; died in darkness "over the whole land," just after midday. The Light of the world came into it at dark, to make it bright with His presence, which presence being taken away, left it dark again. Type of a soul once enlightened, fallen away into the darkness of sin (Matt. vi. 23). IV. BORN ON A HARD COUCH. Born in a stable, laid in a manger, He died extended and reposing upon the bitter couch of the cross. A birth, life, and death in hardship. This world a school of discipline to holy souls. V. BORN BETWEEN TWO ANIMALS. The ox and the ass were with Him at His birth. He was compelled to breathe out His soul between two thieves, and during His life He received sinners. Conclusion: Every life repeats itself. Marvellous concord between Jesus Christ the Child and Jesus Christ the Man, the manger and the cross, the beginning and the end. (*M. Faber.*) **There was no room for them in the inn.**—*No room for Christ in the inn*:—There were OTHER REASONS WHY CHRIST SHOULD BE LAID IN THE MANGER. 1. It was intended thus to show forth His humiliation. Would it not have been inappropriate that the Redeemer who was to be buried in a borrowed tomb should be born anywhere but in the humblest shed, and housed anywhere but in the most ignoble manner?

The manger and the cross, standing at the two extremities of the Saviour's earthly life, seem most fit and congruous the one to the other. 2. By being in a manger He was declared to be the king of the poor. In the eyes of the poor, imperial robes excite no affection, but a man in their own garb attracts their confidence. Great commanders have readily won the hearts of their soldiers by snaring their hardships and roughing it as if they belonged to the ranks. 3. Further, in being thus laid in a manger, He did, as it were, give an invitation to the most humble to come to Him. We might tremble to approach a throne, but we cannot fear to approach a manger. 4. Methinks there was yet another mystery. This place was free to all. Christ was born in the stable of the inn to show how free He is to all comers. Class distinctions are unknown here, and the prerogatives of caste are not acknowledged. No forms of etiquette are required in entering a stable; it cannot be an offence to enter the stable of a public caravanserai. So, if you desire to come to Christ, you may come to Him just as you are; you may come now. 5. It was at the manger that the beasts were fed; and does the Saviour lie where weary beasts receive their provender, and shall there not be a mystery here? Alas, there are some men who have become so brutal through sin, so utterly depraved by their lusts, that to their own consciences everything manlike has departed; but even to such the remedies of Jesus, the Great Physician, will apply. Even beastlike men may come to Christ, and live. 6. But as Christ was laid where beasts were fed, you will recollect that after He was gone beasts fed there again. It was only His presence which could glorify the manger, and here we learn that if Christ were taken away the world would go back to its former heathen darkness. Christianity itself would die out, at least that part of it which really civilizes man, if the religion of Jesus could be extinguished. II. THERE WERE OTHER PLACES BESIDES THE INN WHICH HAD NO ROOM FOR JESUS. 1. The palaces of emperors and the halls of kings afforded the Royal Stranger no refuge. 2. But there were senators, there were forums of political discussion, there were the places where the representatives of the people make the laws, was there no room for Christ there? Alas! none. 3. How little room there is for Him in what is called good society. There is room there for all the silly little forms by which men choose to trammel themselves; room for frivolous conversation; room for the adoration of the body; there is room for the setting up of this and that as the idol of the hour, but there is too little room for Christ, and it is far from fashionable to follow the Lord fully. 4. How little room for Him on the exchange. 5. How little room for Him in the schools of the philosophers. 6. How little room has He found even in the Church. Go where ye will, there is no space for the Prince of Peace but with the humble and contrite spirits which by grace He prepares to yield Him shelter. III. THE INN ITSELF HAD NO ROOM FOR HIM. This was the main reason why He must be laid in a manger. 1. The inn represents public opinion. In this free land, men speak of what they like, and there is a public opinion upon every subject; and you know there is free toleration in this country to everything—permit me to say, toleration to everything but Christ. 2. The inn also represents general conversation. Speech is very free in this land, but ah! how little room is there for Christ in general talk. 3. As for the inns of modern times—who would think of finding Christ there? IV. HAVE YOU ROOM FOR CHRIST? V. If you have room for Christ, then THE WORLD HAS NO ROOM FOR YOU. It had no room for Joseph or Mary, any more than for the Babe. Who are His father, and mother, and sister, and brother, but those who receive His word and keep it? So, as there was no room for the Blessed Virgin, nor for the reputed father, remember there is no room in this world for any true follower of Christ. 1. No room for you to take your ease. 2. No room for you to sit down contented with your own attainments. 3. No room for you to hide your treasure in. 4. No room for you to put your confidence. 5. Hardly room of sufferance. You must expect to be laughed at, and to wear the fool's cap in men's esteem. Will you enlist on such terms? Will you give room for Christ, when there is henceforth no room for you? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ outside of the inn*:—1. This was partly the result of ignorance. Had they known He was the Messiah, doubtless they would have acted otherwise. 2. But partly also the result of selfishness. Had there been more of a generous humanity in their hearts, some fitter place would have been found for Mary and her child. I. We may take this inn as AN EMBLEM OF THE UNGODLY WORLD. What is the essential distinction between an inn and a home? In the one, as in the other, a number of individuals dwell together, but "home" involves the idea of vital unity—common life, feeling, experience. In an inn no mutual fellowship; each thinks only of his own interests. When Christ was born, the Roman Empire

was just one huge inn, with no real cohesion, no vital unity, amongst the various provinces. Into this world of aggregated interests Christ came; and there was no room for Him. Even the Jewish nation, to whom more especially He came, was split up into sects and parties, each pursuing its own objects, although living under the same roof of a common history and a common religion; and so, when He came unto His own, they received Him not. Is it not the same in the world now? II. AN EMBLEM OF MANY AN UNCHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLD. Many a household does not at all realize the idea of a "home." Its members eat and sleep under the same roof; but this is more like an arrangement of temporary necessity than of loving choice. They need Christ as a bond of union; but they do not feel their need of Him, and so for Him they have no room. III. AN EMBLEM OF THE WORLDLY HEART. It might be thought the very spirit of selfishness would impart unity to the worldling's nature. But no, for while his desires are imperious, they are often mutually conflicting. He needs a governing principle—Christ dwelling in the heart. (*T. C. Finlayson.*) *Room in the soul for Christ:*—As the palace, and the forum, and the inn, have no room for Christ, and as the places of public resort have none, have you room for Christ? "Well," says one, "I have room for Him, but I am not worthy that He should come to me." Ah! I did not ask about worthiness; have you room for Him? "Oh," says one, "I have an empty void the world can never fill!" Ah! I see you have room for Him. "Oh! but the room I have in my heart is so base!" So was the manger. "But it is so despicable!" So was the manger a thing to be despised. "Ah! but my heart is so foul!" So, perhaps, the manger may have been. "Oh! but I feel it is a place not at all fit for Christ!" Nor was the manger a place fit for Him, and yet there was He laid. "Oh! but I have been such a sinner; I feel as if my heart had been a den of beasts and devils!" Well, the manger had been a place where beasts had fed. Have you room for Him? Never mind what the past has been; He can forget and forgive. It mattereth not what even the present state may be if thou mournest it. If thou hast but room for Christ He will come and be thy guest. Do not say, I pray you, "I hope I shall have room for Him;" the time is come that He shall be born; Mary cannot wait months and years. Oh! sinner, if thou hast room for Him let Him be born in thy soul to-day. "To-day if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation." "To-day is the accepted time; to-day is the day of salvation." Room for Jesus! Room for Jesus now! "Oh!" saith one, "I have room for Him, but will He come?" Will He come indeed! Do you but set the door of your heart open, do but say, "Jesus, Master, all unworthy and unclean I look to thee; come, lodge within my heart," and He will come to thee, and He will cleanse the manger of thy heart, nay, will transform it into a golden throne, and there He will sit and reign for ever and for ever. My Master wants room! Room for Him! Room for Him! I, His herald, cry aloud. Room for the Saviour! Room! Here is my royal Master—have you room for Him? Here is the Son of God made flesh—have you room for Him? Here is He who can forgive all sin—have you room for Him? There is He who can take you up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay—have you room for Him? Here is He who, when He cometh in, will never go out again, but abide with you for ever to make your heart a heaven of joy and bliss for you—have you room for Him? 'Tis all I ask. Your emptiness, your nothingness, your want of feeling, your want of goodness, your want of grace—all these will be but room for Him Have you room for Him? Oh! Spirit of God, lead many to say, "Yes, my heart is ready." Ah! then He will come and dwell with you. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ waiting for room:*—Were a man to enter some great cathedral of the old continent, survey the vaulted arches and the golden tracery above, wander among the forests of pillars on which they rest, listen to the music of choirs, and catch the softened light that streams through sainted forms and histories on the windows, observe the company of priests, gorgeously arrayed, chanting, kneeling, crossing themselves, and wheeling in long processions before the great altar loaded with gold and gems; were he to look into the long tiers of side chapels, each a gorgeous temple, with an altar of its own for its princely family, adorned with costliest mosaics, and surrounded, in the niches of the walls, with statues and monumental groups of dead ancestors in the highest forms of art, noting also the living princes at their worship there among their patriarchs and brothers in stone—spectator of a scene so imposing, what but this will his thought be: "Surely the Infant of the manger has at last found room and come to be entertained among men with a magnificence worthy of His dignity" But if he looks again, and looks a little farther in—far enough in to see the

miserable pride of self and power that lurks under this gorgeous show, the mean ideas of Christ, the superstitions held instead of Him, the bigotry, the hatred of the poor, the dismal corruption of life—with how deep a sigh of disappointment will he confess: "Alas, the manger was better and a more royal honour!" (*Horace Bushnell, DD.*) *Room in the heart for Christ*:—Christ was straitened for room in the inn, and thrust into the stable, that you might open your heart wide, and enlarge it, to give him a habitation to content Him. First, beloved, *periculosum est inter delicias poni*; 'tis full of peril to rest among pleasures and delights; it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting (Eccl. vii. 2). Adam had his habitation among the sweet savours and most delightful recreations of the garden of Eden; his senses were so filled with objects of pleasures, that he forgot the Lord: therefore Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who came to restore all that was lost, pitched upon the worst corner of the house, where there were no delights at all to move temptation. King's houses, and well furnished mansions have their occasions of lewdness, but she laid her Son in a manger. Learn from hence to condescend unto the humility of Christ if you mean to ascend unto His glory; for as the custom of those regions was, this manger was a vault cut out of a rock, as low a place as He could cast Himself into; but no man projects so wisely to raise up a mighty building as he that lays a low foundation. It is reported of Sextus Quintus, how he was so far from shame that he was born in a poor cottage, that he would sport with his own fortune, and say he was born in a bright resplendent family, because the sun looked in at every cranny of the house; it is not the meanness of the place that can justly turn to any man's scorn, nor doth a magnificent palace build up any man's reputation. Holofernes had a costly tent to cover him, and yet was never the honester; and it was a pretty objection of Plutarch's against the vain consumption of cost upon the decking of our houses. What do we mean, says he, to be at such cost to deck our chambers? Why will we pay so dear for our sleep, when God, if you please, hath given you that for nothing? the slenderest place served our Saviour to cover His head, "she laid Him in a manger." (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Christ seeks entrance into the heart*:—Why, since Christianity undertakes to convert the world, does it seem to almost or quite fail in the slow progress it makes? Because, I answer, Christ gets no room, as yet, to work, and be the fire in men's hearts He is able to be. We undertake for Him as by statecraft and churchcraft and priestcraft. We raise monasteries for Him in one age, military crusades in another. Raymond Lull, representing a large class of teachers, undertook to make the gospel so logical that he could bring down all men of all nations, without a peradventure, before it. Some in our day are going to carry everything by steam-ships and commerce; some by science and the schooling of heathen children; some by preaching agents adequately backed by missionary boards; some by tracts and books. But the work, however fitly ordered as respects the machinery, lingers, and will and must linger, till Christ gets room to be a more complete inspiration in His followers. They gave Him the stable when they ought to be giving Him the inn, put Him in the lot of weakness, keep Him back from His victories, shut Him down under the world, making His gospel, thus, such a secondary, doubtfully real affair, that it has to be always debating in the evidences; instead of being its own evidence, and marching forward in its own mighty power. . . . And yet Christ has a patience large enough to bear us still; for He came to bear even our sin, and He will not start from His burden, even if He should not be soon through with it. All the sooner ought we to come to the heart so long and patiently grieving for us. Be it ours to make room for Him, and to stretch ourselves to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. (*Horace Bushnell, D.D.*) *Shutting out Jesus*:—Unless the Holy Spirit has been really given, these are the words which we may see written up here, and there, and everywhere—even in this professedly Christian land—"No room for Jesus here!" You can scarcely find an inn literally—a hotel, a public-house, or a beer-shop—where these words are not too plainly written up—"No room for Jesus here." They are written, too, over the doors of how many so-called places of amusement—theatres, ball-rooms, and such like: "No room for Jesus here!" But not only so; over how many places of business are there these same words! In how many private houses—drawing-rooms, dining-rooms, parlours, and kitchens—may we look up and see the same sad words—"No room for Jesus here!" And written on all these why? "Who dares," you say, "to write such words?" They write them—every one writes them, wherever he goes, who has an unchanged heart; for upon every heart that is not changed—whether it beats in the bosom of a prince or a peasant, of a professing Christian or a professing

heathen—the same sad, solemn words are written deep—"No room for Jesus here!" (*Henry Wright, M.A.*) *Christ found in lowly places*:—And very like this world was that inn. Room and smiling welcome for the rich and the reveller: no room for the heavy-laden and the poor. And very like—because that which we see *without* in others we can find *within* ourselves, if we look—is our own heart unto that inn. Room, ample room, for pride and display, luxury and indolence: no room for humility and meekness, self-denial and holy work. Yet, as surely as Christ was born, nigh upon 2,000 years ago, in a manger, so is He born now in lowly homes and hearts. Does not your own experience correspond with this? Have you not found Christ in poverty rather than in plenteousness, in suffering rather than in merriment, in solitude rather than in multitudes, in the stable rather than the inn? When have you prayed most vehemently? When have you seemed to know most clearly that you had a soul which could never die, though the body might be buried in a week? it has been, when you have been sent away from the din and excitement of the world, to the lonely, silent places of affliction; affliction in others, or in yourself, alike meant to lead us unto Christ. To be always in the inn, always and altogether in the uproar, and heat, and enjoyment of the world; that would be death to us as Christians, death to our spiritual life. (*Canon S. Reynolds Hole.*) *The disowned Saviour*:—You are all familiar, perhaps, with the story of Ulysses, the great Greek warrior, king of the island of Ithaca, and one of the most illustrious heroes of the Trojan war. After an absence from his home for twenty years—years consumed in wars and wanderings—he returned to his island empire to find his palace beset by a circle of gay young lords, who were not only consuming his substance and wasting his resources in riotous living, but were adding insult to injury, on the one hand by usurping the reins of power in his dominions, and on the other by their infamous proposals, or, at least, by mutually vying for the hand of his beloved and longsuffering Penelope. Wisely, he did not at once make himself known. Had he done so, it might have cost him his life. Nay, doubtless, had he promptly revealed himself in his own proper character, these graceless suitors would not have hesitated instantly to put him out of his own house—incontinently and unceremoniously to order him off his own premises and out of his own kingdom. More likely still, they would have taken measures effectually to compass his death. Do you say that that was pretty rough treatment? I agree with you; and yet it was not more so than that which, eighteen hundred years ago, was accorded to the Son of Man. When the Saviour of men came into this world, His own world, the world He had made with His own hands and was about to redeem with His own blood, there was yet found in it no room for Himself. No room! Hustled out of the inn where others found accommodation, the Divine Son of Mary and of God was left to creep into the world, as it were, through a back door—to be ushered into His earthly existence surrounded only by the wondering beasts of the stall. (*R. H. Howard.*) *Christ waiting to find room*:—On the birth and birthplace of Jesus there is something beautifully correspondent with His personal fortunes afterwards, and also with the fortunes of His gospel, even down to our own age and time. He comes into the world as it were to the taxing, and there is scant room for Him even at that. My subject is the very impressive fact that Jesus could not find room in the world, and has never yet been able to find it. I. SEE HOW IT WAS WITH HIM IN HIS LIFE. Herod's massacre of innocents; parents unable to understand Him, to take in conception of His Divine childhood; John the Baptist growing doubtful, and sending to inquire whether He is really the Christ; Rabbis with no room in their little theologies for His doctrine; His own disciples getting but slenderest conception of His person and mission from His very explicit teachings. II. SO IF WE SPEAK OF CHRISTENDOM, it might seem as if Christ had certainly gotten room, so far, to enter and be glorified in human society. But (*a*) what multitudes of outlying populations are there that have never heard of Him. And (*b*) of the states and populations that acknowledge Him, how little of Christ, take them altogether, can there be said to be really in them? III. To take a closer inspection. GREAT MULTITUDES UTTERLY REJECT HIM, AND STAY FAST IN THEIR SINS. They have no time to be religious, or the sacrifices are too great; some too poor, others too rich. Some too much honoured, and some too much want to be. Some in their pleasures, some in their expectations. Some too young, some too old, &c. The great world thus under sin, even that part of it which is called Christian, is very much like the inn at Bethlehem, preoccupied, crowded full in every part, so that, as the mother of Jesus looked up wistfully to the guest-chambers that cold night, drawing her Holy

Thing to her bosom, in like manner Jesus Himself stands at the door of these multitudes, knocking vainly, till His head is filled with dew, and His locks are wet with the drops of the night. IV. CHURCHCRAFT MEANTIME HAS BEEN QUITE AS NARROW, QUITE AS SORE A LIMITATION AS STATECRAFT. V. AND THE ATTEMPTED WORK OF SCIENCE, CALLING ITSELF THEOLOGY, IS SCARCELY MORE EQUAL TO ITS THEME. VI. But the most remarkable thing is that, when the old niggard dogma of a bigot age and habit give way, and emancipated souls begin to look for a new Christianity and a broader, worthier faith, just then everything great in the gospel vanishes more strangely than before. Faith becomes mere opinion, love a natural sentiment, piety itself a blossom on the wild stock of nature. Jesus, the Everlasting Word, dwindles to a mere man. The Holy Spirit is made to be very nearly identical with the laws of the soul. The new Christianity, the more liberal, more advanced belief, turns out to be a discovery that we are living in nature just as nature makes us live. Salvation there is none; nothing is left for a gospel but development, with a little human help from the excellent Person, Jesus. Is it not time that Christ our Master should begin to be more fitly represented by His people. Be it yours, then, to make room for Him, even according to the greatness of His power—length, breadth, depth, height. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *A fit nursery for the Holy Child*:—We try to realize the scene and situation of which the text tells us; and we feel that the stable and the manger were not a fit nursery and cradle for the Holy Child. The best house in Bethlehem, and the fairest chamber in it, would have been honoured by that wondrous birth. And pious fancy, offended at the lowly birthplace of the Lord, has constructed legends in the hope to hide its shame. They say that the cave in which the Virgin rested glowed with a glorious light as soon as she entered it, and that this light, excelling the brightness of the sun, remained within the cave as long as she was there. We share the feeling out of which such legend grew. And yet, while lamenting that, through want of room, the Saviour should have been born in such a lowly place, it may be that we are not giving Him the best accommodation that we can. For want of room He may be pushed away into some cold corner of our hearts, and to some small apartment of our thoughts. Even in our worship He has often less room than He claims. There is not a precious thing we have that does not owe some of its preciousness to Him. Our lives would be sad indeed, and all our merriment would be but a surface thing, like a hollow laugh or ghastly smile, that seeks to hide our inward wretchedness, were it not for those bright hopes that Christ has enabled us to cherish. If we trace them back to their source we shall find them all in Him. Let us find room for Him then amid all the gladness of this season and all the pleasures of this day. (*E. A. Lawrence.*) *A fit prelude to a life of poverty, humiliation, and sacrifice*:—By a vision of the night God could have prepared the keeper of the inn for the reception of the world's Saviour; by a message conveyed by angelic lips He could have commanded the most sumptuous welcome which earth's palaces could afford; He who created the beauties which smiled on the bosom of paradise could have called into existence a garden blooming with flowers which never graced primeval Eden, and amid its blushing charms the "Rose of Sharon" might have budded. But no! In God's estimation, what difference is there between a palace and a manger? Whatever Christ touched He dignified. The king, untouched by Christ, is blind and miserable and naked. The pauper in whose heart Christ abides is gifted with loftiest dignity. Christ shed a glory round that Eastern stable. Had infant Cæsars pillowed their heads in the manger it would have been a manger still; but Christ having found a cradle there, the manger is henceforth distinguished by such a glory as never shone on the palaces of kings. (*Dr. Parker.*)

NO ROOM FOR JESUS.

He was cradled in a manger;
  His own angels sung the hymn
Of rejoicing at His coming,
  Yet there was no room for Him.

Oh, my brothers, are we wiser,
  Are we better now than they?
Have we any room for Jesus
  In the life we live to-day?

Not much room for our Lord Jesus
Has there been, or will there be;
Room for Pilate and for Herod—
Not for Him of Calvary.

Room for pleasures—doors wide open,
And for business,—but for Him
Only here and there a manger,
Like to that at Bethlehem.

(*Anon.*

NEW PRINCE, NEW POMP.

The inns are full; no man will yield
This little pilgrim bed;
But forced He is with silly beasts
In crib to shroud His head.

Despise Him not for lying there;
First what He is inquire:
An Orient pearl is often found
In depth of dirty mire.

Weigh not His crib, His wooden dish,
Nor beasts that by Him feed;
Weigh not His mother's poor attire,
Nor Joseph's simple weed.

This stable is a prince's court,
The crib His chair of state;
The beasts are parcel of His pomp,
The wooden dish His plate.

The persons in that poor attire
His royal liveries wear;
The Prince Himself is come from heaven:
This pomp is praised there.

With joy approach, O Christian wight!
Do homage to thy King;
And highly praise this humble pomp
Which He from heaven doth bring.

(*R. Southwell.*)

No room for Christ:—That night in Bethlehem, if Joseph had gone to some house and made them thoroughly understand that the Lord of Glory was about to be born in that village, they would have said, "Here is the best room in our house. Come in; come in. Occupy everything." But when Joseph asked at this house and that house and the other house, they said, "No room on the floor, no room on the lounge, no room for Christ." Ah! that has been the trouble in all the ages. The world has never had room for Him. No room in the heart, for here are all the gains and the emoluments of the world that are coming up to be enrolled, and they must find entertainment and lodging. Every passion full. Every desire full. Every capacity of body, mind, and soul full. No room for Christ. Room for all unholy aspirations, room for self-seeking, room for pride, room for Satan, room for all the concerted passions of darkness, but no room for Jesus. I go into a beautiful store. I find its shelves crowded with goods, and the counter crowded, and the floor crowded. It is crowded even to the ceiling. They have left just room enough in that store for commercial men, for bargain-makers, for those who come to engage in great mercantile undertakings, but no room in that store for Christ. I go into a house. It is a beautiful home. I am glad to see all those beautiful surroundings. I am glad to see that the very best looms wove those carpets, and the best manufactory turned out those musical instruments. There is no gospel against all that. But I find no Christ in that household. Room for the gloved and the robed; room for satin sandals and diamond head-gear; room for

graceful step, and obsequious bow, and the dancing up and down of quick feet; room for all light, and all mirth, and all music; but—hear it, O thou Khan of Bethlehem—hear it, you angels who carolled for the shepherds in Bethlehem—no room in that house for Christ! No room in the nursery, for the children are not taught to pray; no room in the dining-hall, for no blessing is asked on the food; no room in the sleeping apartment, for God's protection is not asked for the night. Jesus comes, and He retorts. He says, "I come to this world, and I find it has no room for Me; but I have room for it. Room in My heart—it beats in sympathy with all their sorrows. Room in My Church—I bought it with My blood. Room in heaven. Room in the anthem that never dies. Room in the banner procession. Room in the joys eternal. Room in the doxologies before the throne. Room for ever." (*Dr. Talmage.*) *A night in a Syrian inn:*—I found the house consisted of only one very lofty room, about eighteen feet square. Just within the door a donkey and a yoke of oxen stood; and I soon perceived that rather more than one-third of the room was set apart for cattle, where the floor, which was on a level with the street, was of earth, and partially strewn with fodder. Suddenly the idea entered my mind that it must have been in such a house as this that Christ was born. I imagined Joseph anxiously seeking rest and shelter for Mary after her long journey. All the guest-chambers were already filled. The raised floor was crowded with strangers who had, like them, come to be taxed. But Joseph and Mary may have taken refuge from the cold in the lower part of the room. The manger was very likely close by Mary's side, hollowed out at the edge of the daïs, and filled with soft winter fodder. I raised my head and looked at one of the mangers, and I felt how natural it was to use it as a cradle for a newly-born infant. Its size, its shape, its soft bed of fodder, its nearness to the warm fire always burning on the daïs in mid-winter, would immediately suggest the idea to an Eastern mother. (*Rogers.*) *No room for Jesus:*—Before you utterly damn this unnamed Jewish inn-keeper and his seemingly unfeeling guests, pray be reasonable, and consider three things in abatement. (1) That you bring to the judgment a culture in the humanities which you owe entirely to this Jesus, who had not yet been born; and (2) that the inn-keeper had reasons for his conduct quite as valid as those which are perpetually allowed among men; and (3) that towards this very same Jesus you and I have behaved much worse than did these people whom we are so forward to denounce. I. As to the first. MEN ARE GENERALLY GUILTY OF HOLDING THEIR FELLOWS TO ACCOUNT FOR A MEASURE OF LIGHT AND CULTURE WHICH THOSE FELLOW-MEN DO NOT POSSESS, BUT WHICH THEIR JUDGES DO. II. But as to the second—LET US SEE WHAT REASONS PROBABLY INFLUENCED THE INN-KEEPER, AND WHETHER THE MASS OF MANKIND WOULD NOT THINK THOSE REASONS QUITE VALID. 1. He turned them off because they were not known. It is a busy time. The imperial edict for the enrolment of the provinces is bringing multitudes from the country to town. At this juncture two unknown people present themselves. One is a young woman. Her condition betrays itself. Who are they? The inn-keeper does not know them. Now, under the circumstances, would not such a reception as they received in Bethlehem be awarded to persons in similar condition at a majority of houses in Christendom on any Christmas Day? 2. Their appearance and the condition of their luggage were against them. You know what is meant by a "carpet-bag," on one hand, and on the other by a "Saratoga trunk," and what a bid for attention a man makes by his luggage. Little did Joseph and Mary have. The inn-keeper had his regular customers. They were substantial citizens from the neighbouring country. To bring in two strangers for a night might be to drive off a dozen good, responsible customers for ever. For you must mark that the real glory of Mary and Jesus was unknown to this tavern-keeper, and was really unsuspected. 3. They were poor and could not pay. It would have greatly increased the bill of a rich couple who should have demanded the turning of a guest from his apartments to make way for themselves in an emergency. III. Now in the third case, after you have considered the difference made in our culture by the blessed Jesus, and all the reasons which the inn-keeper had for turning Mary into the stable because he had no room for her and Jesus in the inn, before you pronounce sentence, make some little examination into the question whether we have not treated Jesus worse than He was treated in Bethlehem. The decision of that question will obviously much depend upon the space in our hearts and lives which Jesus is allowed by us to occupy. Are there not some of us who never permit Him to come upon our premises? So present is He everywhere among men by the power of His principles

and His Spirit, that it is not possible to exclude Him utterly, and yet, so far as our responsibility is concerned, we do keep Him out to the whole extent of our failure to give Him a welcome to our thoughts, to our affections, and to our activities. Does He have ample welcome to all these departments of our existence? Does He have the chief place in our thoughts—the best place in our love—the largest place in our work? Is He welcomed and honoured? 1. Jesus is kept out of your heart because you do not know Him. Your ignorance is wilful. Recollect that He does not come unborn to you, as He did to the inn-keeper in Bethlehem. He comes to you with all His history of growth and beauty, of truth and activity, of self-denial and suffering, of love and power. The innkeeper of Bethlehem will rise up in the Judgment with many men of this generation and condemn them—because he turned away an unaccredited woman, and you reject the acknowledged Lord of Glory. 2. And you have the inn-keeper's second reason: it will drive other guests away. Perhaps it would turn other guests out of your heart, perhaps not. If any depart because Jesus came, you ought to be glad of their departure. Here is a whole room full of the members of the large family of the Pleasures. They are many, and they are exacting. They take large space, for they live widely. Many of them are most deceptive, having stolen the garb and imitated the manners of the most reputable and solid Enjoyments. These latter are the most pleasant and among the most respectable guests that the heart can entertain. They will stay with Jesus, while those wild and giddy and profitless things you call Pleasures would better have no place in your affections. You were not born to be amused, but to be disciplined. And there is Business, taking up almost all your heart and head, and crowding you, and calling you, and bothering you, until you are so nervous that you can hardly eat or sleep. Room for darkness, and no room for light; room for foulness, and no room for purity; room for death, but no room for life! Every story from attic to basement crowded, and Jesus turned out into the stable! 3. But the inn-keeper sent Mary to the stable because it would not be remunerative to entertain her in his house. He would have been compelled to turn out some well-known and liberally-paying guests. You know Him to be a Prince, for whose sake every reasonable man would think it quite the proper thing to dismiss any other guest. Does not "pay" to entertain Jesus! Did you ever know a man who took Jesus into his intellect, and worked up his studies under that Great Master, and not grow in profoundness of thought and width of range of intellectual vision? Did you ever know an artist give Jesus a lodging, and not thereby have all his æsthetic nature quickened and purified and brightened? Did you ever know any man to conduct any business for Jesus, permeating his life with the Spirit of Jesus, basing his plans on the principles taught by Jesus, and laying every profitable income of his trade as a tribute at the feet of Jesus, who did not thrive and increase and have happiness along the whole line of his business career? Is He going away? It may be that your years are drawing to a close. Has He grown weary of your insulting dismissals? Stop! Lord Jesus Christ! O Son of Mary, stop! Do not leave such of the readers of this page as have said to Thee, "No room!" It must not be. I seem to hear these busy men in future knocking passionately and desperately at the gate of mercy, but without love of Jesus, and out of the solemn profoundness of eternity there comes the crushing echo, "No room!" And conscience shrieks to them, "No room! No room among the crowns and songs and glories of heaven for the hearts that had no room for Jesus!" (*C. F. Deems, D.D.*)

Vers. 8, 9. **In the same country shepherds.**—*The shepherds and the Magi at the cradle of Christ:*—(with Matt. ii. 1-12). I. THE SHEPHERD COMES FIRST TO THE CRADLE OF CHRIST, BUT THE SAGE COMES TOO; THE JEW FIRST, BUT ALSO THE GENTILE. Here we have—1. A prophecy that, as in His cradle the Lord Jesus received "in a figure" the homage of the entire world, so at last, in happy, glorious fact, He will receive the adoration of all kindreds and tribes, drawing all men unto Himself by virtue of His cross. 2. A consolation, viz., that even the poorest, the simplest, the least gifted and accomplished, find a welcome from Him, and may take rank among the very first in His kingdom. 3. A lesson—that whatever may be the distinctions which obtain among us elsewhere, we are all one in the service of Christ, and should use our several gifts for each other's good,—the shepherd singing his song to the sage, and the sage telling the story of his star to the wondering shepherd. II. WE MAY LEARN FROM THE STORY THAT IT IS NOT SO MUCH IN THE NUMBER AND MAGNITUDE OF OUR GIFTS, AS IN THE USE WE MAKE OF THEM, THAT OUR

TRUE WELFARE AND HAPPINESS CONSIST. The shepherds, ignorant men, condemned to a life of hard toil and scanty fare, tied and bound by the claims of their craft, with few opportunities for joining in the public worship of the Temple, or for listening to the instructions of the Rabbis. Yet, at the bidding of the angel, they leave their flocks, and hasten to Bethlehem to verify the good tidings. The wise men from the East had, in some sort, even fewer advantages and aids than the shepherds. No direct message from heaven was vouchsafed to them. They see a new sign in the sky. They believe that it foretells the advent of some great one upon the earth. How hard it must have been for them to leave the luxuries and honours, and, above all, the scientific pursuits of the Persian palace, in order to encounter the toils and perils of a long and hazardous journey, on the mere chance of finding their conclusion verified! What a noble faith in their scientific inductions, or in the inward leading of God, is implied in their encountering so great a risk or so slight a chance of being bettered by it! III. If it be true that our place in Christ's service and regard depends on our fidelity in using our gifts rather than on the abundance of our gifts, IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT THE ONLY GENUINE FIDELITY IS THAT WHICH LEADS US FORWARD AND UPWARD. The sages and the shepherds were men who looked before as well as after, men who knew little and were aware of it, or men who knew much and yet accounted that much but little compared with what God had to teach. Let us be followers of them, ever looking for more truth while we walk by the truth we know. And, walking in the light we have, it will grow larger and purer; using the gifts we possess, more will be added unto us. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The shepherds*:—1. The time, the place, the tidings, the listeners, are all in unison. The shepherds were on historic ground. On those same slopes, on those same hill-sides, David of old had fed his father's flocks, and it was from those same fields that he went forth at God's command to exchange his shepherd's crook for the royal sceptre, and his lowly dress for the purple of a king. It was on these fields, rich with precious memories, that the shepherds lay. It was night, and the sky was cloudless. Hill and dale slept under the beauty of the clear moon, and the quiet flocks were gathered to the shelter of the fold. To such a scene came the first tidings of the world's peace. Not to man's busy haunts, where even in the hush of night the cry of sorrow is heard, and the trouble in man's heart goes on, but to those peaceful folds, sleeping in the bosom of the voiceless hills. The home of peace is not in the world's great centres, but among the shaggy woods and grassy vales and solemn hills. And when the angels came with their messages of peace to earth they came to such a scene as that. They did not choose the Temple in Jerusalem, and from its lofty pinnacle flash their glory on a slumbering city—that would have been at variance with the character of their message, and discordant with the unostentatious spirit of their King. 2. And that humble shepherds were the first to receive the glad tidings is as instructive as it is strange. The event itself was unparalleled, and the simple announcement of it was destined, like a stone cast into the still lake, to extend its influence in ever-widening circles; yet it was to men lowly and obscure, without worldly place or power of any kind, that the first proclamation was made. In the world's view it would have been deemed an utter waste to brighten the sky with angels, and pour down from the steeps of glory cataracts of tumultuous song, for a few poor shepherds. But no consideration speaks more real comfort to our hearts than this. It shows us plainly that there is no respect of persons with God; that in His eye the loftiest and the lowliest are as one. 3. But not only was the message of the angels given to shepherds, it was given to them while they were pursuing their work. Idle men do not receive visions. It is not in the working up of spiritual ecstasy, but in the sober and honest discharge of life's duties, that we are most likely to find God and be found of Him. 4. The shepherds were "sore afraid." But their fear soon gave place to action. When the angels had gone away, they said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see"—not if the thing is come to pass, but—"this thing which is come to pass." They did not arise and go because they doubted, but because they believed. Ah! it was a grand journey of faith—this of the shepherds from the sheep-folds to the manger, worthy to be inserted in the eleventh of Hebrews. What is our attitude towards the Divine announcements? 5. Having seen the Infant Saviour, they immediately made known their story, first to Mary, who kept all these things and pondered them in her heart, and then to the busy crowd of travellers bustling about the inn. No sooner had they found Christ for themselves, than they made it known abroad that they had found Him. 6. But we do not part company with them here. We are told in the twentieth verse that they "returned"—returned to their ordinary work,

to their flocks and folds, to those vales and hills from which they had come, now for ever bright to them with something of the angels' glory, and there, in their own quiet life, they "fought the good fight, and kept the faith." God does not call every man to be an apostle. He wants preachers in private as well as in public. He wants the glad tidings to be told in sheep-folds, and in markets, and in shops, as much as in places set apart for the proclamation. And if for you the world has been transfigured, and common things have received the impress of heaven by the vision of God's salvation, then in the place where your daily lot is cast, in the sphere of your common duties and labours, stand forth a witness for righteousness and for God, preach the gospel of peace and salvation to the sin-stricken, sorrow-laden men and women all around you. (*H. Wonnacott.*) This angel is the first evangelist. He is a type of what gospel-preaching should be. 1. His message is good news. The gospel not a threat nor a law, but news of salvation. 2. To all the people—not merely to an elect few. To all classes—not merely to the intelligent and refined. 3. The cause of this joy proclaimed is the advent of Christ, *i.e.*, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the great High Priest who makes atonement for the past sins of His people; a Saviour because He saves His people from their sins themselves. 4. The attestation of His Divinity (ver. 12). The evidence of His Divinity is His love—the fact that He is placed under all the limitations of humanity (see Phil. ii. 5–8). 5. Notice also the first approach of the Divine message always produces fear in the heart (ver. 9), and the message of the gospel to the affrighted heart is ever the same, "Fear not." 6. The convert becomes at once a preacher to others (ver. 17). 7. The shepherds publish. Mary ponders. Both the active and the meditative temperament have a place in the Church of Christ. (*Lyman Abbott, D.D.*) *Highest and lowest brought together*:—The shepherds were chosen on account of their obscurity and lowliness to be the first to hear of the Lord's nativity, a secret which none of the princes of this world knew. And what a contrast is presented to us when we take into the account who were the messengers to them. The angels who excel in strength, these did God's bidding towards the shepherds. Here the highest and lowest of God's rational creatures are brought together. The angel honoured a humble lot by his very appearing to the shepherds; next he taught it to be joyful by his message. (*J. H. Newman.*) *Finding the Lord in daily duties*:—The wise woman of Medina went long pilgrimages to find the Lord, but in vain; and, despairing, she returned to her daily duties, and when there engaged she found the Lord she had elsewhere sought in vain. (*See Trench's Poems.*) *Dignity bestowed on those following their daily calling*:—Moses received his credentials as the legate of the Almighty and the lawgiver of a new nation while keeping the flocks of Jethro. Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-press when the angel brought him his commission, and the enemies of Israel fled before "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Saul going to seek his father's asses found a kingdom for himself; and Samuel waited to anoint David while they fetched him from "those few sheep in the wilderness." Elisha was ploughing when "Elijah passed by" and cast the mantle of prophecy upon him, and Amos among the herdmen of Tekoa saw God's judgments upon Philistia and Tyre. It was while Zacharias "executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course" that the angel Gabriel brought him "joy and gladness," and all mankind the earnest of a new and glorious dispensation—and the first mortals that ever heard "the sons of God shouting for joy" were a band of shepherds watching their flocks on the Judean hills. (*Amelia S. Barr.*) *Joy often follows fear*:—Learn in the first place from this that a scene that may open in darkness and fright may end in the greatest prosperity and advantage. These shepherds were alarmed and startled; but how soon their consternation ended in exultation and jubilee. Those shepherds may in their time have had many a fierce combat with wolves, and seen many strange appearances of eclipse, or aurora, or star-shooting. But those shepherds never saw so exciting a night as that night when the angel came. And so it often is that a scene of trouble and darkness ends in angelic tones of mercy and of blessing. That commercial disaster that you thought would ruin you for ever, made for you a fortune. Jacob's loss of Joseph opened for him the granaries of Egypt for his famine-struck family. Saul, by being unhorsed, becomes the trumpet-tongued apostle to the Gentiles. The ship splitting in the breakers of Melita sends up with every fragment on which the two hundred and seventy-six passengers escape to the beach the annunciation that God will deliver His ambassadors. The British tax on tea was the first chapter in the Declaration of American Independence. Famine in Ireland roused that nation to the culture of other kinds of product. Out of pestilence and

plague the hand of medical science produced miracles of healing. It was through bereavement you were led to Christ. The Hebrew children cast into the furnace were only closeted with the Son of God walking beside them, the flames only lighting up the splendour of His countenance. And at midnight, while you were watching your flocks of cares, and sorrows, and disappointments, the angel of God's deliverance flashed upon your soul, crying, "Fear not. Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." If I should go through this audience to-day, I would find that it was through great darkness that you came to light, through defeat that you came to victory, through falling down that you rose up, and that your greatest misfortunes, and trials, and disasters have been your grandest illumination. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The shepherd's an honourable calling*:—Hunters and warriors make a great figure in the world; but he that feeds the sheep is more honourably employed than he who pursues the lion. The attendance of man upon these innocent creatures, which God hath ordained for his use, is an employment which succeeded to the life of Paradise. The holy patriarchs and servants of God were taught to prefer the occupation of shepherds. Their riches consisted in flocks and herds; and it was their pleasure, as well as their labour, to wait upon them in tents, amidst the various and beautiful scenery of the mountains, the groves, the fields, and streams of water. . . . . O happy state of health, innocence, plenty and pleasure—plenty without luxury, and pleasure without corruption! How far preferable to that artificial state of life into which we have been brought by over-strained refinement in civilization, and commerce too much extended; when corruption of manners, unnatural, and consequently unhealthy, modes of living, perplexity of law, consumption of property, and other kindred evils, conspire to render life so vain and unsatisfactory, that many throw it away in despair, as not worth having. A false glare of tinselled happiness is found amongst the rich and great, with such distressing want and misery amongst the poor, as nature knows nothing of, and which can arise only from the false principles and selfish views and expedients of a weak and degenerate policy. (*Wm. Jones.*) Several of the most gracious Divine manifestations, and most interesting discoveries, concerning the Messiah, were made under the Old Testament, to men who followed this occupation, as, *e.g.*, to Abraham, Moses, David. In like manner, a singular honour was now preparing for the shepherds of Bethlehem, who, from the reception they gave the heavenly message, and the part they afterwards acted, appear to have been believing and holy men, whom Divine grace had taught and prepared to welcome a coming Saviour. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *Tending flocks by night*:—It is only in the cool months that sheep feed through the day. In the greater part of the year they are led out to pasture only towards sunset, returning home in the morning, or if they be led out in the morning they lie during the hot hours in the shade of some tree or rock, or in the rude shelter of bushes prepared for them (Cant. i. 7). They are taken into the warmth of caves or under other cover during the coldest part of winter; the lambs are born between January and the beginning of March, and need to be kept with the ewes in the field, that the mothers may get nutriment enough to support the poor weak creatures, which cannot be taken to and from the pasturage, but must remain on it. That many of them die is inevitable, in spite of the shepherd's utmost care, for snow and frost on the uplands, and heavy rain on the plains, are very fatal to them. Nor is their guardian less to be pitied. He cannot leave them day or night, and often has no shelter. At times, when on his weary watch, he may be able to gather branches enough to make a comparatively dry spot on which to stand in the wild weather, but this is not always the case. I have heard of the skin peeling completely from a poor man's feet from continued exposure. By night, as we have seen, he has often, in outlying places, to sleep on whatever brush he may gather; his sheepskin coat, or an old rug or coverlet, his only protection. Perhaps it fared thus with the shepherds of Bethlehem, eighteen hundred years ago, when they were "abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." (*C. Geikie, D.D.*) *Attend to your own business*:—The business of these shepherds that night was staying out of doors to watch their sheep. It was while they were attending to their business that they had a visit from the angels. If they had been at home, or out at a party, or even in a prayer-meeting, when they ought to have been in that sheep-field on the Bethlehem hillside, they would have missed a sight of the angel of the Lord. If they had been playing on harps at a sacred concert, or ornamenting pottery for a synagogue fair, or even carrying an offering up to the temple at Jerusalem, when sheep-watching was their duty, they would not have

heard that song of the angels, or seen the glory of the Lord round about them, or received first of all the good tidings for a lost race. The best place in all the world to be is at the post of duty. Nowhere else can such blessings, temporal or spiritual, be fairly looked for. If the Lord has a good gift or a glad message to one of His children, He sends it to the place where the child ought to be found. If the child is not there, he fails of getting what he might have had to rejoice over. Day or not—night and day, be where you belong. If your duty calls you to stay at home, stay there, and never suppose that you can have a bigger blessing anywhere else. If your duty calls you to be on a steamer, or a railway car, out in the streets or the fields, at a party or a prayer-meeting, in a store or a factory, at a concert or a church-service, in the home of a friend to give counsel or cheer, or in a dwelling of poverty to administer relief, be there, at whatever cost or risk is demanded, and understand that it is safest and best for you to be there only. (*Sunday School Times.*) *Shepherds fit persons to receive the gospel message :*—The news of Christ's birth is a message for an angel to deliver, and it had been news for the best prince on earth to receive. Yet it fell not out amiss that they to whom it first came were shepherds; the news fitted them well. It well agreed to tell shepherds of the yeaning of a strange Lamb, such a Lamb as should "take away the sins of the world;" such a Lamb as they might "send to the Ruler of the world for a present"—Isaiah's Lamb. Or, if ye will, to tell shepherds of the birth of a Shepherd. Ezekiel's Shepherd: "Behold, I will raise you a Shepherd," "the Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter v. 4); "the Great Shepherd" (Heb. xiii. 20); "the Good Shepherd that gave His life for His flock" (John x. 11). And so it was not unfit news for the persons to whom it came. (*Bp. Lancelot Andrewes.*) *The annunciation to the shepherds :*—Who the angel was, we are not told. Quite probably it was the same angel who had already made annunciation to Zacharias in the temple, to Mary at Nazareth, to Joseph in his slumber—even the same Gabriel, Strength of God, who, five centuries before, had made annunciation to the exile by the Ulai. The glory of the Lord which shone round about these shepherds was doubtless that same miraculous effulgence in which Deity had been wont in the earlier ages to enshrine Himself, and which the rabbins called the Shechinah. Diversified as well as extraordinary were the appearances of that Shechinah in ancient days. It had gleamed as a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life; it had flickered as a lambent flame in the brier-bush of Horeb; it had hung as a stupendous canopy over the mountain of the law; it had hovered as a glittering cloud above the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat; it had marshalled the hosts of Israel for forty years, towering like a pillar of cloud by day and like a pillar of fire by night; it had filled the temple of Solomon, flooding it with a brightness so intense that the priests could not enter to minister; it was to be the radiant cloud which should enfold out of sight the ascending Lord; it will be the great white throne on which that ascended Lord will descend when He returns in the pomp of His second advent. But never had it served a purpose so august and blissful as on this most memorable of nights when, after centuries of eclipse, it suddenly reappeared and shone around the astonished shepherds. Well might the effulgent cloud now return, as though in glad homage to the Incarnation; for on this night is born He who is to be His own Church's true pillar of fire-cloud, to marshal her through sea and wilderness into the true promised land. Oh, since the day was as the night when Jesus Christ died, let us be grateful that the night was as the day when Jesus Christ was born. But where shall we find this mighty Deliverer? How shall we know Him when we see Him? The sign is twofold. The first sign is this: "Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." The Christ of God might have descended an archangel, glittering with celestial emblazonry. And it is a sign as powerful as simple. Had He descended otherwise, we might not have believed so easily in the reality of the Incarnation. We might have said that He was an angel. But when we behold Him a helpless little Babe, we feel that the Incarnation was no acting—no phantom. We feel that Deity has in very truth come down within our sphere, linking His fortunes with ours, taking our life, like ourselves, at its germ as well as at its fruit, sharing with us the cradle as well as the grave, the swaddling clothes of Mary of Bethlehem as well as the burial linen of Joseph of Arimathea. But the angel gives a second sign: "Lying in a manger." Not, then, in choice apartments of an inn, not in sumptuous nurseries of the opulent, not in palaces of royalty, was the King of kings and Lord of lords to be cradled; but in a crib, amid the beasts of the stall. And this was to be one of the secrets of his kinghood. In fact, all society is built up from below. "The roof is more

dependent upon the foundation than the foundation upon the roof. Nearly all, if not quite all, the movements which have changed the thinking and determined the new courses of the world have been upward, not downward. The great revolutionists have generally been cradled in mangers, and gone through rough discipline in early life. Civilization is debtor to lowly cradles, and unknown mothers hold a heavy account against the world."—"Ecce Deus," by Joseph Parker, D.D. (*G. D. Boardman.*) *By night*:—Wherefore at night this Babe of Glory was born that He might turn the night into day. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Philosophy discovered by humble men*:—The heathen make much ado, and relate it not without admiration, by what mean and almost despised persons the deep knowledge of philosophy was first found out and brought to light. As Protagoras earning his living by bearing burdens of wood; and Cleanthes no better than a Gibeonite, fain to draw water for his liberty. Chrysippus and Epictetus mere vassals to great men for their maintenance, yet these had the honour to find out the riches of knowledge for the recompense of their poverty; but the day shall come that these philosophers will wonder that they found out no more than they did, and be astonished that silly shepherds were first deputed to find out one thing more needful than all the world beside, even Jesus Christ. Tiberius propounded his mind to the Senate of Rome, that Christ, the great Prophet in Jewry, should be had in the same honour with the other gods which they worshipped. (*Ibid.*) The Good Shepherd that giveth His life for His sheep, would first be manifested to those good shepherds that watched over their sheep. (*Ibid.*) Surely these shepherds had heavenly meditations in their minds, and were most religiously prepared, when His ambassador of heaven did approach unto them. And you, my beloved, I speak to one with another, if that innocency and harmlessness were in you that was in them, you would think many a time that a Divine beam did shine upon your soul, and that you had your conversation with angels. (*Ibid.*) *The first to see Christ at His final advent*:—There are two sorts of persons noted for finding out Christ more eminently than others, the shepherds before all others after He was born, and Mary Magdalen the first of all men and women, as far as we read, after His resurrection. The shepherds were vouchsafed their blessing, because they watched by night, a hard task if you consider the time of the year; and Mary was so prosperous because she rose very early in the morning to seek her Lord. It is hard to say whether ever she slept one wink for care and grief, since the Passion of our Saviour; and God knows who shall be the first that finds Him at His second coming in Glory, when He shall come also like a thief in the night; but whosoever he be, this I am sure of, he must be none of them that sleep in gluttony, that are heavy with surfeiting and drunkenness, with chambering and wantonness, he must watch or be fit to waken to find the Lord. (*Ibid.*) *A watchful shepherd*:—Suffer not your eyelids to shut, but sift and shake your own heart; examine yourself, remember what a blessing it is to be a watchful shepherd, that an angel of comfort may come and sing salvation unto you. (*Ibid.*) *A flock to look after*:—To include you all, every man and woman in the application, suppose you are nobody's keeper but your own; why be watchful and prudent over the safety of your own soul; and when I have spoke that word, your soul, I perceive instantly that you have a whole flock to look to, and it is all your own, the affections and passions of your mind, them I mean; if you bridle their lust and wantonness, if they do you reasonable service, you have a rich flock, sheep that shall stand upon the right hand of God: if they usurp and fill you full of uncleanness, they are a flock of goats, that shall be condemned unto the left. What says Cato of our affections? They are to be governed like a flock of sheep, you may rule them altogether so long as they follow and keep good order, but single one out alone, and it will be unruly and offend you; as who should say all our affections must be sanctified to God, the whole flock; let one passion have leave to straggle and all will follow it to destruction. Let the watchfulness of the heart especially be fixed upon this flock, the desires, the passions over all that issues out of the soul. (*Ibid.*) 1. The Lord did put on this glorious apparel, even a robe of light to express the Majesty of His Son, who was born to save the world. 2. This lightsome apparition about the shepherds, a type of the light and perspicuousness which is genuine and proper to the gospel. 3. The dark night was brightened with a shining cloud at our Saviour's nativity, to signify that He should be a light of consolation to them that sate in the dark night of persecution and misery. The most obscure things shall be made manifest unto His light, and the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed unto Him. 4. No sooner was the world blest with the birth of this holy Child, God and Man, but the angels put on white

apparel, the air grows clear and bright, darkness is dispelled; therefore let us cast off the works of darkness and walk as children of the light; the earth should be more innocently walked on to and fro, because Christ hath trod upon it; our bodies kept clean in chastity, because He hath assumed our nature and blessed it. 5. A glimpse of some celestial light did sparkle at His birth to set our teeth on edge to enjoy Him who is Light of lights, very God of very God, and to dwell with Him in that city which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the Glory of God did enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. I conclude with St. Paul (Col. i. 12). (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 10—**I bring you good tidings of great joy.** *Christmas-day lessons*:—1. The whole thought and idea of all that is told us about Christmas Day suggests the consoling, the cheering thought, that however gloomy our lot, however distressed our portion, God, the Almighty God, has not forsaken us. 2. There is the truth which the heathen, and we must also add, which Christians have often been very slow to acknowledge, that the Divine is only another word for the perfectly good, that God is goodness, and that goodness is God. 3. Let me take one special mark of the life of Christ which extends through the whole of it, by which His career from the cradle to the grave is distinguished from that of any of the other founders of religions. Let me sum it up in one expression which admits of many forms: He was the Mediator between the Divine and human, because He was the Mediator, the middle point, between tne conflicting parts of human nature. (*Dean Stanley.*) *The joy-producing power of Christianity*:—1. What is Christianity itself, that is said to have this power of producing joy? It is that system of influence, which was designed of God, and which is destined to educate the whole human race to perfect manhood. 2. When we say that Christianity tends to produce joy, we are instantly pointed to the wretched condition of things which exists. Men say, "Christianity produce joy! Have there ever been such bloody wars as it has produced? such quarrelling and dissensions? Where is your joy? Besides, these flighty angels may have said something about joy, but what did the Master Himself say! Did He not say 'Take up your cross' &c.?" I do not say, however, that Christianity instantly produces joy. I do not say that it produces joy always. While man is being educated into, I concede that there is much suffering. But it is not suffering for the sake of the suffering—not aimless void and useless suffering. 3. But while this grand education is evolving we must not think that joy is absent wholly, and we must not pass too summarily by what has actually been gained by Christianity in the production of joy in the world. The earliest period of Christian life I suppose to have been transcendently joyful. The apostles had nothing that men usually call elements of happiness. Yet I will defy you to find in literature, ancient or modern, so high a tone of cheerfulness as you will find in their history. And since the days of the apostles how many Christian men have there not been who have been lifted up into that sphere where joy abode with them. There is yet to be a revelation of what Christianity has done for the internal man. The whole range of joy throughout the world has been augmented and elevated. The civilized world in ancient times was never so happy as it is now. The world is better off to-day than it was at any five hundred years previous. Agassiz says that the growth of a plant is in three stages: first, by the root, which is invisible, and is the slowest and longest; second, by the stem, which is perhaps not half as long; third, by maturation or ripening, which is the quickest of all. So it is in history. The past has been largely occupied with root-growth in moral things. The present may be considered the period of growth by the stem. And I think we are standing on the eve of a period of growth by maturation and ripening. It is for me, therefore, a very joyful thought, not only that we have a religion which is joy-producing in its ultimate fruits, but that, looked upon comprehensively, it has already produced vast cycles of joy, and is going forward, not having expended half its force yet, to an era in which joy-producing shall be more apparent, and upon a vaster scale, and with more exquisite fruit, and in infinite variety. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Glad news*:—Christianity is glad news. 1. BECAUSE IT REVEALED GOD TO MAN. Consider the state of the world before Christianity was born. Here and there an old sage had groped his way to a knowledge of the alphabet of truth. Here and there the Divine Spirit had communicated to a tribe or nation so much of the Divine wisdom that they lived faithful to their marriage vows, knew the blessings of home, acknowledged the rights of property and life to such an extent that they would not steal nor kill. But of God they knew little—of the life beyond the grave nothing. But when Christianity

was born, a sun arose into the darkness of the world. Men saw what they had felt must be, but what they had never before seen. And chiefest among all sights revealed, stood God. The heavens were no longer a vacuum, Christianity told them that God is their Father. II. BECAUSE IT REVEALED MAN TO HIMSELF. Never till Jesus was born—never till he had lived and passed away—did man know the nobility of his species. Never until God dwelt in the flesh could any man know what flesh might become. Never until the fulness of God was in man bodily, might the race get even a hint of that Divine receptiveness that, above all else perhaps, most nobly characterises human nature. III. BECAUSE IT REVEALS GOD IN MAN. The proclamation of the angels is confirmed in our experience and corroborated by our knowledge that the birth of Christianity was indeed "glad news" to men, because it brought God out of distance and darkness into light, and made Him nigh, as He is nigh who shares our burdens, consoles our sorrows, and in every pinch and stress of disastrous fortune rescues us from peril and saves us from loss. (*W. H. Murray.*) *Christian joyfulness:*—Have you no song in you to-day? Have you received no mercy that can make you tuneful? Do you not know that birds sing when they get wings? And shall God wing you with powers and yet you remain silent? Look abroad over the world and see how it is being lifted towards Christ; how the old barbarisms are melting away; how the dungeons of old oppressions are crumbling into ruins; how the tyrannies that trampled on men are being shorn of their power. See the torch and the sword drop from the hand of persecution, now nerveless, but once potent to strike and to light the martyr's fire! Hear the chains of slavery snap! The ring and clash of the fetters falling from wrist and ankle sound round the world. What is doing it? Jesus is doing it. The Galilean has triumphed! Old things are passing away; behold, all things are becoming new! Is there no joy in our hearts at the sight of all this? Shall we sit stolid and unmoved while before our eyes the influence of the Birth is moving to its triumph? Should we do so, Religion would disown us as unworthy of her favours, and piety itself rebuke us as incapable of gratitude. (*Ibid.*) *Joy born at Bethlehem:*—In our text we have before us the sermon of the first evangelist under the gospel dispensation. The preacher was an angel, and it was meet it should be so, for the grandest and last of all evangels will be proclaimed by an angel when he shall sound the trumpet of the resurrection, and the children of the regeneration shall rise into the fulness of their joy. The key-note of this angelic gospel is joy—"I bring unto you good tidings of great joy." Nature fears in the presence of God—the shepherds were sore afraid. The law itself served to deepen this natural feeling of dismay; seeing men were sinful, and the law came into the world to reveal sin, its tendency was to make men fear and tremble under any and every Divine revelation. But the first word of the gospel ended all this, for the angelic evangelist said, "Fear not, behold I bring you good tidings." Henceforth, it is to be no dreadful thing for man to approach his Maker; redeemed man is not to fear when God unveils the splendour of His majesty, since He appears no more a judge upon His throne of terror, but a Father unbending in sacred familiarity before His own beloved children. The joy which this first gospel preacher spoke of was no mean one, for he said, "I bring you good tidings"—that alone were joy: and not good tidings of joy only, but "good tidings of great joy." Man is like a harp unstrung, and the music of his soul's living strings is discordant, his whole nature wails with sorrow; but the son of David, that mighty harper, has come to restore the harmony of humanity, and where His gracious fingers move among the strings, the touch of the fingers of an incarnate God brings forth music sweet as that of the spheres, and melody rich as a seraph's canticle. I. THE JOY mentioned in the text—whence comes it, and what is it? 1. A great joy. 2. A lasting joy. 3. A pure and holy joy. But why is it that the coming of Christ into the world is the occasion of joy? The answer is as follows: (1) Because it is evermore a joyous fact that God should be in alliance with man, especially when the alliance is so near that God should in very deed take our manhood into union with His Godhead; so that God and man should constitute one Divine, mysterious person. From henceforth, when God looks upon man, He will remember that His own Son is a man. As in the case of war, the feud is ended when the opposing parties intermarry, so there is no more war between God and man, because God has taken man into intimate union with Himself. Herein, then, there was cause for joy. (2) But there was more than that, for the shepherds were aware that there had been promises made of old which had been the hope and comfort of believers in all ages, and these were now to be fulfilled. (3) But the angel's song had in it yet fuller reason for joy; for our Lord who was born

in Bethlehem came as a Saviour. "Unto you is born this day a Saviour." God had come to earth before, but not as a Saviour. The Lord might have come with thunderbolts in both His hands, He might have come like Elias to call fire from heaven; but no, His hands are full of gifts of love, and His presence is the guarantee of grace. 4. This Saviour was the Christ. "Anointed" of God, *i.e.*, duly authorized and ordained for this particular work. (5) One more note, and this the loudest, let us sound it well and hear it well—"which is Christ the Lord." Now the word Lord, or Kurios, here used is tantamount to Jehovah. Our Saviour is Christ, God, Jehovah. No testimony to His divinity could be plainer; it is indisputable. And what joy there is in this; for suppose an angel had been our Saviour, he would not have been able to bear the load of my sin or yours; or if anything less than God had been set up as the ground of our salvation, it might have been found too frail a foundation. II. Follow Me while I briefly speak of THE PEOPLE to whom this joy comes. 1. Observe how the angel begins, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, for unto you is born this day." So, then, the joy began with the first who heard it, the shepherds. "To you," saith he; "for unto you is born." Beloved hearer, shall the joy begin with you to-day?—for it little avails you that Christ was born, or that Christ died, unless unto you a Child is born, and for you Jesus bled. A personal interest is the main point. 2. After the angel had said "to you," he went on to say, "it shall be to all people." But our translation is not accurate, the Greek is, "it shall be to all *the* people." This refers most assuredly to the Jewish nation; there can be no question about that; if any one looks at the original, he will not find so large and wide an expression as that given by our translators. It should be rendered "to all *the* people." And here let us speak a word for the Jews. How long and how sinfully has the Christian Church despised the most honourable amongst the nations! How barbarously has Israel been handled by the so-called Church! Jesus the Saviour is the joy of all nations, but let not the chosen race be denied their peculiar share of whatever promise Holy Writ has recorded with a special view to them. The woes which their sins brought upon them have fallen thick and heavily; and even so let the richest blessings distil upon them. 3. Although our translation is not literally correct, it, nevertheless, expresses a great truth, taught plainly in the context; and, therefore, we will advance another step. The coming of Christ is a joy to all people. "Goodwill towards"—not Jews, but "men"—all men. There is joy to all mankind where Christ comes. The religion of Jesus makes men think, and to make men think is always dangerous to a despot's power. It is joy to all nations that Christ is born, the Prince of Peace, the King who rules in righteousness. III. THE SIGN. The shepherds did not ask for a sign, but one was graciously given. Wilful unbelief shall have no sign, but weak faith shall have compassionate aid. Every circumstance is therefore instructive. The Babe was found "wrapped in swaddling clothes. 1. There is not the remotest appearance of temporal power here. 2. No pomp to dazzle you. 3. Neither was there wealth to be seen at Bethlehem. 4. Here too, I see no superstition. 5. Nor does the joy of the world lie in philosophy. God's work was sublimely simple. Mysterious, yet the greatest simplicity that was ever spoken to human ears, and seen by mortal eyes. In a simple Christ, and in a simple faith in that Christ, there is a deep and lasting peace, an unspeakable bliss and joy. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *God incarnate, the end of fear*:—I. As to THE FEAR of the text, it may be well to discriminate. There is a kind of fear towards God from which we must not wish to be free. There is that lawful, necessary, admirable, excellent fear which is always due from the creature to the Creator, from the subject to the king, ay, and from the child toward the parent. To have a holy awe of our most holy, just, righteous, and tender parent is a privilege, not a bondage. Godly fear is not the "fear which hath torment;" perfect love doth not cast out, but dwells with it in joyful harmony. The fear which is to be avoided is slaving fear—that trembling which keeps us at a distance from God, which makes us think of Him as a Spirit with whom we can have no communion, as a Being who has no care for us except to punish us, and for whom consequently we have no care except to escape if possible from His terrible presence. 1. This fear sometimes arises in men's hearts from their thoughts dwelling exclusively upon the Divine greatness. Is it possible to peer long into the vast abyss of Infinity and not to fear? Can the mind yield itself up to the thought of the Eternal, Self-existent, Infinite One without being filled first with awe and then with dread? What am I? An aphis creeping upon a rosebud is a more considerable creature in relation to the universe of beings than I can be in comparison with God. We have had the impertinence to be disobedient to the will

of this great One; and now the goodness and greatness of His nature are as a current against which sinful humanity struggles in vain, for the irresistible torrent must run its course, and overwhelm every opponent. What does the great God seem to us out of Christ but a stupendous rock, threatening to crush us, or a fathomless sea, hastening to swallow us up? The contemplation of the Divine greatness may of itself fill man with horror, and cast him into unutterable misery! 2. Each one of the sterner attributes of God will cause the like fear. Think of His power by which He rolls the stars along, and lay thy hand upon thy mouth. Think of His wisdom by which He numbers the clouds, and settles the ordinances of heaven. Meditate upon any one of these attributes, but especially upon His justice, and upon that devouring fire which burns unceasingly against sin, and it is no wonder if the soul becomes full of fear. Meanwhile, let a sense of sin with its great whip of wire flagellate the conscience, and man will dread the bare idea of God. 3. Wherever there is a slavish dread of the Divine Being, it alienates man most thoroughly from his God. Those whom we slavishly dread we cannot love. Here is the masterpiece of Satan, that he will not let the understanding perceive the excellence of God's character, and then the heart cannot love that which the understanding does not perceive to be loveable. 4. Fear creates a prejudice against God's gospel of grace. People think that if they were religious they would be miserable. Oh, could they comprehend, could they but know how good God is, instead of imagining that His service would be slavery, they would understand that to be His friends is to occupy the highest and happiest position which created beings can occupy. 5. This fear in some men puts them out of all heart of ever being saved. Thinking God to be an ungenerous Being, they keep at a distance from Him. 6. This wicked dread of God frequently drives men to extremities of sin. 7. This fear dishonours God. 8. This fear hath torment. No more tormenting misery in the world than to think of God as being our implacable foe. II. THE CURE FOR THIS FEAR. God with us: God made flesh—that is the remedy. 1. According to the text they were not to fear, because the angel had come to bring them good news. He who made the heavens slumbers in a manger. What then? Why, then God is not of necessity an enemy to man, because here is God actually taking manhood into alliance with Deity. Is there not comfort in that? 2. The second point that takes away fear is that this man who was also God was actually born. He is more man than Adam was, for Adam never was born; Adam never had to struggle through the risks and weaknesses of infancy; he knew not the littlenesses of childhood—he was full-grown at once; whereas Jesus is cradled with us in the manger, accompanies us in the pains and feebleness and infirmities of infancy, and continues with us even to the grave. 3. Christ's office is to deliver us from sin. Here is joy upon joy. III. APPLY THE CURE TO VARIOUS CASES. Encouragement to the weak, the sinful, the lonely, the tempted. There is no cause for any to keep away from God, since Jesus has come to bring all to Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The joyful tidings of Christmas*:—Now, if, when Christ came on this earth, God had sent some black creature down from heaven (if there be such creatures there) to tell us, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," and if with a frowning brow and a stammering tongue he delivered his message, if I had been there and heard it, I should have scrupled to believe him, for I should have said, "You don't look like the messenger that God would send—stammering fellow as you are—with such glad news as this." But when the angels came there was no doubting the truth of what they said, because it was quite certain that the angels believed it; they told it as if they did, for they told it with singing, with joy and gladness. If some friend, having heard that a legacy was left you, should come to you with a solemn countenance, and a tongue like a funeral bell, saying, "Do you know so-and-so has left you £10,000?" Why, you would say, "Ah! I dare say," and laugh in his face. But if your brother should suddenly burst into your room, and exclaim, "I say, what do you think? You are a rich man. So-and-so has left you £10,000!" Why, you would say, "I think it is very likely to be true, for he looks so happy over it." Well, when these angels came from heaven, they told the news just as if they believed it; and though I have often wickedly doubted my Lord's good will, I think I never could have doubted it while I heard those angels singing. No, I should say, "The messengers themselves are proof of the truth, for it seems they have heard it from God's lips; they have no doubt about it, for see how joyously they tell the news." Now, poor soul, thou that art afraid lest God should destroy thee, and thou thinkest that God will never have mercy upon thee, look at the singing angels and doubt if thou darest. Do not go to the synagogue of long-faced hypocrites to hear the minister

who preaches with a nasal twang, with misery in his face, whilst he tells you that God has goodwill towards men; I know you won't believe what he says, for he does not preach with joy in his countenance; he is telling you good news with a grunt, and you are not likely to receive it. But go straightway to the plain where Bethlehem shepherds sat by night, and when you hear the angels singing out the gospel, by the grace of God upon you, you cannot help believing that they manifestly feel the preciousness of telling. Blessed Christmas, that brings such creatures as angels to confirm our faith in God's goodwill to men! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The joy of Christmas:*—The incarnation, such a great and manifold blessing to our race, must bring with it a feeling of joy; and not to our race alone, but also to other beings whose destinies are bound up with ours. The nativity brought joy—1. In heaven, to the angel spirits. Their ruin was now repaired (Isa. li. 3). Zion here represents those who are ever beholding the Father's face; who rejoice that the loss to their heavenly country is now made good, for the Lord will be able to lead all the faithful thither, where with the angels they will be in eternal joy. 2. In the unseen world, to the faithful departed. Joyful to the old fathers, it is their longed-for redemption. Adam's sin brought our race into captivity to the devil. Redemption began to-day. 3. In the world, among all people. Joy for the new manifestation. He who before was invisible was made visible to-day by opening the eyes of the human race. The light of wisdom has put to flight all the darkness of ignorance, and brought joy in the place of despair. (*Anon.*) *Joy at the birth of Jesus:*—To us men, more than to the angels or to any other created beings, is this day's joy. It is the great festival of humanity. He who was born to-day was—I. A REDEEMER. Delivering us from the servitude of sin and Satan—a worse bondage than that of Egypt. Think what songs of praise (Ex. xv. 1) are due to Jesus Christ to-day, who, by the baptism reddened by His blood, hath delivered us from the power of our spiritual foes. II. A SURETY. Taking upon Himself all our debts and the condemnation of their punishment. A new, the greatest and unheard-of benefit (Col. ii. 14). He came to-day to remit that vast debt of sin which God alone could pay; that the bond might be burnt in the fire of His love, or be affixed to the cross on Mount Calvary. III. A HEAVENLY PHYSICIAN. Prepared and willing to heal all diseases, again and again, without fee or reward, without pain to the patient (Matt. ix. 12; Luke iv. 23). IV. A SUN TO THE WORLD. Enlightening a darkness more dense than any natural or physical darkness (John i. 9; ix. 5). A light—1. Eternal. 2. Cheering. 3. Glorifying. V. A GUIDE TO THE TRUE AND BLESSED LIFE (Micah ii. 13). Going before in difficulties, smoothing rough ways. VI. A NOURISHER OF THE WORLD. Sustaining us in the way with "living bread." VII. A PRINCE OF PEACE. Bringing peace—1. With God. 2. To one's own conscience. 3. With each other. (Psa. xi. 6–10.) VIII. A SAVIOUR. Who will, after this life, bring us safely to the blessed and eternal country and being. Think on all these things and say (Psa. cxvii. 1). (*M. Faber.*) *Joy follows sorrow:*—It is the presence, or the memory, of something avoided, which gives point to our warmest rejoicings. In man grief is linked on to happiness, and suffering to joy. Just as a life without need of care is not a happy life, so if there were no fasts there could be no feasts. You must have shadow to show the light. So if there had been no fall there could have been no rising again. If there had been no Adam, there could have been no Christ. It was not only for His own pleasure, and not at all for His own profit, but for us, that Christ was born. Not for Adam, nor the old patriarchs, nor for very wicked men, but because we are what we are—that is why God must needs deny His own nature, and be born. Thus the little Infant Child appeals to us, as from the cross the Saviour crucified. Shall we then be sad and sorrowful on such a day? It is not sadness to remember an escape from danger, nor sadness to see a harbour in a storm. Those to whom this Christmas-time is not all mere pleasure, but whose sad memories and present troubles are too heavy, may sympathize with the Child born to suffer, and rejoice in the Lord born to save. It is for you to whom the world is not too dear, that you may have a world where sorrows enter not, that Christ was born. And for those who have no weight of care and sorrow, let the memory of Christ make them generous and thoughtful and kindhearted; not hard and selfish in their enjoyment, but longing to make all as merry and lighthearted as themselves, remembering that the first Christmas gift was given by God to us, when the Son of God gave to mankind Himself. (*Bp. E. Steere.*) *Good tidings:*—The gospel may be called "good tidings."—1. Because it is so beneficial. 2. Because it is so appropriate. 3. Because it is so personal.

4. Because it is so unexpected. 5. Because it is so subservient to the illustration of all the other dispensations of God toward us. (*G. Brooks.*) *The duty of Christian joy*:—We are incapable of omniscience in the region alike of enjoyment and of suffering. God has so made the eye of this body that it discerns not the animalcules swallowed in water, nor the tiny reptiles that are crushed by each tread of the foot. This limitation of the natural vision is a type to us of a principle which is the very condition of being. We are not to scrutinize sufferings which we cannot alleviate. We are not to allow pain to annihilate pleasure. We are not to set God's dispensation of sorrow at variance with God's other dispensation of joy. Where there is the remotest chance of alleviating, there we are to be keen-sighted in investigation. The eye is to be open—but let it be the natural eye, not the microscope. We are not intended so to realize the woe which cannot be mitigated, as to foster a general depression of tone, or a practical insensibility to the blessings which are largely mingled (none can deny it) in the cup of human being. It is needful, too, that we should none of us so enjoy as to forget the suffering which is for another and which shall be for us. On this ground, with this view, to this extent, we are bound to remember, and to take into our reckoning, the hardships, the calamities, and the miseries, which abound in the world. But it is not by refusing to rejoice that we shall really either learn to feel or learn to bear. (*J. Vaughan.*) *The gospel to be presented as great joy*:—It is the bounden duty of each one of us, in his own place and sphere, to present the gospel to the world as good tidings—of great joy—to all people. If we once lose this view of it, we have parted with its chief power over one large section at least of mankind. To the young, to the strong, to the busy, to the happy, it is idle to offer a consolation which they need not, or a gloom which they repudiate. Tell them that the gospel is a great joy—that it heightens all other joys, that it makes that everlasting which else must be temporal, that it makes the strong man stronger, and the young man younger, and the wise man wiser, and the delightful man more delightful, and thus completes and perfects every part and every kind of human vigour and of human usefulness and of human hope—you make Christ then what prophecy writes Him, the Desire of Nations; and you make the gospel what the angel calls it, great joy, and to all people. Nor do you, in so painting it, detract from any one of its charms for the struggling and the sorrow-laden. "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (*Ibid.*) *Christmas Day the turning point*:—Do you remember that Christmas Day is the first day in the year in which the days begin to lengthen? On the 21st, the 22nd, the 23rd, and the 24th of December they are substantially at a standstill; but on the 25th of December the hand of the poetic year cuts one lock from the head of darkness, and hangs it like a star on the forehead of the day; and to-day is a minute longer than yesterday. And the sun will not go back now. It has set its face toward the summer; and though there are going to be great storms in January, though vast shrouds of snow will cover the ground, yet you know and I know that the sun has gone to its farthest limit, and has begun to turn back; and that just as sure as nature is constant in her career, that sun is retracing his steps with summer in his bosom, and that there are fruits, and there are flowers, and there is a whole realm of joy coming. You have no doubt of this in the natural world. And I say that though the days of the world's winter are not over, yet I believe that the Sun of righteousness has gone as far away as He ever will, and has turned, and is coming back; and that there is to be a future summer of joy and rejoicing in things spiritual as well as in things temporal. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Heathen religions and Christianity*:—There have been many religions which have made men much more joyful than Christianity has; but they played upon the nature just as it was, and never sought to change it. The religion of the Greeks was a gay and festive religion. They wreathed themselves with flowers; they anointed themselves with sweet perfumes; they surrounded their temples with every attraction; they invoked every pleasure that they could think of; they sought to make the hour of their worship a beautiful and charming hour. They sought joy without seeking manhood. Theirs was a religion which took men just where they were, and left them where they were, and wrung out of them all the joy that there was in them at that point of development—and that was all. But Christianity takes men, and says, "Ye are capable of mightier things than these," and so begins to open up

the nature, to accord the nature, to discipline the nature, and make manhood vaster with the volume of joy by-and-by wrung out of their faculties—so vast that it shall transcend immeasurably that which was possible in the beginning or at the earlier stages. It is a great comfort to me, that have looked with so much sympathy upon the whole long requiem of time past, and upon the groaning and travailing in pain until now that is in the world, to believe, as I do heartily believe, that the future of Christianity is to be far brighter, and that the day of struggle is comparatively past. (*Ibid.*) *All creatures interested in the incarnation of Christ*:—Men did share in Him in His own sex and person; women in the womb that bare Him; poor men in the shepherds, great ones in the sages of the East; the beasts by the stable wherein He was born; the earth in the gold that was offered; the trees in the myrrh and frankincense; and to reckon up no more, the heavens in the star that blazed. All the works of God, even they which by natural obedience bless Him and magnify Him for ever, did claim some office to make one in the solemnity when their Creator was born. Why surely some room was left for the angels. It was fit they should be in the train at the inauguration of this mighty Prince, and their place, according to their dignity, was very honourable; they were God's ambassadors, and as if they had a patent to use their office frequently, they had many errands from heaven—to Mary, to Joseph. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Behold*:—Of which word standing in this place I note three things—admiration, demonstration, and attention. 1. *Ecce*, see and admire this is the greatest wonder that ever was. If you love to cast your eyes upon that which is miraculous, look this way, and see the greatest miracle that ever was brought to light. 2. To cry out unto the shepherds, behold, is an adverb of demonstration. Things hard by make us look towards them more than those that are farther off; we sit still and muse upon that which we hope will come to pass, but when we hear the bridegroom coming, then we bustle and look out. And though the senses of our body do not fix themselves upon Him, yet faith will perceive Him strongly and certainly that He is truly present; faith will assure itself how He stands at the door and knocks, and how it hears His voice. Furthermore let this demonstrative direction put you in mind to live so justly and inoffensively as if you did always behold God in the flesh. But—3. *Ecce*, behold, it doth not beg, but command, attention. When the Lord sends a messenger, is it not fit to note him diligently, and to ponder his sayings in your mind? (*Ibid.*) *Good news to all people*:—A good harvest is not welcome to one village, but it is gladsome to the whole country round about; and when spoils are divided after the vanquishing of an enemy, every soldier is enriched, and hath his share. Such a communicative blessing is our Saviour's incarnation—every man fills his bosom with the sheaves of the harvest; every Christian soldier that fights a good warfare plucks somewhat from the spoils of the enemy. (*Ibid.*) *The birth of Jesus*:—I. THE MESSENGER EMPLOYED. One of the dignified sons of light. An ambassador from heaven to earth, from God to man. A service of unrivalled glory and benevolence, calculated to excite wonder and abundant praise. By the redemption which is in Christ angels become our brethren, our friends, and our companions for ever. It is probable their joys and honours are greatly enhanced by the work of the Messiah. II. THE PERSONS ADDRESSED. Jewish shepherds. What a contrast between the ambassador and those to whom he appeared. How different, too, to the doings of men and to human expectations. It would have been supposed the tidings should have been given to kings, or philosophers, or assuredly to the priests. But God's ways are not our ways. In all the work and life of Christ God poured contempt upon worldly glory and distinctions. III. THE MESSAGE COMMUNICATED. 1. The angel describes the person of Him who is born. (1) Saviour. (2) Christ. (3) The Lord. 2. He announces His birth. The end of prophecy. The fulfilment of types. The fulness of the times. 3. He affirms this to be an event of good tidings. Tidings of Divine grace and salvation—all others are insignificant in comparison. Life, light, happiness, eternal glory. 4. He notices the universal application of these good tidings. (1) To the Jew first. "You." (2) "All people." None shut out. How comprehensive. Wherever we find even a horde of wandering savages, Christ is born for them. Application: 1. Is the end of Christ's birth answered in you? 2. If so, rejoice. 3. Caution against the temptations of the season. Let your joy be "in the Lord." (*Jabez Burns, D.D.*) *The angel's message to the shepherds*:—1. The time. Not in the meridian splendour of the sun, when his unnumbered glories might have added to the lustre of the scene, and charmed and gratified senses and imagination. Silence

of night is more favourable to devotion than bustle of day. The errand of the heavenly messengers was of a religious nature, therefore they arrive in the darkness and stillness of night. Long before this silent hour the sun had set in the western sky. The stars appeared, and the moon could not certainly withhold her light and her attendance upon such an occasion; everything conspired to direct the pious mind to solemn contemplation. 2. The persons. Not to rulers or great men was the message sent, but to humble shepherds. Why, then, say the poor, that religion is not for them, that they are neglected and forgotten? It was to poor men that this wondrous announcement was made. 3. The tidings revealed. Were they not "good tidings"? Would not the poor afflicted and oppressed debtor, who was just about to be dragged by a merciless creditor from his home and family, to be shut up in prison, esteem it glad tidings if he should be in that hour informed that one, completely able, had sent an express messenger to the hard-hearted creditor, saying, "Place all this man's debt to my account; set him at liberty to go home to his afflicted wife and famishing children"? And was it not good tidings to the children of Israel in Egypt when Moses was sent by God to be their deliverer, and to lead them to the promised land? But what is here announced far exceeds the joy of such occasions as these, for they refer to temporal concerns, this to eternal. (*H. Venn, M.A.*) *Great joy is often*—1. Secret. 2. Silent. 3. Childlike. 4. Modest. 5. Elevated. Christ is the only source of rational joy among fallen men. (*Van Doren.*) *The Christmas festival a festival for the whole world*:—1. This it is designed to be. 2. This it can be. 3. This it must be. 4. This it will be. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *The message to the shepherds*:—I. How sure is God's word. Ages had rolled by since the promise was first made. Saints had waited; types had prefigured; prophets had foretold: at last, when all preparation is complete, the Divine decree is accomplished. II. How wonderful are God's ways. III. How glorious is God's salvation. God, and yet man; a babe, and yet Lord of all. How great the Father's love; how wonderful the Son's condescension! (*W. S. Bruce, M.A.*) *Christianity a cheerful religion*:—It is necessary for some people to remember that cheerfulness, good spirits, light-heartedness, merriment, are not unchristian nor unsaintly. We do not please God more by eating bitter aloes than by eating honey. A cloudy, foggy, rainy day is not more heavenly than a day of sunshine. A funeral march is not so much like the music of angels as the song of birds on a May morning. There is no more religion in the gaunt naked forest in winter than in the laughing blossoms of the spring, and the rich ripe fruits of autumn. It was not the pleasant things in the world that came from the devil, and the dreary things from God; it was sin brought death into the world and all our woe; as the sin vanishes, the woe will vanish too. God Himself is the ever-blessed God. He dwells in the light of joy as well as of purity, and instead of becoming more like Him as we become more miserable, and as all the brightness and glory of life are extinguished, we become more like God as our blessedness becomes more complete. The great Christian graces are radiant with happiness. Faith, hope, charity—there is no sadness in them; and if penitence makes the heart sad, penitence belongs to the sinner, not to the saint. As we become more saintly, we have less sin to sorrow over. No; the religion of Christ is not a religion of sorrow. It consoles wretchedness, and brightens with a Divine glory the lustre of every inferior joy. It attracts to itself the broken-hearted, the lonely, the weary, the despairing; but it is to give them rest, comfort, and peace. It rekindles hope; it inspires strength, courage, and joy. It checks the merriment of the thoughtless who have never considered the graver and more awful realities of man's life and destiny; but it is to lead them through transient sorrow to deeper and more perfect blessedness, even in this world, than they had ever felt before the sorrow came. (*T. Dale, M.A.*) *The great birthday*:—I. The birth of Christ should be the subject of supreme joy. We have the angelic warrant for rejoicing because Christ is born. It is a truth so full of joy that it caused the angel who came to announce it to be filled with gladness. He had little to do with the fact, for Christ took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham; but I suppose that the very thought that the Creator should be linked with the creature, that the great Invisible and Omnipotent should come into alliance with that which He Himself had made, caused the angel as a creature to feel that all creatureship was elevated, and this made him glad. Besides, there was a sweet benevolence of spirit in the angel's bosom which made him happy because he had such gladsome tidings to bring to the fallen sons of men. 1. The birth of Christ was the

incarnation of God. This is a wondrous mystery, to be believed in rather than to be defined. Mankind is not outlawed or abandoned to destruction, for, lo! the Lord has married into the race, and the Son of God has become Son of Man. This proves that God loves man, and means man's good; that He feels for man and pities him; that He intends to deliver man and to bless him. 2. He who was born is unto us a Saviour. Those who will be most glad of this will be those who are most conscious of their sinnership. If you would draw music out of that ten-stringed harp, the word "Saviour," pass it over to a sinner. "Saviour" is the harp, but "sinner" is the finger that must touch the strings and bring forth the melody. 3. This Saviour is Christ the Lord, and there is much gladness in this fact. We have not a nominal Saviour, but a Saviour fully equipped; one who, in all points, is like ourselves, for He is Man, but in all points fit to help the feebleness which He has espoused, for He is the Anointed Man. The godlike in dominion is joined with the human in birth. 4. The angel called for joy, and I ask for it too, on this ground, that the birth of this child was to bring glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men. The birth of Christ has given such glory to God as I know not that He could ever have had here by any other means. We must always speak in accents soft and low when we talk of God's glory; in itself it must always be infinite and not to be conceived by us, and yet may we not venture to say that all the works of God's hands do not glorify Him so much as the gift of His dear Son, that all creation and all providence do not so well display the heart of Deity as when He gives His Only-Begotten, and sends Him into the world that men may live through Him? What wisdom is manifested in the plan of redemption of which the incarnate God is the centre! What love is there revealed! What power is that which brought the Divine One down from glory to the manger; only Omnipotence could have worked so great a marvel! What faithfulness to ancient promises! What truthfulness in keeping covenant! What grace, and yet what justice! II. Let us consider TO WHOM THIS JOY BELONGS. 1. It belongs to those who tell it. 2. It belongs to those who hear it. 3. It belongs to those who believe it. III. How THAT JOY SHOULD BE MANIFESTED. 1. Proclaim the Saviour. 2. Sing God's praises. 3. Spread the news—as the shepherds did. 4. Ponder this miracle of love—as Mary did. 5. Go and do good to others. Come and worship God manifest in the flesh, and be filled with His light and sweetness by the power of the Holy Spirit. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ's Nativity*:—1. Observe the interest which the angels felt on the occasion. While men's minds are intent on the decree of the emperor, theirs are centred on Christ. 2. Not only did an angel appear to the shepherds, but the glory of the Lord shone round about them. Evidence of a message immediately from God. 3. The effect it had upon the shepherds. Sore afraid, but afterwards cheered. 4. The object proclaimed is the "Saviour." Not themselves, but Christ. 5. The good news was common to all people, not to one nation only. 6. The good news, though common to all people, was more immediately addressed to the shepherds, who like many others were waiting for the consolation of Israel. The gospel is addressed to individuals, as if they only were the objects of it. Salvation is directly offered to every soul. 7. In this heavenly message particular attention is paid to time, place, and other circumstances, to show their agreement with ancient prophecy. Not even an angel may speak anything contrary to the Scriptures (Gal. i. 8). I. CONSIDER THE SUBJECT OF THE ANGELIC MESSAGE, AND SEE WHAT GOOD TIDINGS ARE CONTAINED IN IT. 1. The birth of Jesus Christ was itself good news. The great object of prophecy from the beginning of the world, and the hope of the Church in all ages. 2. The gracious design of His incarnation imparted good tidings to a guilty and ruined world. 3. The way of salvation, which was effected by the coming of Christ, forms an essential part of the good tidings brought to us by the angel. Repentance and remission of sins preached among all nations. II. THESE TIDINGS ARE MATTERS OF JOY, OF GREAT JOY TO ALL PEOPLE. The word used is strong, and only used for such great occasions as the joy of harvest or an important victory; but is fully applicable to this subject. 1. The coming of Christ was the joy of the Old Testament Church, while they lived only in hope of this great event (Isa. xxv. 9; John viii. 56). How much more when it is fully realized. 2. All the joy of believers during the lifetime of our Saviour centred entirely in Him. 3. All the joy in the times of the apostles had an immediate reference to Christ and His salvation. The apostles triumphed in every place, but it was because the savour of His name was spread abroad. 4. Christ and His salvation made all their

troubles and sorrows light and momentary; yea, they counted not their lives dear for His sake. The history of the primitive Church is a history of sufferings in the cause of Christ, and of joy and rejoicing in His holy name. This also is the way for us to bear up under all the sorrows, trials, and afflictions of this life. III. INQUIRE WHAT IS NECESSARY TO RENDER THESE GOOD TIDINGS A MATTER OF REAL JOY TO US. It is an undoubted fact that they do not produce joy in all: they did not then, and they do not now. Many think the tidings of the gospel not worth hearing. Many who hear, neglect them, or feel no interest in them. Some who seem to rejoice for a time become indifferent, and afterwards wither away. 1. To become the subject of real joy, these tidings require to be believed as true, and to be received with the utmost cordiality. 2. It requires a deep conviction of our guilty, lost, and ruined state, which is presupposed by the gospel, and which must be felt and realized before it can convey to us tidings of great joy. 3. A cordial reception of the gospel itself, as revealing the only way of salvation; obeying it from the heart, and receiving the truth in love. (*Theological Sketch-book.*) *The first Christmas:*—I. THAT A SCENE OF FRIGHT OFTEN BECOMES A SCENE OF EXALTATION. Joseph's way to authority led through the pit, slavery, and prison. How many through affliction have found spiritual triumph. II. WE SEE WHY CHRIST FINDS SO POOR A RECEPTION UPON EARTH. Room for outward pomps, but none for the lowly Son of God. In yonder store there is room for trade, for money, but no room for Christ. There is no war between prosperity and Christ. III. THAT WHILE VIRTUE IS OFTEN FORCED TO PLAIN LODGINGS, WICKEDNESS IS PROVIDED WITH FINE QUARTERS. Guilt on the throne, innocence in the cabin; Nero in the palace, Paul a prisoner; Nebuchadnezzar walking in the hanging gardens, Shadrach in the fire. Remember the order: first the manger; second, the cross; third, the crown. IV. THAT JOY IS A DOMINANT ELEMENT IN RELIGION. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The first Christmas morning:*—I. THE ADVENT OF CHRIST WAS GOOD TIDINGS TO THE SLAVE. When He came, a large part of the race were held in abject servitude. Slavery prevailed extensively in cultivated Greece, in imperial Rome, and even in Palestine—in the very shadow of the temple of the Most High. Some Roman masters held from ten to twenty thousand slaves, and the condition of the slave was hard in the extreme. He was treated and held simply as a "thing"; bought and sold as men deal in sheep and horses, he was absolutely the property of his master; he had no rights as a man—no place under the law; could be beaten, scourged, and put to death at the will of the master. Such was the condition of half the world when the angel choir sang their *Gloria in Excelsis.* But that song was the death-knell to human bondage. The Infant that lay in the manger hard by was to be the great Deliverer. Glorious emancipation! Glorious harbinger of that spiritual liberty which Christ is yet to achieve! II. THE ADVENT OF CHRIST WAS GOOD TIDINGS TO THE LABOURER. The mass of men belong to the labouring class—are forced to earn their bread in the sweat of their brows. The honour, the dignity, of labour was not at all understood before Christ's advent. Philosophers taught that all forms of manual labour were degrading. In Rome only three kinds of occupation were considered respectable, viz.: medicine, commerce, and architecture. Free men had to work side by side with slaves. But Christ taught a new doctrine. He consecrated and made honourable all honest labour, both by the precepts He taught and by His own example. And just as the spirit and teachings of the great Master prevail, the labouring classes will be elevated and prosperous, and human society will approximate the heavenly world. III. THE ADVENT OF CHRIST REVEALED TO EARTH THE TRUE IDEA OF HUMANITY. The ancients had no just conception of man as man. At best, he was considered of no account, except as related to the State or the crown. IV. THE ADVENT OF CHRIST WAS GOOD TIDINGS TO THE FAMILY. The ancients had very imperfect ideas about it. Marriage was simply the means the State had to produce citizens. But, oh, the power, the blessedness, of the religion of Jesus on the family! V. THE ADVENT OF CHRIST WAS GLAD TIDINGS BECAUSE IT GAVE THE WORLD A NEW HOPE. The song of the angels on that eventful Christmas morning was the song of hope to a despairing world. (*D. W. Lusk.*) *Good tidings of great joy:*—The sweet air of the gospel hath some harsh tidings, to take up the cross, and endure unto blood, and death, but these were tidings of joy. 1. Joys are of several sizes, this is a great one, nay, none so great. 2. Joys and great ones are quickly done, this is joy that shall be and continue. 3. A man may be a conduit-pipe to transmit joy to others, and have no benefit himself; this is joy to you, to every ear that hears it. 4. A good nature would not engross a blessing, but desires to have it diffused, and so was this joy to all people. The

angel said unto them, "Fear not." What should they not fear: first, *non a splendore divino*, let not their hearts be troubled because the glory of the Lord shone round about them. Sore eyes are distempered at much light, and it is a sign there is some darkness within us all, which loves not to be discovered; that the best of us all are much perplexed if any extraordinary brightness flash upon us. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Fear not:*—So if there be not a mixture of fear with our love, it falleth asleep, it waxeth secure, and loseth her Beloved. If the comfort of our joy be not allayed with some fear, 'tis madness and presumption. Again, if our fear be not intermixed with the comfort of some joy, 'tis sullenness and desperation. As the earth cannot be without summer and winter to make it fruitful, the pleasure of the one and the austerity of the other make up the revolution of a good year, so faith is the parent both of a cloudy fear, and a smiling hope: faith begets fear in us in regard of our own weakness, and hope in regard of the goodness of God; hope ariseth out of the faith of the gospel, and fear out of the faith of the law. These cannot be parted. (*Ibid.*) That bondage which makes us liable to judgment is naught; but the fear which issues from a conscientiousness of that bondage flying to God that it may fly from judgment is holy and good. Briefly, let them thus be compared together; a filial fear, which loves God for His own goodness, is like a bright day which hath not a cloud to disfigure it; a servile fear, that dreads God because it dreads the wrath to come, is like a day that is overcast with clouds, but it is clearer than the fairest moonshine night. It is good to have the spirit of adoption, but it is better to have the spirit of bondage than the spirit of slumber; it is good to be in Canaan, but it is better to be in the wilderness than in Egypt; it is good to be a child, but it is better to be a servant than a stranger to the Lord. (*Ibid.*) This, then, is another fear which belongs to our allowance, but there is a fear which hath a *nolite* set before it, an immoderate horror of heart, a symptom of desperation, or at least of infidelity and diffidence; this is that quivering with which God strikes His enemies, as a tree is shaken by the wind to unfasten it from the root. (*Ibid.*) Nothing, you see, is comfortable to them that have not the true comforter, the Holy Spirit in their soul. (*Ibid.*) Satan feels some horror that gnaws and torments him, but he feels not the blessing of that fear which should discipline him from sin, and amend him. (*Ibid.*) Then it were good, methinks, that discretion and consideration of Christ's merciful gospel did mitigate their zeal, who think they are bound to thunder nothing so much to the people as fears, and terrors, like the writer of Iambiques that spoke anger and poison to put Archilochus into desperation. Let vices be threatened, but let the hope that accompanies true repentance go together. Let judgment be put home to the obdurate conscience, but let mercy be an advocate for the broken in heart. Let the strictness of law and the curse thereof fetch a tear from our eyes; but let the ransom of our sins be set before us, and that Christ will wipe all tears from our eyes. St. Paul wished himself at Corinth, not to affright them, but to rejoice with the brethren; as it was said of the mild nature of the Emperor Vespasian, he never sent any man from him discontent, but gave him some comfort and satisfaction. So the gospel is such a sweet demulcing lesson, that if it be truly preached it must always revive the heart, it cannot leave a sting behind it. You see the angel delights not to scare, but to comfort the shepherds, "Fear not." (*Ibid.*) *Gospel joy continuous:*—This spiritual gladness and festivity is the principal assistance to vanquish Satan, and all desperate doubts with which he would perplex our conscience: it is a royal joy which comforts us that we shall be heirs of a glorious kingdom; it is a sanctified joy which gives us promise that we shall not only be kings but priests for ever, to offer up the sweet odours of our prayers to God; it is a superlative joy which cries down all other petty delights, and makes them appear as nothing; it is endless joy of durance and lasting for ever and ever; for my text says it is "joy that shall be unto you." Times of feasting have a period, every man is glutted at last; he that hath his fill of sport is weary by the late of night, and glad to take his rest. But the joy that you have in Christ is with you all the year, in all your sorrow, in all your adversities; it sleeps with you, it grows old with you, it will change this life with you, and follow you into a better: "And My joy shall no man take from you," says our Saviour (John xvi. 22). Christmas joy was not only for the first twelve days when the Son of God was born, but for all the twelve months of twelve hundred years, and many hundreds after them unto the world's end. So St. Peter doth solace us (1 Pet. i. 8), "Though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. (Eccles. xi. 9.) So that let the wicked speed never so well in his frolics and jocundities, he returns home as Theseus did,

with black sails of sorrow; as if he had never made a saving voyage. All their laughter is like the the joy of Herod's birthday; dancing, and revels, and offering of great gifts last for a while, but before evening you shall see an alteration; and when their surfeited tables are removed away, the last service in the platter is the head of John the Baptist. But the mirth which we have in the Mediator of our salvation is a song which hath no rest in it, nor ever shall have a close. We begin the first part here, that we may sing the other part in psalms and hallelujahs with the saints for ever. As Christmas is celebrated part of the new year, and part of the old, so it is joy that is in this life, and shall be in the life to come. (*Ibid.*) *The nativity of our Lord, tidings of great joy*:—1. Let us consider that the nativity doth import the completion of many ancient promises, predictions, and prefigurations concerning it; that whereas all former dispensations of favour and mercy were as preludes or preambles to this; the old law did aim to represent it in its mysterious pomps; the chief of providential occurrences did intimate it; the prophets often in their mystical raptures did allude to it, and often in clear terms did express it; the gracious designs of God, and the longing expectations of mankind being so variously implied in regard thereto; now all is come to be fulfilled, and perfected in most clear, most effectual, most substantial accomplishment. Now what can be more delightful, or satisfactory to our mind, than to reflect on this sweet harmony of things, this goodly correspondence between the old and new world; wherein so pregnant evidences of God's chief attributes (of His goodness, of His wisdom, of His fidelity and constancy), all conspiring to our benefit, do shine? Is it not pleasant to contemplate how provident God hath ever been for our welfare? what trains from the world's beginning, or ever since our unhappy fall, He hath been laying to repair and restore us? how wisely He hath ordered all dispensations with a convenient reference and tendency to this masterpiece of grace? how steady He hath been in prosecuting His designs, and how faithful in accomplishing His promises concerning it? If the "holy patriarchs did see this day, and were glad"; if a glimpse thereof did cause their hearts to leap within them; if its very dawn had on the spirits of the prophets so vigorous an influence, what comfort and complacence should we feel in this its real presence, and bright aspect on us! 2. Let us consider what alteration our Lord's coming did induce, by comparing the state of things before it with that which followed it. The old world then consisting of two parts, severed by a strong wall of partition, made up of difference in opinion, in practice, in affection, together with a strict prohibition to one of holding intercourse with the other. Such was the state of the world in its parts; and jointly of the whole it may be said that it was "shut up under sin" and guilt, under darkness and weakness, under death and corruption, under sorrow and woe: that no full declaration of God's pleasure, no clear overture of mercy, no express grant of spiritual aid, no certain redemption from the filth or the force of sin, from the stroke of death, from due punishment hereafter; no encouragements suitable to high devotion, or strict virtue, were anywise in a solemn way exhibited or dispensed before our Lord's appearance: so that well might all men be then represented as Cimmerians, "sitting in darkness, in the region and shadow of death." Now the Spirit of God (the Spirit of direction, of succour, of comfort spiritual) is poured on all flesh. "Now the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men." Now Jew and Gentile are reunited and compacted in one body; walking in the same light, and under obligation to the same laws. But farther, that we may yet more nearly touch the point—3. Let us consider that the nativity of our Lord is a grand instance, a pregnant evidence, a rich earnest of Almighty God's very great affection and benignity toward mankind; for, "In this," saith St. John, "the love of God was manifested, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world:" and, "Through the tender mercies of our God," sang old Zachariah, "the Day-spring from on high did visit us:" this indeed is the peculiar experiment, wherein that most Divine attribute did show and signalize itself. And what greater reason of joy can there be, than such an assurance of His love, on whose love all our good dependeth, in whose love all our felicity consisteth? What can be more delightful than to view the face of our Almighty Lord so graciously smiling on us? Should we not be extremely glad, should we not be proud, if our earthly prince by any signal mark would express himself kindly affected to us? How much more should we resent such a testimony of God's favour! how worthily may our souls be transported with a sense of such affection! 4. We may consider our Lord's nativity, as not only expressing simple good-will, but implying a perfect reconciliation, a firm peace, a steady friendship established between God and us;

or that it did not only proceed from love, but did also produce love to us. Now, then, what can be more worthy of joy than such a blessed turn of affairs? How can we otherwise than with exceeding gladness solemnize such a peace? 5. Our Lord's nativity doth infer a great honour, and a high preferment to us: nowise indeed could mankind be so dignified, or our nature so advanced as hereby: no wisdom can devise a way beyond this, whereby God should honour His most special favourites, or promote them to a nearness unto Himself. This is a peculiar honour, to which the highest angels cannot pretend; "for He took not the nature of angels, but He took the seed of Abraham." And is it not good matter of joy to be thus highly graced? When are men better pleased than when they are preferred; than especially, when "from the meanest state, from the dunghill, or from the dust, they are raised to be set among princes, and made to inherit the throne of glory"? 6. Finally, if we survey all principal causes of joy and special exultation, we shall find them all concurring in this event. Is a messenger of good news embraced with joy? Behold the great Evangelist is come, with His mouth full of news, most admirable, most acceptable: He, who doth acquaint us that God is well pleased, that man is restored, that "the adversary is cast down," that paradise is set open, and immortality retrieved; that truth and righteousness, peace and joy, salvation and happiness are descended, and come to dwell on earth. Is the birth of a prince by honest subjects to be commemorated with joyous festivity? Behold a Prince born to all the world! a Prince undertaking to rule mankind with sweetest clemency and exact justice. May victory worthily beget exultation? See the invincible warrior doth issue forth into the field, "conquering and to conquer": He that shall baffle and rifle the strong one, our formidable adversary; that shall rout all the forces of hell, and triumph over the powers of darkness. Is a proclamation of peace, after rueful wars, to be solemnized with alacrity? Behold then everlasting peace between heaven and earth, a general peace among men. Is satisfaction of desire and hope very pleasant? Behold the "desire of all nations, the expectation of Israel," He for whom the whole creation groaned, is come. Is recovery of liberty delectable to poor slaves and captives? Behold the "Redeemer is come out of Sion"; the precious ransom, sufficient to purchase the freedom of many worlds, is laid down. Is an overture of health acceptable to sick and languishing persons? Behold the great Physician, endued with admirable skill, and furnished with infallible remedies, is come, to cure us of our maladies, and ease us of our pains. Is mirth seasonable on the day of marriage? Behold the greatest wedding that ever was is this day solemnised; heaven and earth are contracted; divinity is espoused to humanity; a sacred, an indissoluble knot is tied between God and man. Is the access of a good friend to be received with cheerful gratulation? Behold the dearest and best Friend of all mankind. Is opportune relief grateful to persons in a forlorn condition, pinched with extreme want, or plunged in any hard distress? Behold a merciful, a bountiful, a mighty Saviour and succourer. Is the sun-rising comfortable after a tedious, darksome, and cold night? See, "the Sun of Righteousness is risen with healing in His wings," dispensing all about His pleasant rays and kindly influences. (*J. Barrow, D.D.*) *Religious joy*:—Let us consider this more at length, as contained in the gracious narrative of which the text is part. 1. What do we read just before the text? that there were certain shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night, and angels appeared to them. Why should the heavenly hosts appear to these shepherds? What was it in them which attracted the attention of the angels and the Lord of angels? Were these shepherds learned, distinguished, or powerful? Were they especially known for piety and gifts? Nothing is said to make us think so. Almighty God looks with a sort of especial love, or (as we may term it) affection, upon the lowly. Perhaps it is that man, a fallen, dependent, and destitute creature, is more in his proper place when he is in lowly circumstances, and that power and riches, though unavoidable in the case of some, are unnatural appendages to man, as such. And what a contrast is presented to us when we take into account who were our Lord's messengers to them! The angels who excel in strength, these did His bidding towards the shepherds. Here the highest and the lowest of God's rational creatures are brought together. A set of poor men, engaged in a life of hardship, exposed at that very time to the cold and darkness of the night, watching their flocks, with the view of scaring away beasts of prey or robbers. We know the contracted range of thought, the minute and ordinary objects, or rather the one or two objects, to and fro again and again without variety, which engage the minds of men exposed to such a life of heat, cold, and wet, hunger and nakedness, hardship and servitude. They cease to

care much for anything, but go on in a sort of mechanical way, without heart, and still more without reflection. To men so circumstanced the angel appeared, to open their minds, and to teach them not to be downcast and in bondage because they were low in the world. He appeared as if to show them that God had chosen the poor in this world to be heirs of His kingdom, and so to do honour to their lot. 2. And now comes a second lesson, which I have said may be gained from the festival. The angel honoured a humble lot by his very appearing to the shepherds; next he taught it to be joyful by his message. The angel said, "Fear not," when he saw the alarm which his presence caused among the shepherds. Even a lesser wonder would have reasonably startled them. Therefore the angel said, "Fear not." We are naturally afraid of any messenger from the other world, for we have an uneasy conscience when left to ourselves, and think that his coming forebodes evil. Besides, we so little realize the unseen world, that were angel or spirit to present himself before us we should be startled by reason of our unbelief, a truth being brought home to our minds which we never apprehended before. A little religion makes us afraid; when a little light is poured in upon the conscience, there is a darkness visible; nothing but sights of woe and terror; the glory of God alarms while it shines around. His holiness, the range and difficulties of His commandments, the greatness of His power, the faithfulness of His word, frighten the sinner, and men seeing him afraid, think religion has made him so, whereas he is not religious at all. But religion itself, far from inculcating alarm and terror, says, in the words of the angel, "Fear not;" for such is His mercy, while Almighty God has poured about us His glory, yet it is a consolatory glory, for it is the light of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. iv. 6). If all these things be so, surely the lesson of joy which the incarnation gives us is as impressive as the lesson of humility. St. Paul gives us the one lesson in his Epistle to the Philippians: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *Glad news:*—The days of life are not lived on one level range. There are days that are lifted, and days that are depressed; days which stand out radiant with opportunity, as summits of mountains stand forth to the eye when the sun shines upon them. Now and then you come to a day so auspicious, so prophetic of good, that it sings through all its hours, and is as a hymn and a psalm. Not only do men come to such days, not only do individuals find themselves lifted by God's mercy to such summits of feeling and expression, but nations and cities, governments and institutions, come to the same happy fortune. There are days in national life linked with such victorious memories, full with such present triumphs, that at the rising of the sun every patriotic citizen flings out to the morning air the national banner. Institutions, too, have their glorious days. Popular movements that represent great causes and grand effects roll up like waves to their cresting, and the power of the forces which moved them on culminates in popular gladness. Religion shares in the action of this law. And it is because Christianity helps men that it is properly named "glad news"; and it may be well for us who are in worship assembled to ask ourselves and to consider wherein Christianity is glad news, and why, being accepted, it brings joy to the human heart. In the first place, it is glad news because it is a revelation of God—both as to what He is in Himself, and what His feelings are toward man. The highest conception the human mind can form is that of Deity. It is too great in itself to go on without conceiving of a greater. The human constitution is of so noble a sort, is so majestic in its vision, so profound in its necessities, that it must have a God. The greatness of man is seen in the fact that in him is an actual craving to bow down to some one or to something that symbolises some one. Look, then, at and consider the state of the world before Christianity was born. Here and there an old sage, by sixty years of studentship, had groped his way up until his fingers had felt out a knowledge of the alphabet of truth which taught him the rudiments of righteousness. But of God they knew little. Of the life beyond the grave they knew nothing. The consolation which comes from knowledge they had not amid their trials. They died blindly submissive; they died wretchedly patient; they died stoically indifferent. And those that were left to mourn above their graves mourned without hope. But when Christianity was born, a sun rose into the darkness of the world. Men saw what they had felt must be, but what they had never before seen. And chiefest among all sights revealed stood God. It told them of His affection, of His patience, of His mercy. It told

them that He was mindful of them, that His ears were open to their cries, and His eyes noted the falling of their tears. What a revelation was this! How satisfactory in its nature! How sublime in its significance! How far-reaching in its influence! How could piety ever become intelligent? How could devotion ever be ardent and sincere until, in the person of God, the source and pattern of all purity, of all justice, of all affection, should be revealed unto man? Let it be known, then, and profoundly felt by us all here to-day, that Christianity was "glad news" unto man, first and foremost, because it revealed God. We do not realize, so familiar are we with the thought, what a gap would be made in our lives if from our minds the knowledge we have of God were stricken. Such a removal would be like taking one's heart from his bosom. As in the one case physically we could not survive, so in the other case spiritually we could not survive. And the second great and emphatic reason is, as it seems to me, because it revealed man to himself. Never till Jesus was born—never till He had lived and passed away—did man know the nobility of his species. Never until God dwelt in the flesh could any man know what flesh might become. For natures are measured, not by what they can impart primarily, but by what they can receive. The ox can receive but little. The sweetness of the grass, the pungency of the budding shrubbery he crops, the coolness of the water that he drinks when athirst—these measure his being. They minister to his structure, and its wants being supplied his life is satisfied. The dog can receive yet more. He craves food, but he also craves affection. A life higher than his own is needed for his happiness. He looks at the hand of his master as the inferior looks at the superior when itself is great enough to discover greatness. The dog finds deity in his master. From him he learns law and love both. From him he receives joy so intense that even his master marvels at it, and wonders that so slight a motion of his hand, so brief an utterance from his lips, can make any being so happy. It is because the dog can receive so much that thought ranks him so high. And the capacity of receptiveness gives accurate measurement and gradation to animals and to men. I say to men; for the same law holds good in the human species. There are some who receive little. On the other hand, there are those who are as a house when its windows are all open, and the sun and the wind play through its chambers. There is no form of beauty; there is no shade of loveliness; there is no odour or perfume, nor any melodious sound, that appeals to them in vain. And when we view them on the higher levels of receptiveness—the levels of mind and soul—we find that their intellect and their spirits alike are as pools that stand waiting for the streams to flow into them. From history and poetry, from science and art, from past and present, they are ministered unto ceaselessly. Nor is there anything religious, anything sacred and devout, anything spiritual and Divine, which does not find ready entrance into their natures. So freely do they receive of these, that by them at last they are possessed. Renewed in mind, transformed in spirit, sanctified in soul, they become like Him of whom they have received. So that their walk and conversation is with God. Never, as we have said, until Christ came was the greatness of this capacity to receive demonstrated. Christ showed what man *might* be, and thereby fixed his value. Heaven paid such a price for man that man himself was astonished. God's acts are based on knowledge. The second reason, then, why Christianity is glad news is seen in the fact that beyond any mere religion, beyond all philosophies, it tells me what man is. We who are here can rise up and say, "We know what man is!" The world, from east to west, from north to south, can say, speaking through all her myriad mouths, "We know what man is!" The great continents, the islands of the sea, the far shores and the far climes, through all their industries, through all their commerce, through their intelligence, through the glory of their bloom and the pendent wealth of their harvests, can say, "We know what man is!" Ay, and the spirits of the redeemed in heaven and the great angels that wait before God, mighty in their power and intelligence, can bow down before Him who made the revelation in His Son, and murmur, in the hush of holy awe, "We know what man is!" We have said that the first reason why Christianity was glad news was found in the fact that it revealed God; and the second great reason that it was glad news was found in the fact that it revealed man; and now we say, lastly, that the third great reason why Christianity is glad news is found in the fact that it reveals God in man. Theodore Parker, of pleasant memory to many, to whom this city owes much, and to whom humanity owes more, had a splendid conception of God. No nobler Deity was ever preached than he proclaimed. Many who deride him, but have

never read him, would be richer spiritually than they are if in their minds and souls they had his conception of Divinity. In addition to his splendid conception of God, he had the noblest possible conception of man—of his nature, of his possibilities, of his rights, and of his destiny. But of God in man he seems to have had little, if any, conception. On his right hand stood God, like a hewn pillar, massive and polished to the finest gleam; on the left stood man, a companion pillar, of which in way of description it is enough to say that it was the reflection of the other. But God in man, or the God-man—that white arch that should connect and span the space between the two—he did not discern. And that the object of this incarnation of Deity was the salvation of men from their sins we know. The mighty and benevolent uses of incarnation are patent. Only so could God be revealed, in such a way that the human mind might apprehend Him clearly, and the human soul in Him find courage. Only by such an incarnation could the requisite authority be given to human utterance, and the requisite wisdom be imparted to human understanding. Only by such an incarnation could the holy example, whose presence was needed, be given unto the world, and the adequate inspiration be imparted to humanity. And only by such an incarnation, only through the lips of His own Son, could the Divine Fatherhood be properly declared, the Divine life properly lived, and the victorious sacrifice, required both for the justice of heaven and the moral necessities of men, be made. We rejoice, therefore, in the incarnation of God in Christ as those who apprehend the high spiritual uses it subserves, the profound spiritual necessities it meets, and the otherwise incomprehensible truths that it makes familiar unto us. (*W. H. Aitken.*) *Good tidings of great joy*:—The message was one bearing "good tidings of great joy." "Good tidings" in view of the light which was to be shed, the deliverance which was to be wrought, and the union of the whole race which was contemplated, and shall in due course be effected. I. "Good tidings of great joy" in view of THE LIGHT WHICH WAS TO BE SHED. Christ in His coming has shed light upon the Divine tenderness and grace. Christ, in His coming, has shed light upon the moral obligations of men. "The law was given by Moses." And Christ in His coming has shed light upon human destiny. II. "Good tidings of great joy" in view of THE DELIVERANCE WHICH WAS TO BE WROUGHT. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The deliverance Christ came to effect for all who should trust to Him is both a present and an eternal deliverance. He secures deliverance from the burden of unforgiven sin. He sets free from the defilement of sin. He preserves from remorse. And He saves from despondency and distrust. But He came to effect our eternal deliverance. III. "Good tidings of great joy," in view of the union of THE WHOLE RACE WHICH WAS CONTEMPLATED, AND WHICH SHALL, IN DUE COURSE, BE ACCOMPLISHED. "Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy which shall be to all people." Judaism was marked by its exclusiveness. (*S. D. Hillman, B.A.*)

Ver. 11. **For unto you is born this day.**—*Lessons from the birthday of Christ*:—The birthday of Christ!—a name which connects with the familiar associations of home-life the opening of the heavens to human hope, the inconceivable grace and condescension of Almighty God, the beginning of a state of things on earth in which God our Maker has united Himself for ever with humankind. I. REVERENCE. In thinking of Christ's birthday, we are between two dangers. It may have become a mere name and word to us, conventionally accepted and repeated, but conveying no really living meaning; or it may have come with such fulness of meaning as to overwhelm and confound our thoughts, making us ask, "How can such things be?" Let us remember that "God is Love;" and that the mystery of the incarnation is the manifestation of that infinite Love. Let us try to take a true measure of the unspeakable majesty and living goodness with which we have to deal. II. PURITY. The Incarnation was the mind and atmosphere of heaven, coming with all the height of their sanctities into human flesh—a spectacle to make us stop and be thoughtful, and consider our own experience of life and society. Let us pass from things which fashion and custom do not mind, but which do lower the tone and health of soul and character, which often tempt and corrupt it; let us turn away our eyes from what, however captivating and charming, is dangerous to know and look at, to the little child and His mother, and learn there the lesson of strength, of manliness—for purity means manliness—of abhorrence of evil. III. HUMILITY. The human mind cannot conceive any surrender of place and claims, any willing lowliness and self-forgetfulness, any acceptance of the profoundest abasement, comparable to that which is before us in the birth, and the circumstances of the birth, of Jesus

Christ. The measure of it is the measure of the distance between the Creator and the creature, and the creature in the most unregarded, most uncared-for condition, helpless, unknown, of no account for the moment among the millions of men whom He had made, and whose pride, and loftiness, and ambition filled His own world. There He was for the time, the youngest, weakest, poorest of them all; and He came thus, to show what God thinks of human pride, ambition, loftiness. He came thus, to show how God despises the untruth of self-esteem, the untruth of flattery, and to teach how little the outward shows of our present condition answer to that which, in reality and truth, it is worth while for a living soul, an immortal being, to be. IV. THE LESSON OF NOT PUTTING OUR TRUST IN THE ARM OF FLESH. Contrast the birthday of Christ with the purpose of His coming—to reform, conquer, and restore the world. Of all that mighty order which was to be, of all that overwhelming task and work before Him, here were the first steps, in the lowliest paths of human life! He it was to whom was committed this great work of God. Not in the way which men understood or anticipated, not by forces and measures suggested by their experience, but in the exact way of God's perfect holiness and righteousness. He began and finished the work which the Father gave Him to do. In the utter unlikelihood of His success, there is a lesson for us. In doing His work, and in doing our own work, we are often sorely tempted to depart from His footsteps. In doing His work, in maintaining His cause, in fighting for His kingdom, it has always been too common for man to think, that all the same means are available which are used in human enterprises, that success depended on the same conditions, that it was impossible without employing weapons which were not like His. They have trusted to energy, strength, sagacity; they have distrusted the power of single-hearted obedience, prayer, patience, faith, self-sacrifice, goodness; they have thought it weak to be over-scrupulous; they have forgotten how far beyond the reach and touch of human power are the fortunes of the kingdom of the Most Holy. And so in doing our own work, it is hard for us all not to do the opposite to what our Master did; hard not to trust to the arm and the ways of flesh, instead of trusting with our eyes shut the path of duty, truth, obedience. The trader has before him the way of unflinching honesty, or the way in which custom and opinion allow him to take advantage and make shorter cuts to profit and increased business; which path will he take? Will he have faith in principle, and perhaps wait, perhaps lose; or will he do as others do, and, highly respecting principle, yet forget it at the critical moment? The young man entering into life wishes to get on. Will he trust to what he is, to his determination to do right, to straightforwardness and simplicity, to God's blessing, or what God has blessed and promised to bless, or will he push his fortunes by readiness to appear what he is not, by selfishness, by man-pleasing, by crooked paths and questionable compliances? The boy has to do his lessons and satisfy his teachers. Will he be content to appear no cleverer than he is, to be conscientious, diligent, faithful, dutiful, whatever comes of it; or will he be tempted to save himself labour and trouble by shorter and easier ways which many will tell him of, and gain credit for what he has no right to? Here, to warn us, to teach us, to comfort us, in all our varied conditions and employments, we have the beginning of Christ's conquest of the world. The footsteps of His great progress begin from the cradle of the nativity. V. GLADNESS AND JOY. Sometimes we feel hardly in tune for the rejoicing of Christmas. It contrasts sharply with the bitterness of a recent bereavement, the sorrowful watch round a hopeless sick bed. Or it may be, while we are saluting our Lord's coming with hymns and carols of childlike exultation, and repeating the angelic welcome to the Prince of Peace, that by a terrible irony the heavens around us are black with storm and danger: that great nations are involved in the horrible death-struggle of war; that day by day men are perishing by every form of carnage, and suffering every form of pain; and that by each other's hands. We almost ask, in such a case, whether it is not mockery to think of gladness. Yet it is in place even then; and Christmas claims it from us. Those great gospel songs which heralded the Incarnation of the Son of God—the Magnificat, the Benedictus, the Song of the angels—were themselves but the prelude to the life of the "Man of Sorrows." They are followed immediately by Rachel weeping for her children at Bethlehem, and the flight from the sword of Herod. But yet in those dreadful days on earth, of blood and pain and triumphant iniquity, there was peace in heaven and the joy of the angels; for amid the cloud and storm of the conflict which men could not see through, the angels knew who was conquering. He is conquering, and to conquer

still. All falsehood, cruelty, selfishness, oppression, and tyranny, are to fall before Him. Amid the darkness of our life, the hope of man is still on Him, as fixed and sure as ever it was. He will not disappoint man of his hope. (*Dean Church.*) *The message of the shepherds* :—I. How SURE IS GOD'S WORD! II. How WONDERFUL ARE GOD'S WAYS! III. How GLORIOUS IS GOD'S SALVATION! (*W. S. Bruce, M.A.*) *The two advents* :—I. THE FIRST COMING WAS IN WEAKNESS, the glory hidden; the second will be in power, the glory revealed. II. THE FIRST COMING WAS INTRODUCTIVE TO AN EXPERIENCE OF LABOUR AND SUFFERING; the second will be the inauguration of coronation and triumph. III. IN FIRST COMING CHRIST MADE SALVATION POSSIBLE; in second He will prove how His work has sped. IV. IN FIRST COMING HE INVITED MEN TO RECONCILIATION AND PEACE; in second He shall descend to bless the believing, but judge the impenitent. Lessons: As we are sure concerning the record of the first advent, let us also be as to the prediction of the second. Have we used the first so as to be prepared for this? (*G. McMichael, B.A.*) *Unto us a child is born* :—I. 1. Consider the revelation thus delivered by the angel—"Unto you is born a Saviour." Jesus is born a Saviour; we do not make Him a Saviour; we have to accept Him as such. Neither does salvation come from us or by us, but it is born to us. 2. Consider the outward sign by which the Saviour was to be known—"A babe lying in a manger!" Children are the saviours of society: the human race renewing itself perpetually in the freshness and innocence of childhood is prevented from becoming utterly corrupt. This is just the lesson the world needed. Philosophy, art, law, force, all had tried to raise mankind out of sin, and all had failed. In the fulness of time "unto us a Child is born," and in the weakness of that Childhood, the human race is renewed, its flesh comes again "as the flesh of a little child." II. 1. What a message from heaven to a world weary of life and sick with sin—"Unto you is born a Saviour!" 2. What a message to those who are trusting in the pride of intellect, or in the pride of wealth, or in the pride of earthly position, or in the pride of character—"This shall be the sign: a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger!" The signs which betoken the presence of the Eternal are not always such as commend themselves to men's reasoning, for we are living among shadows which are not realities, although we mistake them for such. (*Canon Vernon Hutton, M.A.*) *The nature of Christ's salvation* :—He is not a temporal Saviour: He is not a Saviour from mere temporal calamity; He is not a Saviour such as the saviours among the Jews were, who had emancipated them from their civil foes; but He is a Saviour from spiritual evils. He saves us from spiritual darkness by His Word; from the pollution and power of sin, by His merit and grace; from the bondage of Satan, by His energy; from hell, by becoming a curse for us, that we may attain eternal life. His salvation extends to the soul as well as the body; to eternity as well as to time. (*Dr. Beaumont.*) *Universality of the gospel offer* :—In the further prosecution of this discourse, we shall first say a few words on the principle of the gospel message—good-will: Secondly, on the object of the gospel message—men—it is a message of good-will to men: And, Thirdly, on the application of the gospel message to the men who now hear us. I. When we say that God is actuated by a principle of good-will to you, it sounds in your ears a very simple proposition. There is a barrier in these evil hearts of unbelief, against the admission of a filial confidence in God. We see no mildness in the aspect of the Deity. Our guilty fears suggest the apprehension of a stern and vindictive character. It is not in the power of argument to do away this impression. We know that they will not be made to see God, in that aspect of graciousness which belongs to Him, till the power of a special revelation be made to rest upon them—till God Himself, who created light out of darkness, shine in their hearts. But knowing also that He makes use of the Word as His instrument, it is our part to lay the assurances of that Word, in all their truth and in all their tenderness, before you. II. We now proceed, in the second place, to the object of the gospel message—men—a message of good-will to men. The announcement which was heard from the canopy of heaven was not good-will to certain men to the exclusion of others. It is not an offer made to some, and kept back from the rest of the species. It is generally to man. We know well the scruples of the disconsolate; and with what success a perverse melancholy can devise and multiply its arguments for despair. But we will admit of none of them. We look at our text, and find that it recognizes no outcast. Tell us not of the malignity of your disease—it is the disease of a man. Tell us not of your being so grievous an offender that you are the very chief of them. Still you are a man. The offer of God's good-will is through Christ Jesus unto all and upon all them that believe. We want

to whisper peace to your souls; but you refuse the voice of the charmer, let him charm never so wisely. And here the question occurs to us—how does the declaration of God's good-will in the text consist with the entire and everlasting destruction of so many of the species? In point of fact, all men are not saved. We hold out a gift to two people, which one of them may take and the other may refuse. The good-will in me which prompted the offer was the same in reference to both. God in this sense willeth that all men shall be saved. There is no limitation with Him; and be not you limited by your own narrow and fearful and superstitious conceptions of Him. III. But this leads us, in the last place, to press home the lesson of the text on you who are now sitting and listening around us. God, in the act of ushering the gospel into the world, declares good-will to man. He declares it therefore to you. Now, you are liable to the same fears with these shepherds. You are guilty; and to you belong all the weakness and all the timidity of guilt. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *Christ the Saviour*:—At the very utterance of the name *Saviour*, every heart exults with a delight otherwise unknown. To the generous breast, no other object is so beautiful, no other sound so welcome. Never do we shed such rapturous tears, or feel so passionate a joy, as when we witness the heroism and the self-devotion of some act of magnanimous deliverance. Power softens into loveliness, when thus exerted. Danger and toil, encountered in such a cause, impart a stern, yet irresistible attraction. It is thus we think of the patriot, bleeding for the freedom of his country; of the philanthropist, regardless of his own security amidst pestilence, and darkness, and the ministers of death, that he may release the wretched captive, and break the yoke of the oppressor; of the advocate, defending the house of the widow or the heritage of the orphan, and turning into mockery the venality of accusation, and the menaces of vengeance; of the statesman, who stands forth single-handed, but with a dauntless heart, to turn back the flood of tyranny or faction, when threatening to engulf in common ruin the welfare of his people and the safety of mankind; and of the pilot, adventurously urging his way through the pitiless and maddening surge, that he may snatch some solitary victim from the horrors of shipwreck, and bear him, naked and shivering, to the shore. What, then, shall be the glory of Him who plunged, with all the consciousness of unsheltered peril, into the very depths of misery, to rescue the perishing soul! Or what shall be the measure, either of our admiration or our gratitude, when we celebrate, beholding its last triumphs, the emancipation of a world! Advocate, Friend, Brother, these are beloved names; and, like a grateful odour, they give life to the drooping spirit; but if the name of Saviour be more endearing than them all, then what is that ravishment of love with which the rescued sinner shall hail at length the blessed name of Jesus! (*S. McAll.*) *The Saviour's love*:—Like the sunshine that falls with magical flicker on pearl and ruby, lance and armour, in the royal hall, yet overflows the shepherd's home, and quivers through the grating of the prisoner's cell; pours glory over the mountain-range; flames in playful splendour on the wave; floods the noblest scenes with day, yet makes joy for the insect; comes down to the worm, and has a loving glance for the life that stirs in the fringes of the wayside grass; silvers the moss of the marsh and the scum of the pool; glistens in the thistle-down; lines the shell with crimson fire, and fills the little flower with light; travels millions and millions of miles, past stars, past constellations, and all the dread magnificence of heaven, on purpose to visit the sickly weed, to kiss into vividness the sleeping blooms of spring, and to touch the tiniest thing with the gladness that makes it great: so does the Saviour's love, not deterred by our unworthiness, not offended by our slights, come down to teach and bless the meanest and the lowliest life in the new creation. He restores the bruised reed; the weakest natures share His visits, and revive beneath His smile. (*Charles Stanford, D.D.*) *The great announcement*:—I. A Saviour is BORN. II. A SAVIOUR is born. III. A Saviour is born unto YOU. IV. THIS DAY. (*Van Doren.*) *A Saviour from spiritual ruin*:—I know not how, but when we hear of saving, or mention of a Saviour, presently our mind is carried to the saving of our skin, of our temporal state, of our bodily life; further saving we think not of. But there is another life not to be forgotten, and greater the dangers, and the destruction there more to be feared than of this here, and it would be well sometimes we were reminded of it. Besides our skin and flesh, a soul we have, and it is our better part by far, that also hath need of a Saviour; that hath her destruction out of which, that hath her destroyer from which she would be saved, and those would be thought on. Indeed, our chief thought and care would be for that; how to escape the wrath, how to be saved from the destruction to come,

whither our sins will certainly carry us. Sin will destroy us all. And to speak of a Saviour, there is no person on earth has so much need of a Saviour as has a sinner. Nothing so dangerous, so deadly unto us, as is the sin in our bosom; nothing from which we have so much need to be saved, whatsoever account we make of it. From it comes upon us all the evil of this life, and of the life to come, in comparison whereof these here are not worth speaking of. Above all, then, we need a Saviour for our souls, and from our sins, and from the everlasting destruction which sin will bring upon us in the other life not far from us. Then if it be good tidings to hear of a Saviour, where it is but a matter of the loss of earth, or of this life here; how then, when it comes to the loss of heaven, to the danger of hell, when our soul is at stake, and the well-doing or un-doing of it for ever? Is not such a Saviour worth hearkening after? (*Bp. Lancelot Andrews.*) *Christ the Saviour of men*:—What does that word Christ mean, and what does it teach us? To the Jew of that day, and even to the Pagan, there could have been no doubt as to the meaning of this word Christ, *the Christos*, the Anointed, one representing to him some person who had been publicly set apart to some great office among men. Anointing was that act by which, especially among the Jews, a man was set apart to some Divinely appointed office among the people; the prophet who was to speak to the people from God, the priest who was to minister to the people in holy things for God, the king who was to rule in God's glory over God's own people, were solemnly set apart by anointing to their office. What they would have called anointing we now call consecration—the publicly and divinely ordered sanctioning and setting apart of a man for an office in which he is to minister unto men and for God. This is anointing, and more than this, it implies that with the appointment and consecration came a power and a grace to fit a man for the office he received. When our Lord, then, is called the Anointed One, the Christ, it means that He is the One of all humanity, who is divinely consecrated and set apart to noble office and high service, and whose whole life and being is filled with the Divine light necessary for doing the work of that office—the Anointed, consecrated One, in whom all consecration and Divine unction centres for the performance of all offices. And every one of these offices, observe, was in the service of mankind. The prophetic office was His, and He claims it as His own when He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for He hath anointed Me"—what for? "to preach the gospel to the poor." The prophet's office was an office to serve mankind as their teacher, their guide, and their counsellor. The priestly office was His, and for what? That He might offer Himself as a Lamb without spot or blemish to God, and, having entered by a new and living way with His own blood, should live for intercession and sacrifice, coming forth with blessings for God's people. God made Him king over them, and gave Him heaven for an inheritance—for what? That He might rule them in righteousness and peace. Prophet, Priest, King: in each one of these He was the servant of mankind, and so He says of Himself, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." King of kings and Lord of lords He is, but Servant of servants to His brethren, and the lordship and the kingdom that He won was won by faith and suffering, won by faithful service, and He served that He might reign, and through it all He was sustained by the indwelling power of the Spirit of God, who gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him. This is the idea of the Christ, the consecrated One. It means One whose whole life on earth, whose whole life ever since He has left this earth, was devoted, is devoted, to the service of mankind. (*Bishop W. C. Magee.*) *A consecrated life*:—Not so long ago the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands were sorely smitten and plagued by leprosy. They resolved at last to gather all the lepers from the islands round about, all tainted with the slightest symptoms of leprosy, and banish them to one island, where they should dwell and perish slowly, while the rest of their fellow-citizens were saved from the plague—and they did so. And this band of pilgrims, on a pilgrimage of death, were gathered on the shore of one of these islands, about to depart by a ship which would carry them away for life, and standing on the shore was a priest, a Roman Catholic priest, and he saw this multitude going away without a shepherd to care for their souls, and he said, "Take me, let me go amongst them; I will dwell amongst these lepers, and will give them the ministrations of religion which otherwise they would be without." He went, and for some time his courage sustained, and his ministrations blessed that people amongst whom he had cast his lot for life, for he might never leave that place; and then we hear in a letter, written by himself calmly and cheerfully, how that the disease has at last assailed himself, and that his hours of labour are numbered, and before him lies the death of

slow and hideous decay to which he had doomed himself that he might save others. In that man was the heart of the priest; in that man was to be seen a manifestation of the Spirit of Christ, the Anointed One; full surely on that soul rested the Divine unction that strengthens and blesses men for noble deeds of sacrifice; and there is not one of us who, in our boasted Protestantism, might be disposed to look down upon "the benighted priest," there is not one of us who might not say, "Let my soul be with his soul in the day when men will have to give an account before the judgment seat of God." (*Ibid.*) *The good news is for each and all*:—It is very pleasant to hear good tidings for all the rest of the world; but it is pleasanter to know that we have a personal share in the benefits of which those tidings tell. There may be safety to others who are endangered, and not to us. The lifeboat may come and go, and we be left on the wreck. Bread may be distributed to the hungry, and we fail of a share which shall keep us from starving. The physician may bring health to many, and pass us by unnoticed. All of our condemned fellows might be pardoned, and we have no release. Unless the good tidings are to us also, we cannot welcome them with boundless joy, however glad we are that there is help for others. The writer found himself, in the fortunes of war, a prisoner in the Libby, at Richmond. One evening, as the prisoners lay down to sleep, the story was whispered among them that a flag-of-truce boat had come up the river, and that some one of their number was to be released the next day. That was glad tidings for all. But the question in every prisoner's mind was, "Am *I* to be released?" There were many dreams of home that night on that prison floor. In the early morning, after roll-call, there was breathless expectancy for the name of the favoured prisoner. It was the name of Chaplain Trumbull. Those glad tidings had a meaning for him they could not have for any of his companions. To him there came that day the message of deliverance from bondage, and he passed out from the prison-house thanking God that the message was to him. "Unto you" is a Saviour born. Whoever you are, whatever are your sins there is salvation for you. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *Joy in the Saviour fully received*:—He is the most joyful man who is the most Christly man. I wish that some Christians were more truly Christians: they are Christians and something else; it were much better if they were altogether Christians. Perhaps you know the legend, or perhaps true history of the awakening of St. Augustine. He dreamed that he died, and went to the gates of heaven, and the keeper of the gates said to him, "Who are you?" And he answered, "Christianus sum," I am a Christian. But the porter replied, "No, you are not a Christian, you are a Ciceronian, for your thoughts and studies were most of all directed to the works of Cicero and the classics, and you neglected the teaching of Jesus. We judge men here by that which most engrossed their thoughts, and you are judged not to be a Christian but a Ciceronian." When Augustine awoke, he put aside the classics which he had studied, and the eloquence at which he had aimed, and he said, "I will be a Christian and a theologian;" and from that time he devoted his thoughts to the Word of God, and his pen and his tongue to the instruction of others in the truth. Oh I would not have it said of any of you, "Well, he may be somewhat Christian, but he is far more a keen money-getting tradesman." I would not have it said, "Well, he may be a believer in Christ, but he is a good deal more a politician." Perhaps he is a Christian, but he is most at home when he is talking about science, farming, engineering, horses, mining, navigation, or pleasure-taking. No, no, you will never know the fulness of the joy which Jesus brings to the soul, unless under the power of the Holy Spirit you take the Lord your Master to be your All in all, and make Him the fountain of your intensest delight. "He is my Saviour, my Christ, my Lord," be this your loudest boast. Then will you know the joy which the angel's song predicts for men. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The lesson of Christmas*:—In the light of the Son of God becoming flesh, we dare not degrade or defile ourselves. We see how base an apostasy it is to abnegate the Divine prerogative of our being. The birth of Christ becomes to us the pledge of immortality, the inspiration of glad, unerring, life-long duty to ourselves. And no less does it bring home to us the new commandment of love to our brethren. It becomes the main reason why we should love one another. If men were indeed what Satan makes them, and makes us try to believe that they solely are—hopelessly degraded, unimaginably vile; if human life be nothing at the best but the shadow of a passing and miserable dream, I know not how we could love one another. We could only turn with loathing from all the vice and blight, the moral corruption, the manifold baseness of vile, lying, degraded lives. How is all transfigured, how is the poorest

wretch earth ever bore transfigured, when we remember that for these Christ became man, for these He died! Shall we, ourselves so weak, so imperfect, so stained with evil, shall we dare to despise these whom Christ so loved that for them—yea, for those blind and impotent men, these publicans and sinners, these ragged prodigals of humanity still voluntarily lingering among the husks and swine—for these, even for these, He, so pure, so perfect, took our nature upon Him, and went, step by step, down all that infinite descent? Despise them? Ah! the revealing light of the God-man shows too much darkness in ourselves to leave any possibility for pride. If we have learnt the lesson of Christmas, the lesson of Bethlehem, let us live to counteract the works of the devil; let it be the one aim of our lives to love and not to hate; to help, not to hinder; to succour them that are tempted, not to add to and multiply their temptations; to make men better, not worse; to make life a little happier, not more deeply miserable; to speak kindly words, not words that may do hurt; to console and to encourage, not to blister and envenom with slanderous lies; to live for others, not for ourselves; to look each of us not on his own things, but on the things of others; to think noble thoughts of man as well as of God; to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven us. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *A Saviour*:—The Esquimaux have no word in their language to represent the Saviour, and I could never find out that they had any direct notion of such a Friend. But I said to them, "Does it not happen sometimes when you are out fishing that a storm arises, and some of you are lost and some saved?" They said, "Oh yes, very often." "But it also happens that you are in the water, and owe your safety to some brother or friend who stretches out his hand to help you." "Very frequently." "Then what do you call that friend?" They gave me in answer a word in their language, and I immediately wrote it against the word Saviour in Holy Writ, and ever afterwards it was clear and intelligible to all of them. (*Colemeister.*) *Christmas day explains two dispensations*:—Those who have travelled in mountainous countries know how the highest crest of the mountain range is always known by seeing from that point, and that point only, the streams dividing on either side. Even so it is with the event of this day. The whole, or nearly the whole, history of the ancient world, and specially of the Israelite people, leads us up to it as certainly on the one side, as the whole history of later times, especially of the Christian world, leads us up to it from the other side. Other events there are which explain particular portions of history; other birthdays can be pointed out; other characters have arisen which contain within themselves the seed of much that was to follow. There is none which professes like this to command both views at once, and thus, even if we knew no more concerning it, we should feel that a life and character which so explains two dispensations comes to us with a double authority. Either would be enough to constitute a claim to our reverence; both together make a claim almost irresistible. (*Dean Stanley.*) *Christ born in the city of David*:—A poor casket to contain so great a Jewel. "Thou Bethlehem," says the Prophet Micah, "the least among the princes of Judah;" yet big enough to contain the Prince of heaven and earth. Little Zoar, says Lot, and yet Zoar was big enough to receive him and his children safe out of the fire of Sodom. Mean Bethlehem, unless the angel had spoke it, the prophet foretold it, and the star had showed it to the wise men, who would not have gainsaid that the Saviour of all men could be laid in such a village? The Roman historian made a marvel that so noble an emperor as Alexander Severus was, could come out of Syria, Syrus Archisynagogus, as they called him in scorn. Behold that emperor's Lord, comes not only out of Syria, but out of the homeliest corner in Syria, out of the despicable tributary city of David. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *A Saviour*:—But that the name may not be an empty sound to us as it was to them, consider these three things. 1. With what honour it was imposed. 2. What excellency it includes. 3. What reverence it deserves. (*Ibid.*) His words, His actions, His miracles, His prayers, His sacraments, His sufferings, all did smell of the Saviour. Take Him from His infancy to His death, among His disciples and among the publicans, among the Jews, or among the Gentiles, He was all Saviour. (*Ibid.*) The sun enlightens half the world at once, yet none discern colours by the light but they that open their eyes; and a Saviour is born unto us all, which is Christ the Lord: but enclasp Him in thine heart as old Simeon did in his arms, and then thou mayest sing his "Nunc Dimittis," or Mary's "Magnificat," "My spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's birth city*:—The Athenians were proud of Pompey's love, that he would write his name a citizen

of their city. For a princely person to accept a freedom in a mean corporation is no little kindness; how much more doth it aggravate the love of Christ to come from heaven, and be made a citizen of this vile earth, to be born after a more vile condition than the most abject of the people. (*Ibid.*) *The merit of Christ's birth*:—For, as we say of the sin of Adam, the act passed away at the first, but the guilt remains upon his posterity: so our Saviour was born upon one particular day which is passed, but the merit and virtue of it is never passed, but abides for ever. (*Ibid.*) 1. Then with reverend lips and circumcised ears let us begin with the joyful tidings of a Saviour. 2. Here's our participation of Him in His nature, *natus*, He is born, and made like unto us. 3. It is honourable to be made like us, but it is beneficial to be made for us; "unto you is born a Saviour." 4. Is not the use of His birth superannuated, the virtue of it long since expired? No, 'tis fresh and new; as a man is most active when he begins first to run—He is born this day. 5. Is He not like the king in the Gospel who journeyed into a far country, *extra orbem solisque vias*, quite out of the way in another world? no—the circumstance of place points His dwelling to be near—He is "born in the city of David. 6. Perhaps to make Him man is to quite unmake Him; shall we find Him able to subdue our enemies, and save us, since He hath taken upon Him the condition of human fragility? Yes, the last words speak His excellency and power, for He is such a "Saviour as is Christ the Lord." (*Ibid.*) *A Saviour*:—It comprehends all other names of grace and blessing; as manna is said to have all kind of sapors in it to please the taste. When you have called Him the glass in which we see all truth, the fountain in which we taste all sweetness, the ark in which all precious things are laid up, the pearl which is worth all other riches, the flower of Jesse which hath the savour of life unto life, the bread that satisfieth all hunger, the medicine that healeth all sickness, the light that dispelleth all darkness; when you have run over all these, and as many more glorious titles as you can lay on, this one word is above them, and you may pick them all out of these syllables, "a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." (*Ibid.*) *The nativity*:—Let us consider the message itself, the foundation of all our spiritual joy. I. WHAT IS HE WHO IS BORN? He is "a Saviour," a Deliverer. Good indeed are the tidings of a saviour. Delightful to one languishing on a bed of pain and sickness is He that comes with power and skill to heal and to restore. Most joyful to the wretch condemned to die for his crimes, is the sound of pardon. II. WHAT ARE THE TITLES GIVEN TO THIS SAVIOUR? 1. He is "Christ." As His name, Jesus, signifies a saviour, so Christ signifies the anointed. He is an anointed Saviour. Thus is He distinguished from all other saviours. The title "Christ" also teaches us His office. 2. He is "the Lord." High and glorious name! He is Jehovah. He is "Lord" by right of creation, in His Divine and eternal nature. He is "Lord" by right of inheritance; man, as Mediator between God and man. He is more particularly our "Lord" by redemption. These names, then, "Christ, the Lord," show Him, an all-sufficient Saviour; show Him, God and man united in one Person: as man to suffer, as God to redeem. (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*)

Ver. 12. **And this shall be a sign unto you.**—What the angels said to the shepherds was, "This shall be the sign unto you; ye shall find a babe," a babe like any other, "wrapped in swaddling clothes," differing from other babes only in the lowliness of His birth, "lying in a manger." The absence of any adventitious source of interest, anything awe-inspiring in the circumstances of the birth of Christ, was no mere casual incident; it was eminently significant, characteristic of His life, a symbol of His sway. The identification of "signs" with "wonders" was the common error of the Jews. All Israel was expectant of the Messiah. The reason why they received Him not was that they could not recognize the Divine in the ordinary. A babe was born in Bethlehem: only by those who shared the mother's prophetic insight was the mystery of God's interposition seen in His birth. Angels sang of His advent; their song was mute save to the listening ear of a few shepherds. And this is the common error of us all. "He that receiveth a prophet," says Christ, "in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward." Yes, we respond, that is well; we all shall know a prophet when we see him. But Christ also says, "Whoso shall receive a little child in My name receiveth Me." He who is blind to the Christ in the little child may also fail to see the prophet when he comes. Such as Christ was manifested here, such did He ever continue. He would steal into the life of humanity as a babe twines round a mother's heart. He would draw men to Him by the charm and sweetness of humna

sanctity; and to those who were thus attracted to Him and abode in His fellowship, there came at length the revelation that this was the Divine. The cross lay hidden in the manger of Bethlehem. He was already bearing the only cross a babe can bear, poverty and man's contempt; sweetened by a mother's care, the symbol of that affection of pious hearts which never failed Him throughout His vexed and troubled history; and hallowed by the Father's approval of the well-beloved Son, in whom, now as ever, He was well pleased. The sacrificial purpose and saving energy of His life already appeared. "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes," &c. The mother of Jesus and the adoring shepherds must have been struck by the contrast between the honour of His annunciation and the meanness of His birth; between the splendours of the angelic host, and the manger where He lay. Eighteen centuries of Christian history have taught us that herein is no contrast, but profound consistency. What honour could the world have rendered the Son of God which would not have more sharply contrasted with His character and mission than poverty and the world's neglect? There is nothing in common between Christ and the luxury of wealth, the ostentation of a palace, the statecraft of a Court. The manger of Bethlehem is the sign of the Messiah; the lowly, self-accepted lot of Jesus is the seal of His divinity. Men soar, God stoops; ambition is human, condescension is Divine. When God reveals Himself for man's salvation it can only be by sacrifice; and the more complete the sacrifice, the fuller is the revelation. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *The sign of Jesus Christ*:—What a wonderful contrast between this verse and that which follows! What greatness on the one side, what humility on the other! That humility is the sign of the greatness. I. The sign of humility by which the entrance of Jesus into the world was announced, is found throughout the whole course of His history. II. The same contrast is found in the institutions which Jesus has left to preserve in His Church the remembrance of His benefits. III. There is, again, this same contrast of grandeur and humility to mark, with a Divine seal, the Church of Jesus Christ. 1. In its origin, composed of obscure persons from lowest ranks of a small unknown people. 2. As it exists to-day wherever the true Church is to be found. IV. The same sign of humility will enable us to recognize the worship with which God is pleased. V. The sign of humility which is constantly found in Christ, and in all that springs from Christ, must be found also among His disciples. (*Horace Monod.*) *Lessons of the holy manger*:—At the cradle of Christianity, we may observe something of the predestined form both of Christian doctrine and Christian life. In the bud we trace the probable shape and colour of the coming flower. When standing at the source of a river we can determine at least the general direction of its course. In the Sacred Infancy, too, we may discern, without risk of indulgence in over-fanciful analogies, a typical portraiture of the Christian creed, and a precious lesson for good Christian living. To the theologian and the practical Christian, the sign of the manger and of the swaddling clothes is at least as full of meaning now as it was of old to the shepherds of Bethlehem. I. LOOK THEN AT THE CREED OF THE CHURCH. It has two sides, two aspects. It is one thing to sight, another to faith. To sight, it is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. To faith, it is revealed from heaven as supernatural and Divine. II. Consider THE MORAL IMPORT OF THE MANGER-BED OF THE INFANT JESUS. The world-wide principle of spiritual death needed to be expelled by a stronger and not less universal principle. It demanded a regenerating force, resting not on theory but on fact, a principle human in its form and action, but Divine in its strength and origin. Such a privilege we find in the Babe, wrapped, &c. This was indeed the Divine Word, engrafted on human nature, and able to save the souls of men. The Incarnation was the source of a moral revolution. By saving man it was destined to save human society. It confronted sensuality by endurance and mortification. It confronted covetousness by putting honour upon poverty. It taught men that a man's highest life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth. But its great lesson was a lesson of humility. In the humiliation of the Highest, the nations read the truth which the incarnate Lord taught in words:—"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." For us men humility is the law of progress, because it is the admission of truth. At Christ's manger may we learn the blessed temper which makes faith, repentance, perseverance, easy, and to which are promised the crowns of glory, worn by the blessed around His throne. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The babe: A Christmastide meditation*:—The Incarnation was the great event in the world's history. Nothing can rival in interest to us the coming of God in our

mortal flesh; the shadowing of Deity in a human form, so that we might see Him; the manifestation of Deity in a saving love, so that we might be drawn to Him; the shinings in our humanity of a Divine purity; which should at once reveal to us our sins; and deliver us from their power. I. OUR SAVIOUR WAS A REAL MAN. All are alike at birth—babes. Christ came as we came. He passed through the entire experience of human life, starting from the cradle, right up to and beyond the tomb. II. OUR SAVIOUR WAS SIMPLY A MAN. "Ye shall find the babe": just a babe, no more. No accident of birth limited Jesus to any part of the community; there were none of those things about Him on which men pride themselves. He belongs to all, however humble, obscure, poor, simple, needy. III. HE WAS A LOVING MAN. A babe is the emblem of the mightiest thing on earth—love—the sunshine of the Divine radience. IV. He was, for the most part, A REJECTED MAN. There never seemed to be any room for Him, from His birth onwards. V. HE IS ALL IN ALL TO THOSE WHO RECEIVE HIM. 1. To find this Babe will be the beginning of truest peace to our own hearts. 2. To find this Babe will be the beginning for us of a better, nobler life. 3. To find this Babe will give to us the true spirit of brotherhood and charity. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*) *The sign of the manger:*—Let us think what is the connection here. A sign—a signal: how so? In what sense did the mode and circumstance of the birth make it typical of the thing which Christ comes to do? What is that thing which Christ comes to do? He has come to be the God-man, the Redeemer, the Emmanuel, and the Saviour—the God for us, and God with us, and God in us—of the fallen, the sinful, the erring and straying man. Now, to be this, He must first incorporate Himself with men, take the flesh and blood, the nature and body and spirit of the race which He comes to save. He must first of all incorporate Himself—not with a man, or a few men, but with humanity—with man as man, and not with certain privileged specimens and choice individuals of the race. He has come to undo the fall. He has come to bear the sins, to wipe away the tears, to take the sting out of the death of the Adam race as a whole; therefore He must not only take flesh and blood—become one of us and live our very life: that is not enough. He must go down to the very rock from which we are hewn, and He must put on our nature—not in its ornamental but in its bare form—not as it may deck itself in the embellishment of rank or wealth, of social distinction or philosophical culture, but as it is in itself and in the commonest experiences of its humblest children. If the Divine Saviour had appeared in any other form than this, He would have misled men as to the thing which He came to do, and as to the relation in which He desired to stand as to the lower and the lowest portions of the human family. The sign of the helpless babe and the manger cradle was no capricious or accidental idea; for, inasmuch as it is Christ the Lord, therefore ye shall find Him not in the miraculous strength of an instantaneous maturity, and not in the guest-chambers of a king's palace, but as a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. There was a connection and a congruity between the sign and the reality; for thus it was that Christ became, not the faith of a few, but the Saviour of all. None are poorer, none are humbler, none are less learned, none are less noble after the flesh, than He. None can say now, "His is the religion of the educated—of the philosophical—of kings and princes—His is the religion which admits or which favours a position of comfort or respectability, and I am none of these, so Christ is not for me." And when, at this Christmas season, wealth surrounds itself with all its luxuries of mind and body, and thinks it much if, for a moment and in the most perfunctory way, it remembers the poor, we feel how slight must be the hold of these self-indulgers upon the faith which they profess to honour. If we would know the mystery of Christmas; if we would read the riddle of the angel; if we would know why he said, "The Saviour is born, and the sign is the manger," we should turn our steps to some poor man's chamber with its highbacked chair and its open Bible. We shall hear that man say, "Oh, I love both to be abased and to abound. I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, for Christ the Lord was born this day for our salvation, and His first earthly resting place was a yard and a manger." (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Divine things veiled under earthly forms:*—This shall be your sign: not the march of a conqueror, not the splendour of a king, but the Babe wrapped in swaddling bands and lying in a manger! Wherever God is, the presence is secret. What, for example, is the Book of God—the Bible—but an example of this sanctity in commonness: a heap of leaves, marked with ink and hand, stamped with signs for sounds, multiplied by printing-press and steam-engine, conveyed hither and thither

by railways, bought and sold in shops, tossed from hand to hand in schools and homes, lost and dissipated by vulgar wear and tear? But go back to its composition. What was the Bible as it came forth originally, book by book, and chapter by chapter, from the mind which thought, and from the hand which wrote it? Was it not written, after all, both in composition and in dictation, like any other work of poetry or philosophy, of history or fiction—by the brain and nerve power of common human beings? Was it not given forth line by line from the lips of a Paul sitting at the tent-making, or some other evangelist alternating between preaching and handicraft—by the utterance of sounds in an imperfect human language to some obscure Persis or other amanuensis reporting? Yet in that Book of books, thus material, thus earthly, thus human in its circumstances, there lies concealed the very breath and spirit of God Himself, mighty to stir hearts, and mighty to regenerate souls. The swathing bands of sense and time enclose the living and moving power which is of eternity, which is Divine. Nay, the sign of the true Deity is the fact that the form is human. Take another example of this from another of God's instruments of communication. What is that vessel for holding common water, which is the appendage of every Christian place of worship? Is there anything in that laver—that font—but what is of the earth, and of the very commonest of all earth's gifts for refreshing and purifying? "What can be the use," some might inquire, "of bringing that earthly water into the House of God's worship, as though we had forgotten our Master's own words, 'God is a Spirit'? What significance can there be—certainly what virtue—in sprinkling those few drops of common water upon the forehead of a child, with or without a particular form of sacred words accompanying? What, again, can be less intelligible than that sight of that little frugal table of common bread and common wine, standing there in front of the congregation? How can eating and drinking in God's house affect, in any degree, for good the soul of the worshipper?" We can but answer that Christ our Master commanded the one sacrament as the appointed way of dedicating a new life to His service, and that He appointed the other sacrament as commemorative of His own death and passion—as instrumental, also, in nourishing the soul that in it feeds upon Him by faith. And though it would be presumptuous, indeed, to attach any value to a form of man's invention, we feel that the presumption would be all the other way if we neglected an ordinance of Jesus Christ, because it was either too mysterious for us, or too carnal. Nay, we can almost read in the very simplicity a signal of His working, who, when He came on earth came as a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and made it a sign of His presence that He was lying in a manger. But the same thing which is true of the Bible and of the sacraments, is true also of the Church and of the Christian. Where is it, we ask, that God in Christ dwells most certainly, most personally, on this earth? It is no word of man's invention which answers, to the Church—"Ye, collectively, are the temple of God," and, to the Christian—"your body is the shrine of the Holy Ghost, which is in you." Yet if we look at the men and the women and the children thus spoken to, we see nothing but human beings, frail and fallen, occupied for a large part of their life in the employments and the relaxations, in the talk and in the seeking, which are common alike to the righteous and the wicked, and which would equally be theirs if they had neither faith nor heaven. The treasure of the Divine light is always held in earthen vessels; not until the pitcher is broken at the fountain shall the full radiance shine out so as to be read of all men. Meanwhile the sign of God is the commonness. Christ came not to take men out of the world, but to consecrate and keep them in it. Coming to redeem earth, He takes earth as it is: not the ideal, but the real; and makes this the very token of His being amongst us—that we find a helpless babe and a manger cradle. (*Ibid.*) *The practice of swathing infants:*—When the Gospels were translated in our venerable version, it did not occur to any of the translators that the word "swaddling clothes" would ever be an obsolete word, needing to be illustrated by a description of ancient or foreign customs. And yet so it is at this day. The usage which is alluded to in this word is to us entirely strange. Few things among the old world customs, I venture to say, strike some of us as more outlandish—more pitiable even—more entirely removed from our notions of good care and right training—than the swaddling of little helpless babies, as it is practised, for instance, in Germany. I do not believe an American mother can generally pass one of those poor little *Wickelkinder*, strapped down on its back to a pillow by spiral after spiral of convoluted bandages, without longing to apply the scissors and let the little prisoner go free. And yet it is only

a few generations since this way of treating new-born children prevailed, with variations and aggravations, in all nations, even the most civilized. We owe our own emancipation, in this land and century, from this and other artificial traditions, to no other single influence so much as to a remarkable book published in the middle of the last century by a citizen of Geneva—the "Emile" of Jean Jacques Rousseau. It speaks thus of the universally prevalent treatment of an infant child as it had continued to his day: "Scarcely does the child begin to enjoy the liberty of moving and stretching its limbs, when it is placed anew in confinement. It is wound in swaddling clothes, and laid down with its head fixed, its legs extended, its arms at its sides. It is surrounded with clothes and bandages of all sorts that prevent it from changing its position. It is a good thing if they do not even draw the bands so tight as to hinder respiration, and if they have the foresight to lay it on its side to avoid the danger of strangulation. . . . The inaction and constraint in which the child's limbs are confined must necessarily disturb the circulation, hinder the child from gaining strength, and affect its constitution. . . . Is it possible that such cruel constraint can fail to affect the character of the child, as well as its physical temperament? Its first conscious feeling is a feeling of pain and suffering. It finds nothing but hindrances to the motions which it craves. More wretched than a criminal in irons, it frets and cries. The first gifts it receives are fetters; the first treatment it experiences is torture." Such was the practice of a hundred years ago in the highest families of the most civilized country in the world. In many lands, partly owing to this very protest, the practice is better now. But in the slow-going East the common practice of the nursery is no botter, and it is probably no worse than it was nineteen hundred years ago. But it is worse than anything we ever see or hear of in this part of the world. In fact, it comes nearer to the binding of an Indian papoose to a board, than to anything that we are accustomed to see in the families of Christendom. Once wound around with these swathing-bands, sometimes with an addition of fresh earth against the skin, and packed in their cradles like a little mummy in its coffin, the poor little babies are expected to stay there, all cries and complaints notwithstanding; they are not removed by their mothers even for such necessary occasions as to be fed. I have heard pitiful stories told by missionaries' wives, and by missionary physicians, in the East, of the sufferings of little infants in consequence of the obstinate persistence of parents in a usage which we clearly see to be so unreasonable and unnatural. (*Leonard W. Bacon.*) *The sign of the swaddling clothes*:—Is it not strange, you will ask, that when the shepherds were given a sign by which they should know their new-born Saviour, they should be told, not of something distinguishing Him from all children beside, but of something common to all the infants that were born that night in all Judea? "Ye shall find wrapped in swaddling clothes." Why not say, according to the instincts of heathen mythology, Ye shall know Him by the bees that gather to suck the honey of His lips, or the strangled serpents that lie about His cradle? Why not say, according to the suggestions of Christian legend and art, Ye shall know Him by the aspect of supernatural majesty, which it shall be the dream and the disappointment of all the world's artists to attempt to portray? Or, Ye shall know Him by the halo of celestial light beaming from His brow, as in the "Holy Night" of Correggio, and filling the rude stall with an unearthly brightness? Or, Ye shall know Him by some accessories worthy of so royal a birth, by gifts of gold and myrrh and frankincense that strew the humble shed? The very question brings its answer: You are to know Him from all these natural dreams of a fond imagination, from the hopeful prognostications of Hebrew mothers, or the impatient fancies of fanatics, or the artful fictions of impostors taking advantage of the general expectation with which the very atmosphere of Palestine was saturated, to set forth some feigned Messiah—you are to know Him from all these by the fact that He is just the opposite of all such imaginings—that He is to all appearance just a helpless human infant, the most helpless thing in the whole creation, bound and bandaged in swaddling clothes. And if you would know how to distinguish Him from other such, it is not by His grandeur but by His poverty. There is no room in the inn for such as He; and they have laid Him in the manger, among the cattle. . . . The sign given to the shepherds is a sign also to us—that we find the Holy Child wrapped in swaddling clothes. Illustrious men have sometimes had an honest pride in inscribing upon their escutchon, beneath a noble crest, the symbol of the humble mechanic rank in which they had their origin. So the Church of Christ, beneath

the diadem of supreme royalty, quarters upon its shield, beside the cross and the thongs, the manger and the swaddling bands, and invites the world to read the blazon. That family group which the painters of every later age have been essaying to depict—the carpenter with his simple, uninquisitive faith obedient to heavenly visions, the pure Virgin with her unskilled maiden tenderness pondering strange memories in her heart, both leaning over the Wonderful, but understanding not the saying which He speaks to them—these speak over again to us the language of that prophet who first called his child "Immanuel," "Behold we and the Child whom the Lord hath given us are for signs and for wonders from the Lord of hosts." (*Ibid.*) *Naturalness of the truly great*:—To illustrate the use of such a sign as was given to the shepherds, let me suppose some traveller accustomed to the splendour and reserve of royal courts visiting the city of Washington, and asking, on his way to the White House, how he should find the President. We should tell him, "You may know him by this sign. He is a plain man, plainly dressed in a black suit, and you will find him in the centre of the thickest crowd, and everybody coming up to shake hands with him. First, he is not distinguished in the way you expect him to be; and, secondly, he is unmistakably distinguished in just the opposite way." But for some such "sign" as this our traveller might naturally mistake for the President some *attaché* of a South American Embassy standing apart in a halo of dignity and a light blaze of gold lace. This "wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger" was just the sign the shepherds needed. And we do well if, looking for the Christ, we take heed to it ourselves. We are not yet safe from the error of them of old time, who thought to find the Lord clothed in soft raiment and dwelling in king's palaces. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's humility*:—In His nativity, and in His temptation (Mark i. 13), Christ was among beasts. Believers, ambitious of high place, forget their Master's cradle. A manger is here honoured above a thousand glittering thrones. It is an ornament of His royalty, a throne of His glory. He comes in humility; He reigns in humility; He leads by humility. The manger and the cross are stumbling-blocks to many. His infancy and death are still rocks, wrecking human pride. (*Van Doren.*) *The sign of the Incarnation*:—Christmas is full of surprises. It brings in, as no other event ever did, the element of mystery, of wonder. Its testimony is, God became manifest in the flesh. The Eternal Word was joined with a perfect human nature. The miracle of the Incarnation transcends every other that has been and will be wrought. It is in itself a wonder so great that all the accompaniments of the birth of Jesus sink into comparative insignificance. We are, I fear, inclined to forget the majesty of the fact in the strangeness of its surroundings. We count it a wonderful thing that He should have been born in the stable of a country inn, whereas the real wonder is that such a birth should take place anywhere, and so I ask you to contemplate one of the signs by which the shepherds of Bethlehem were to find and know the incarnate God—"Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." I. It reminds us, by way of analogy, of a fact which constitutes the most trying element in the mystery of the Incarnation, namely, that GOD THEREBY CAME WITHIN CERTAIN LIMITATIONS. How an uncreated and omnipresent, that is, a boundless, Infinite Being could be contracted within the circumference of a human life is the most puzzling problem of revelation. The impossibility of our understanding this is a temptation, not perhaps to deny, but to forget the deeper meaning of the Christmas feast. Remember, then, that within these swathing bands which encircled the infant form of Jesus there was bound the nature of a Being more than human, even God Himself. Men may call this an unreasonable tax upon our faith. It is rather a sign of God's condescension to human weakness. The whole secret of the history of idolatry among the Jews and the Gentiles was a longing for some visible manifestation of Him whom they felt they must worship. Man instinctively longs for some incarnate form, some Word of his Maker manifest in the flesh, some finite manifestation of the Infinite Father. And the birth of Jesus, the enshrining of God within a human form, the swathing of that power, which otherwise knows no bounds, was but an answer to man's desire. II. The sign holds good, not only of the nature of Christ, but likewise of THE LIFE WHICH, FROM FIRST TO LAST, HE LIVED. That also was like every purely human life, hemmed in. It unfolded according to the ordinary laws of growth. His babyhood was as real as His manhood. He increased in wisdom as well as stature. He learned gradually the wisdom which all the world now confesses. The common idea which people have of Jesus is that, being

Divine, He was exempt from the ordinary conditions of common men; that He never knew constraint; that there were no barriers opposing Him, no bands fettering the free exercise of that Divine power which lay hidden within Him. Yet duty was sometimes hard for Him. He longed to do things which He might not attempt, because the higher and more spiritual dictates of His conscience forbade it. The kingdoms of this world and their glory looked as fair and tempting to His soul as they do to ours. But the law of righteousness, the swathing-bands of duty, the rules of obedience which God throws around us, likewise constrained Him. III. The manner of the Incarnation shows GOD'S ESTIMATE OF HUMAN NATURE. If you are ever tempted to despise human nature because you see it now and then wearing disagreeable phases, or to think ill of, nay, to slight, your friends, remember God's estimate of them. He does not thus stoop and toil to save the worthless. From being a King He descended to the lowest form of human life, entered the world in utter helplessness, was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and during all His development here on earth never rose above that form of a servant which He had taken. And He did all this, because even fallen man was dearer to His heart than the world of lost angels. (*E. E. Johnson, M.A.*) *Great things from small beginnings*:—Not, Ye shall find the angel in the heavens, the king on his throne, the young prince in a palace, the commander at the head of his armies, but "the babe in a manger." How strange are God's ways of working out His strange plans! It is not by might, nor by power, that His agencies accomplish their vast work. The least things are often the greatest in His providence (1 Cor. i. 27–29). It may be the shepherd boy with his sling who gains victory over the mailed giant in whose presence the whole army of Israel stands trembling; it may be the tinker in Bedford Jail who writes a masterpiece in religious literature, to be honoured for centuries for its work and its worth; it may be the unschooled clerk from a Boston shoe-store who proclaims the gospel with a fervency and power which the best-cultured divines of all Christendom have not attained to; or it may be in the most unprepossessing child of your school or class that the grandest possibilities for the kingdom of Christ to-day lie hid. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *The fitness of the sign*:—"This shall be the sign," saith the angel. "Shall be"; but should it be this? No; how should it be? Let us see. Why, this shall be the sign; ye shall find the Child, not in these clouts or cratch, but in a crimson mantle, in a cradle of ivory. That, lo, were somewhat Saviour-like! But in vain take we upon us to teach the angel; we would have—we know not what. We forget St. Augustine's *distingue tempora*; as the time is the angel is right, and a fitter sign could not be assigned. Would we have had Him come in power and great glory? and so He will come, but not now. He that cometh here in clouts will one day come in the clouds. But now His coming was for another end, and so to be in another manner. His coming now was "to visit us in great humility," and so His sign to be according. Nay, then, I say, first go to the nature of a sign; if Christ had come in His excellency, that had been no sign, no more than the sun in the firmament shining in his full strength. Contrary to the course of nature it must be, else it is no sign. The sun eclipsed, the sun in sackcloth; that is *signum in sole*, "the sign indeed" (Luke xxi. 25). And that is the sign here: the Sun of Righteousness entering into His eclipse begins to be darkened in His first point, the point of His nativity. This is the sign, say I, and that had been none. (*Bishop Lancelot Andrewes.*) *The sign nothing; the treasure all*:—Make of the sign what ye will; it skills not what it be, never so mean. In the nature of a sign there is nothing, but it may be such; all is in the thing signified. So it carry us to a rich *signatum*, and worth the finding, what matter how mean the sign be? We are sent to a crib, not to an empty crib; Christ is in it. Be the sign never so simple, the *signatum* it carries us to makes amends. Any sign with such a *signatum*. And I know not the man so squeamish, but if, in his stable and under his manger, there were a treasure hid, and he were sure of it, but thither he would, and pluck up the planks, and dig and rake for it, and be never a whit offended with the homeliness of the place. If, then, Christ be a treasure, as in Him are "all the treasures of the wisdom and bounty of God," what skills it what be His sign. With this, with any other, Christ is worth the finding. He is not worthy of Christ who will not go anywhither to find Christ. (*Ibid.*) *Christ born in a manger*:—At midnight from one of the galleries of the sky a chant broke forth. To an ordinary observer there was no reason for such a celestial demonstration. If there had been such brilliant and mighty recognition

at an advent in the House of Pharaoh, or at an advent in the House of Cæsar, or the House of Hapsburg, or the House of Stuart, we would not so much have wondered; but a barn seems too poor a centre for such delicate and archangelic circumference. The stage seems too small for so great an act, the music too grand for such unappreciative auditors, the windows of the stable too rude to be serenaded by other worlds. I. THAT NIGHT IN THE BETHLEHEM MANGER WAS BORN ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ALL THE POORLY STARTED. He had only two friends—they His parents. No satin-lined cradle, no delicate attentions, but straw and the cattle, and the coarse joke and banter of the camel drivers. From the depths of that poverty He rose, until to-day He is honoured in all Christendom, and sits on the imperial throne in heaven. Do you know that the vast majority of the world's deliverers had barnlike birthplaces? Luther, the emancipator of religion, born among the mines. Shakespeare, the emancipator of literature, born in a humble home at Stratford-on-Avon. Columbus, the discoverer of a world, born in poverty at Genoa. Hogarth, the discoverer of how to make art accumulative and administrative of virtue, born in a humble home at Westminster. Kitto and Prideaux, whose keys unlocked new apartments in the Holy Scriptures which had never been entered, born in want. Yea, I have to tell you that nine out of ten of the world's deliverers were born in want. I stir your holy ambitions to-day, and I want to tell you, although the whole world may be opposed to you, and inside and outside of your occupations or professions there may be those who would hinder your ascent, on your side and enlisted in your behalf are the sympathetic heart and the almighty arm of One who, one Christmas night about eighteen hundred and eighty years ago, was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Oh, what magnificent encouragement for the poorly started! II. Again, I have to tell you that IN THAT VILLAGE BARN THAT NIGHT WAS BORN GOODWILL TO MEN, whether you call it kindness, or forbearance, or forgiveness, or geniality, or affection, or love. It says, "Sheathe your swords, dismount your guns, dismantle your batteries, turn the warship *Constellation*, that carried shot and shell, into a grain ship to take food to famishing Ireland, hook your cavalry horses to the plough, use your deadly gunpowder in blasting rocks and in patriotic celebration, stop your lawsuits, quit writing anonymous letters, extract the sting from your sarcasm, let your wit coruscate but never burn, drop all the harsh words out of your vocabulary—Goodwill to men." III. Again, I remark that BORN THAT CHRISTMAS NIGHT IN THE VILLAGE BARN WAS SYMPATHETIC UNION WITH OTHER WORLDS. Move that supernatural grouping of the cloud banks over Bethlehem, and from the special trains that ran down to the scene I find that our world is beautifully and gloriously and magnificently surrounded. The meteors are with us, for one of them ran to point down to the birthplace. The heavens are with us, because at the thought of our redemption they roll hosannas out of the midnight sky. IV. Again, I remark that THAT NIGHT BORN IN THAT VILLAGE BARN WAS THE OFFENDER'S HOPE. Some sermonizers may say I ought to have projected this thought at the beginning of the sermon. Oh, no! I wanted you to rise toward it. I wanted you to examine the cornelians and the jaspers and the emeralds and the sardonyx before I showed you the Kohinoor—the crown jewel of the ages. Oh, that jewel had a very poor setting! The cub of the bear is born amid the grand old pillars of the forest, the whelp of a lion takes its first step from the jungle of luxuriant leaf and wild flower, the kid of the goat is born in cavern chandeliered with stalactite and pillared with stalagmite. Christ was born in a bare barn. Yet that nativity was the offender's hope. Over the door of heaven are written these words, "None but the sinless may enter here." "Oh, horror," you say, "that shuts us out!" No. Christ came to the world in one door, and He departed through another door. He came through the door of the manger, and He departed through the door of the sepulchre; and His one business was so to wash away our sin that after we are dead there will be no more sin about us than about the eternal God. I know that is putting it strongly, but that is what I understand by full remission. All erased, all washed away, all scoured out, all gone. Oh! now I see what the manger was. Not so high the gilded and jewelled and embroidered cradle of the Henrys of England, or the Louis of France, or the Fredericks of Prussia. Now I find out that that Bethlehem crib fed not so much the oxen of the stall as the white horses of Apocalyptic vision. Now I find the swaddling clothes enlarging and emblazing into an imperial robe for a conqueror. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The Child in the manger*:—I. Learn from this story of the birth of Jesus, in the first place, that INDIGENCE IS

NOT ALWAYS SIGNIFICANT OF DEGRADATION. When princes are born, heralds proclaim it, and flags wave it, and cannon thunder it, and illuminations set cities on fire with the tidings; but when Christ was born there was no demonstration of earthly honour or homage. Poor, and, if possible, getting poorer, and yet the recognition of the angel host proves the truth of the proposition that indigence is no sign of degradation. In all ages of the world there have been great hearts throbbing under rags, gentle spirits under rough exterior, gold in the quartz, Parian marble in the quarry, and in the very stables of poverty wonders of excellence that have been the joy of the heavenly host. Poetry, and science, and law, and constitutions, and commerce, like Christ, were born in a manger. Great thoughts that seem to have been the axle-tree on which the centuries turned, started in some obscure corner, and had Herods who tried to slay them, and Iscariots who betrayed them, and Pilates who unjustly condemned them, and rabbles who crucified them, and sepulchres which confined them until they broke forth again in glorious resurrection. Men are, like wheat, worth all the more for being flailed. Strong character, like the rhododendron, is an alpine plant which grows best in the tempest. There are a great many men who are now standing in the front rank of the Church of God who would have been utterly useless had they not been ground and hammered in the foundries of disaster. II. Again, I learn from the text that IT IS WHEN WE ARE ENGAGED IN OUR LAWFUL OCCUPATIONS THAT WE HAVE DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS MADE TO US. If these shepherds had gone that night into the village, and risked their flocks among the wolves, they would not have heard the song of the angels. In other words, he sees most of God and heaven who minds his own business! We are all shepherds, and we have large flocks of cares, and we must tend them. I know there are a great many busy men who say, "Oh, if I had only time, I would be good. If I had the days and the months and the years to devote to the subject of religion, I should be one of the best of Christians." A great mistake are you making. The busiest men are generally the best men. There is no point from which you can get clearer views of duty than at the merchant's counter, or the accountant's table, or on the mason's wall. III. Again, the story of the text STRIKES AT THE POPULAR FALLACY THAT THE RELIGION OF CHRIST IS DOLOROUS AND GRIEF-INFUSING. The music that broke through that famous birth-night was not a dirge, but an anthem. It shook joy over the midnight hills. It not only dropped among the shepherds, but it sprang upward among the thrones. The robe of righteousness is not black. The religious life is not all weeping and sighing, and cross-bearing and warfare. Christianity does not frown on amusements and recreations. It quenches no light. It defaces no heart. Among the happy it is the happiest. Heaven itself is only a warmer love and a brighter joy. IV. Again, I learn from this subject, WHAT GLORIOUS ENDINGS COME FROM SMALL AND INSIGNIFICANT BEGINNINGS. The New Testament Church was on a small scale. The fishermen watched it. Small beginnings, but glorious endings. A throne linked to a manger. Mansions of light at God's right hand associated with stables of poverty. V. I learn, finally, from this story of the birth of Christ, THE GLORIOUS RESULT OF A SAVIOUR'S MISSION. Have you ever thought how strangely this song of peace must have sounded to the Roman Empire? Why, that Roman Empire gloried in its arms, and boasted of the number of men it had slain, and with triumph looked at conquered provinces. Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Macedonia, Egypt, had bowed to her sword, and crouched at the cry of her war eagles. Their highest honours had been bestowed upon Fabius and Scipio and Cæsar. It was men of blood and carnage that they honoured. With what contempt they must have looked upon a kingdom the chief principle of which was to be goodwill to men, and upon the unarmed, penniless Christ, who, in Nazarene garb, was about to start out for the conquest of the nations. If all the blood which has been shed in battle were gathered together in one great lake, it would bear up a navy. The blow that struck Abel into the dust has had its echo in the carnage of all the centuries. If we could take our stand on some high mountain of earth, and have all the armies of other ages pass along, what a spectacle! There go the hosts of the Israelites through scores of Red Seas, one of them of water, the rest of blood. There go the armies of Cyrus, lifting their infuriate yell over prostrate Babylon. There goes Alexander, with his innumerable host, conquering all but himself, and making the earth to reel under the battle gash of Persepolis and Chæronia. There goes the great Frenchman, down through Egypt like one of its own plagues, and up through Russia like one of its own ice-blasts. Host after host. Tramp, tramp, tramp. Coming down to our day, I appeal to the grave-trench under the shadow

of Sebastopol, and turning to India I show you fallen Delhi, and Allahabad, and the inhuman Sepoys, and the regiments of Havelock avenging the insulted flag of Great Britain. On this, the day before Christmas, I bring you good tidings of great joy. A Saviour for the lost. Medicine for the sick. Light for the blind. Harbour for the bestormed. Eternal life for the dead. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 13. **With the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.**—*The angel's song*:—I. CONSIDER THE PASSAGE AS IT LIES BEFORE US IN THE HISTORY. II. MAKE SOME PRACTICAL REMARKS UPON THE SUBJECT. 1. If this be the song and taste and sentiment of heaven, what is the taste and sentiment of the men of the earth who call themselves wise, and call us fools for believing the Bible? 2. We learn from the song that no goodwill from heaven can be communicated to man, nor any peace on earth, but what is consistent with the glory of God. 3. Herein are afforded sufficient encouragement and direction to every believing heart. (*R. Cecil, M.A.*) *A multitude of the heavenly host*:—In that distant age, as by no means since, the ministry of angels was familiar to the human mind—was required to answer, in fact, the necessities of human thought. On occasions infinitely less important than the birth of One whose name should be called Jesus, the Saviour, the angels then came and went in the universe freely, because in mind and for mind the universe was what it was. Since then not one has come. So the impression made then by its being said that this event was made illustrious by the attendance of a multitude of the heavenly host, and that which is made now, cannot be wholly the same. With all our ideas of the universe, it is infinitely more wonderful now than it was then. As it is so much more wonderful, it is so much more difficult to realize in thought. And so it is with reference to all else that is wonderful in the story of that birth to which the thoughts of the best part of the human race go back as to no other event in all human history. The modes of thought and of expression with regard to all that are unchanged by the lapse of ages—in the letter unchanged—but are they actually the same in spirit to us as they were in another age under cruder and almost opposite conditions of human thought? So shadowy has the angelic host become to mortal men now, to whom in their direst need or in their loftiest ecstasies no angels come, that the joy of that angelic host over the birth of the Saviour of mankind, so far from communicating itself to the Christian world of to-day, as it did once, is never felt save at Christmas, and then it would be hard to say by whom. This is not as it should be. To the thought of Christian men and women eighteen centuries ago the angelic host and their joy were real. Why should they not be so to our thought too? That these men and women were even as we are is the key to all history. With all that there is in our modern modes of thought to make the supernatural seem to us in fact, however it may be in name, one and the same thing with the incredible or faintly believed—with all that there is of this in our modern modes of thought, that which is in them, too, of a powerful apprehension of the idea of Christ's life as the most signal manifestation of the Divine, is enough, if it be only well and truly considered, to make the angelic host and their song as real to us as ever they were to any generation of men—much more real, at any rate, than they have been to many in this generation. (*J. Service, D.D.*) *Music*:—Music has been called the speech of angels. I will go further and call it the speech of God Himself. Without words it is wonderful—blessed—one of God's best gifts to men. But in singing you have both the wonders together, music and words. Why is there music in heaven? Because in music there is no self-will. It goes on certain laws and rules which man did not make, but has only found out. Music is a pattern of the everlasting life of heaven, because in heaven, as in music, is perfect freedom and perfect pleasure; and yet that freedom comes not from throwing away law, but from obeying God's law perfectly; and that pleasure comes not from a self-will, and doing each what he likes, but from perfectly doing the will of the Father who is in heaven. And that in itself would be sweet music, even if there were neither voice nor sound in heaven. Some of us may not be able to make music with our voices; but we can make it with our hearts, and join in the angel's song this day, if not with our lips, yet in our lives. Christmas has always been a day of songs, of carols, and of hymns; and so let it be for ever. For on Christmas Day, most of all days (if I may talk of eternal things according to the laws of time) was manifested on earth the everlasting music which was in heaven. (*Charles Kingsley.*) *Suddenly, or spirit and understanding*:—There are two classes of persons between whom a mutual distrust exists, because they fail to appreciate each other's attitude toward

the events of the universe. I. The first class expects all things to come to pass gradually, so that their courses may be traced. The motive of this class is intellectual; the mind wants to correlate facts. Sudden transitions, having been hitherto supposed to argue the absence of natural causes, are unwelcome to the scientific mind. II. The other class cares little for natural causes, but rather delights in things supposed to be unexplainable by any but extra-natural interventions. It knows that worship is the highest exercise of the mind, and it desires sudden and mysterious events to quicken the feeling of reverence. III. Between these extremes our text mediates by affirming the sudden occurrences, but associating them by a copulative, rather than an adversative conjunction with the things that went before them. In this it has the authority of many scientific men (notably Dr. Maudsley), who assert that there are indeed leaps and sudden changes and specific differences, while they assign them to natural causes, thus contrasting them only with other events and things, not with nature as a whole, and connecting them copulatively instead of adversatively with other phenomena. Nor does this destroy the value of such events as calls to worship. The surprise caused by a sudden event often wakes up a sleeping sense of reverence whether the event is explainable or not. God means to surprise us, but He does not mean to put us to confusion. The scientific mind is compelled by the facts to concede the actual occurrence of sudden and surprising events. With the universe full of God the devout mind can afford to concede the presumptive universality of natural causes. Science has kept saying "not suddenly;" religion has reiterated "but suddenly;" the Bible calmly says "and suddenly." The "and" suits science, the "suddenly" suits religion. Let us seek to be devout and scientific both, and sing with spirit and understanding. (*American Homiletic Review.*) *The birth of our Lord*:—The manner and spirit in which we ought to spend Christmas. I. LET US ASCRIBE GLORY TO GOD. The Lord incarnate is placed before us; the Conqueror of Satan; the Saviour of man is thus revealed. Surely, if our hearts can be touched by the motive of gratitude to God for His mercies, we must feel it in the commemoration of the arrival of His Son. Surely we must feel some inclination this day to join the angelic host in "blessing, praising, and magnifying His Holy Name." II. LET US SPREAD PEACE ON THE EARTH. All animosities should cease. If God desire to be at peace with us, let us imitate the heavenly pattern set us at Bethlehem. All is peace in heaven, and it is our duty to promote it on earth. III. LET US EXERCISE GOODWILL TOWARDS MEN. IV. Let me impress upon you TO MAINTAIN, when this day and year have been added to the past, and even to the end of your lives, THE SEVERAL GRACES TO WHICH I HAVE ADVERTED. Becoming as they are at this season, they become us always. (*A. Gatty, M.A.*) *The song of the angels*:—I. THE SONG ITSELF. I. The song consists of a proclamation of peace. We are in a state of hostility and alienation. Not an easy thing to restore peace, consistently with the Divine nature and glory. Not only is the birth of Christ the occasion of a proclamation of peace between us and God, but it restores peace to our own mind. There is also peace made with our fellows and neighbours and kindred, and with the whole creaturely universe. II. THE SONG AS SUNG ON THIS OCCASION—that is, as sung by ANGELS. 1. They are the most intellectual part of God's creation; they have the purest intellect. 2. Observe not merely their intellectuality by their disinterestedness and impartiality. We are ourselves interested in the whole affair; not so with them. They were never polluted. 3. Their unanimity in singing it. There was no jarring string in that song; no dissenting voice in that harmony. Salvation affects heaven as well as earth. Lessons: 1. A lesson of gratitute to God. 2. Kindness to each other, especially the poor. (*J. Beaumont, D.D.*) *The nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ*:—His own appearance was despicable; that of His retinue was most magnificent. He who was the ancient of days became a helpless infant: He who was the light of the sun, comes into the world in the darkness of the night: He who came that He might lay us in the bosom of the Father, is Himself laid in the manger of a stable. But though meanly welcomed on earth, yet heaven makes abundant amends for all. I. For the first it is said that AN INNUMERABLE COMPANY OF THE HEAVENLY HOST PRAISED GOD. Strange that they should make this day of heaven's humiliation their festival and day of thanksgiving. 1. The holy angels rejoiced at the birth of Christ, because it gave them occasion to testify their deepest humility and subjection. To be subject to Christ while He sat upon the throne of His kingdom, arrayed with unapproachable light, controlling all the powers of heaven with a beck, was no more than His infinite glory exacted from them: but to be subject to Him in a cratch, when He hid His

beams, was not obedience only but condescension. Now the time is come when they may express their fidelity and obedience in the lowest estate of their Lord. 2. The angels rejoiced at the birth of Christ because the confirmation of that blessed estate of grace and glory, wherein they now stand, depended upon His incarnation. The government of all creatures is laid upon His shoulders. He is the "head of all principality and power" (Col. ii. 10; Ephes. i. 10). The Mediator confirms them in their holy estate; therefore they rejoiced at the birth of Christ, wherein they saw the Godhead actually united to the human nature; since the merit of this union, long before that, prevailed for their happy perseverance. 3. The holy angels rejoiced at the birth of Christ, from the fervent desire they have of man's salvation. II. WHAT THIS ANGELICAL SONG CONTAINS IN IT? 1. God's glory. God's glory is of two sorts, essential and declarative. The abasing nativity of Jesus Christ is the highest advancement of God's glory. This is a strange riddle to human reason, for God to raise His glory out of humiliation. (1) In the birth of Christ God glorified the riches of His infinite wisdom. This was a contrivance that would never have entered into the hearts either of men or angels. It is called the wisdom of God (1 Cor. i. 24). The question was how to satisfy justice in the punishment of sinners, and yet to gratify mercy in their pardon. (2) The birth of Christ glorified the almighty power of God. Is it not almighty power that the infinite Godhead should unite to itself dust and ashes, and be so closely united, that it should grow into one and the same person. (3) By the birth of Christ God glorified the severity of His justice. His Son must rather take flesh and die than that this attribute should remain unsatisfied. (4) By the birth of Christ the truth and veracity of God is eminently glorified, by fulfilling many promises and predictions. (5) The birth of Christ glorifies the infinite purity and holiness of God. (6) Hereby the infinite love and pity of God are eminently glorified. 2. Peace on earth. (1) Peace mutually, between man and man. (2) Peace internally, with a man's self, in the region of his own spirit and conscience. (3) Peace with God. Christ was sent into this world as a minister of peace, as a mediator of peace. (*a*) All the precepts of His doctrine do directly tend to the establishing of peace among men. Christianity teaches us not to offer any injury to others. Christ forbids private revenge and retaliating of wrongs. (*b*) The examples of Christ all tend to peace. But Christ says (Matt. x. 34, 35), we must distinguish between the direct end of Christ's coming into the world and the accidental issue of it. 3. The infinite love and goodwill that God hath shown towards men. (1) If you consider the Person sent, this will exalt the goodness of God toward us. He lay under no necessity of saving us. (2) Consider the manner and circumstances of Christ's coming into the world, then will appear the infinite love and goodwill of God. That Christ was sent, as from the Father, freely: as to Himself, ignominiously. (3) The infinite goodwill of God in sending Jesus Christ into the world appears to be glorious and great, if you consider the persons to whom He was sent. This love is pitched upon froward, peevish, and rebellious creatures. (4) It is evident from these many great benefits, of which, by Christ's coming, we are made partakers. (*E. Hopkins, D.D.*)

The glory of the heavenly host an argument for more than bare necessity in the service of God:—May not sundry ceremonies be left out, say they, and yet our religion be sound and entire? Indeed, our ceremonies are not necessary in themselves we grant it; why, and what if such great cathedral churches had not been built, nor such rich costly ornaments bestowed upon the roof, upon the choir, upon the Communion Table, might not prayers be read, and sermons preached with poorer habiliments and in meaner places? Well, no man denies but God was faithfully served in dens, and rocks, and caves of the earth, when the apostles and prophets were persecuted. Besides, there are that complain, when one minister may sufficiently and audibly read service to the congregation: *frustra fit per plura*, what a needless thing it is, to have a choir of singers discharge that, which ordinarily is no more than one man's labour? They that make these objections, let them consider what errors they fall into. They may as well tax God Himself for sending a multitude of angels to congratulate the birth of His Son, when two or three would have done the business; for out of the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be justified. Why should a reasonable man think it fit to glorify God with bare scanty provision? God hath given us full measure of all His blessings, and running over; therefore no decent ceremony is superfluous, no rich ornament too gorgeous, no strain of our wit too eloquent, no music too sweet, no multitude too great to advance His name, who hath exalted us by the humiliation of His Son, and made us capable to live with angels in heaven, because Christ was

content to lie among beasts in a manger. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Multitude pleasing to God*:—And remember that there is no variation or change in God; as He appointed many angels to sing out His birth, so to this time and for ever He loves to be glorified by multitudes. Let two or three be gathered together in His name rather than one separatist alone; but if you will multiply those two or three to hundreds, to thousands of souls, O then His desire is upon them that fear Him, and upon those thwackt congregations that call upon His name. He that invited the guests in the Gospel did not think his feast well bestowed till his room was full; therefore he bid his servants scour the highways and bring them in, that his number might be augmented. I commend your private exercises of prayer between God and your own heart, that your Father that sees you devout in secret may reward you openly: but those prayers which you would have most prosperous and successful, send them up in the thickest press of prayers, when a great assembly open their lips together. He that joins his spirit with the spirit of the Church shall be heard as if he prayed with ten thousand voices. (*Ibid.*) *Trust the heavenly forces*:—O see how many legions He can command from heaven, and then say, it is a vain thing to trust in the forces of man; it is the Lord that hath powers and principalities in store to awe the world: lo, He cometh with a multitude of the heavenly host. (*Ibid.*) *One good work quickly followed by another*:—The choir was not long a-tuning, but the hymn was sung immediately after the sermon was ended, like a chime that follows a clock without distinction of a minute: one good work follows another incontinently without any tedious pause or lingering respite. Quick motions of zeal and devotion are ever most acceptable. Procrastinating of time is the ready way to be taken tardy like the foolish virgins. (*Ibid.*) *Church Psalmody*:—If Asaph and that choir did lift up their note with all sorts of musical instruments in the old law, while the sacrifice was burning upon the altar, I am sure we have much more cause, not in imitation of Asaph, but of the angels, to praise the Lord with psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. Luther, I know not upon what reason, unless it were because the angels in my text did begin the gospel with melody, he makes psalmody to be one of the notes of the orthodox Church of Christ. The voice of man certainly is to praise God in its best tunes and elegancies: and the reasons why musical notes are most fit and necessary amidst our Christian prayers are these four: 1. Rules of piety steal into our mind with the delight of the harmony. The Agathyrsians, even to Plato's days, were wont to sing their laws, and put them in tune, that men might repeat them in their recreations. 2. It kindles devotion, and fills the soul with more loving affections. Make a cheerful noise to the God of Jacob, says David. As the noise of flutes and of trumpets inspire a courage into soldiers, and inflame them to be victorious, so the psalms of the Church raise up the heart, and make it leap to be with God; as if our soul were upon our lips, and would fly away to heaven. 3. An heavy spirit oppresseth zeal, and that service of God is twice done which is done with alacrity: and our Christian merriment by St. James's rule is, singing and making melody to the Lord. When our Saviour and His company were sad the night before His Passion, to put away that heaviness they sang an hymn, when they went to Mount Olivet. 4. To sing some part of Divine doctrine is very profitable, because that which is sung is most treatibly pronounced; the understanding stays long upon it, and nails it the faster to the memory. (*Ibid*). *Angelic insight*:—So my text lets you see, that if men be silent, and set not forth the praise of the Lord, the angels will speak, and give Him glory. It were a great shame for the Commons to be rude and irrespectful towards their king, when the nobles and princes of the people are most dutiful and obsequious; so when the Cherubins devote their songs to extol the most High, it were a beastly neglect in man, a worm in respect of a Cherubin, not to bear a part in that humble piety: but to speak after the method of reason, had it not been more proper for the angels at this time to have proclaimed Christ's poverty than His power, His infancy than His majesty, His humility in the lowest, rather than His glory in the highest? If there were any glory coming out of this work of the Incarnation, it may seem we had it rather than our Saviour, and He lost it. But the piercing eye of those celestial spirits could see abundant honour compassing Christ about, where ignorant man could espy nothing but vileness and misery. 1. They celebrate the glory of God's justice in sending His Son made of a woman, and made under the law, to suffer for us that had sinned against the law, because that justice would not receive man into favour without a satisfaction. 2. They divulge the honour of Christ unto the ends of the world, for the mercy that came down with Him upon all those that

should believe in His name; if His justice was not forgotten in their song, surely His mercy should be much more solemnized. The angels for their own share were unacquainted with mercy, 'twas news in heaven till this occasion happened; for those rebellious ones of their order that had sinned, they found no grace to remit their trespasses; properly that is called mercy, but a thing so rare and unheard of in heaven, that as soon as ever they saw it stirring in the earth, they sing "Glory to God in the highest." 3. They praise the Lord on high for the Incarnation of His Son, because the dignity of the work was so from Himself, that no creature did merit it, none did beseech or intercede unto Him for it, before He had destinate it, nothing but His own compassion could move Him to it. (*Ibid.*) *The song of angels* :—1. They knew, in the first place, the glory and greatness of that Being who was cradled in the manger. 2. The angels knew the sinfulness and misery from which the Saviour came to rescue fallen man, as we have never known them. 3. These visitants, again, knew, as we do not, the happiness of that state to which Christ's mission would raise us. We have seen, then, that angels praised God with such lively fervours, because they had so much clearer views than we of what Christ came to accomplish, when He was born at Bethlehem. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*)

Ver. 14. **Glory to God in the highest.**—*The angels' song* (*A Christmas sermon*) :—First heard above the plains of Bethlehem it is one day to be heard over all the world. Its sweet melody is to be woven into every language which men have learnt to speak. The angels are to hear it in all dialects and tongues. It is to be the choral response of a gladdened world to the birthday joy which was once poured forth upon the shepherd hearts at Bethlehem. I. WE OWE CHRISTMAS-TIDE TO CHRISTIANITY. II. LET US REMEMBER THE ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTMAS-TIDE WITH "PEACE ON EARTH AND GOOD-WILL TO MEN." III. THERE IS JOY IN THINKING OF THE PARTIAL PREVALENCE OF THIS DIVINE INFLUENCE AMONGST THE FAMILY OF MAN. IV. HOW MAY THE ADVENT OF CHRIST BE MADE TO REPEAT ITSELF THIS CHRISTMAS-TIDE? Whenever peace and goodwill mightily prevail amongst men, that is a time when Christ has a fresh hold upon human hearts. V. We may not forget that THERE ARE HOMES WHICH WILL DEPEND FOR CHRISTMAS JOY UPON THE CAREFUL THOUGHT AND KINDLINESS OF OTHERS. VI. THERE ARE SOME WHOSE HEARTS WILL BE TROUBLED WITH MEMORIES WHICH WILL CROWD AROUND THIS OTHERWISE HAPPY PERIOD. (*W. Dorling.*) *A Christmas carol* :—I. HOW DID THE APPEARING OF CHRIST BRING GLORY TO GOD? 1. In the fulfilment of prophecy. 2. In the salvation of man. 3. In exhibiting God's love without detracting from any other attribute. II. HOW PEACE ON EARTH? 1. It was not peace at first certainly. Describe the state of the world, especially Palestine, when Christ came, and during succeeding years. 2. But in proportion as Christ is known and felt, there will surely be peace on earth. 3. Peace in the city, town, or village in which Christians dwell. 4. Peace in the family. 5. Peace in the heart. 6. And all this will result from the practice of the principles of that religion whose Founder was cradled in Bethlehem's manger, for that religion (1) Subdues the passions; (2) Regulates the life; (3) Elevates the soul. III. How GOOD-WILL TOWARD MEN? 1. When one makes a present to another we look upon it as an expression of good-will. The value of the present is often indicative of the measure of esteem or good-will. God has given us His greatest, choicest gift, for He bestowed His only Son. 2. God's good-will becomes even more apparent when we contemplate our own guilt. 3. What have you to say in answer to all this? All God requires from us in recognition of His love is our heart. And if we give Him our heart, we shall surely give our service. Have you given yours to Him? (*A. F. Barfield.*) *The Divine method in the world* :—This is the key-note, not only of the Christian message, but of Divine religion from the beginning. It is ours to follow, not to precede; to ask what has been the Divine method, not to ask what it should have been; and when once we begin to have some light on that view, then it will be ours to ask what are the signs of accomplishment. I. WHAT HAS BEEN THE DIVINE METHOD? 1. We learn that there is a Divinity in this world which secures the direction of growth, but leaves the operative influences that produce it, and the working out of results to great natural laws. 2. We learn that the Divine method implies great length of time. 3. We learn that one universal and insuperable difficulty has been in teaching men how to live together peaceably. II. WHAT, NOW, IS THE CONDITION AND THE PROSPECT, THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE WORLD, OF GOOD-WILL AND PEACE, OR THE ART OF LIVING TOGETHER? 1. The possibility of happiness among the poor, who constitute by far the largest part of the human race, has been so immensely increased as to form a broad platform on which to put

our feet and form an estimate of the gains that have been made. 2. In the mind of the very labourers themselves there is springing up a spirit of organization and thrift. 3. There is coming, gradually, the admission of the great under-class of the human family to a participation in government. 4. The influence of nation upon nation must also be taken into consideration in estimating the advance of the latter-day glory. The globe has become but a single neighbourhood. 5. Look at how God has been raising up four great languages on the globe which ultimately, I think, will result in one. Look at what treasure is stored up in the French, in the German, in the English, and in the Latin. Shall I add the Greek—the language of science? The language of men, the language that contains the doctrines of independence, of liberty, of, I trust, man in man, is the English tongue. It is spoken more widely over the globe than any other. I rejoice with exceeding great joy that the English tongue is a charter of liberty to the human race. III. IF YOU ACCEPT THE PROPHECIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, INTERPRETING THEM along the lines of experience, showing what is the Divine method of working upon the human race, the angels that sang peace and good-will at the Advent will not be long delayed before they will sing again. I shall hear that song, not here but yonder. And perhaps joined with it will be the outcry of this glorious achievement which seems to us to have lingered, but that has not lingered, according to the thought of God, who hath done and is doing all things well, and who is the Conqueror of conquerors, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, my Saviour and my God, your Saviour and your God. Trust Him; rejoice in Him; love Him; and reign. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The angels' text*:—Such was the text of the angels on the night of our Saviour's birth; and to that text our Saviour's life furnished the sermon. I. The first words of it are, "GLORY TO GOD!" and a most weighty lesson may we draw for ourselves from finding the angels put that first. A world is redeemed. Millions on millions of human beings are rescued from everlasting death. Is not this the thing uppermost in the angels' thoughts? No, it is only the second thing. The first is, Glory to God! Why so? Because God is the giver of this salvation; nay, is Himself the Saviour, in the person of the only-begotten Son. Moreover, because in heavenly minds God always holds the first place, and they look at everything with a view to Him. Now, I would have you look to God in exactly the same manner. Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, you should do all to God's glory. Then will you be like the angels who began their text with, Glory to God! II. The next branch of the text is "PEACE ON EARTH." Our Saviour Himself is the Prince of Peace—1. Because His great purposes were to bring down peace to man. 2. Because He made it one of His prime objects to plant and foster peace within man. Peace was His legacy to His apostles. 3. But what kind of peace? Truly every kind which man can enjoy. (1) Peace of conscience; (2) peace of heart; (3) peace of a mind at ease about worldly matters; (4) peace and union between brethren, that we may all make up one body under Jesus Christ our Head. Now, let each of us ask himself with all seriousness, Do I feel anything of this godly peace? III. There is a third part of the angels' text, namely, "GOOD-WILL TO MEN:" and a very important part it is. For it sets forth the ground of our salvation. It was no excellency or merit of ours that drew our Saviour down from heaven. It was the wretchedness of our fallen state. Herein, as St. Paul tells us, "God commendeth His love toward us," &c. (Rom. v. 8). But though this love of God for His sinful creatures is worthy of all gratitude and praise, the good-will declared in the angels' text means something more than mere love. The word which we translate "Good-will," is a word very full of meaning, and signifies that mixture of goodness, and kindness, and wisdom, which tends to good and wise plans. The good-will then in the angels' text is no other than the great and merciful purpose of our redemption. Have we any proper sense and feeling of this good-will? I have spoken to you on the angels' text, and in so doing have spoken of man's salvation. The end of the whole is God's glory; the means is peace on earth; the sole motive is goodness and loving-kindness to us miserable sinners. IV. There are still three words in this text which I have not noticed. The angels did not simply say, "Glory to God;" but, "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST," that is, in heaven. Here is a wonderful, a glorious, a soul-sustaining scene opened to us. The angels in the very presence of God are moved by our sufferings and our redemption. Shall they glorify God for His goodness to us, and shall we forget to glorify Him for His goodness to ourselves? (*A. W. Hare.*) *Christmas Day*:—There is considerable difference of opinion as to what is the best reading and the best rendering of this passage. According to Dean Alford and the

Revised Version, we should understand it to mean, "Peace among men towards whom God has a good-will"—that is, in whom He is well pleased. According to the Vulgate the meaning should be, peace to men who exhibit a good-will. This is the sense adopted by Keble in his Christmas hymn. The reading of the Authorised Version is not, perhaps, the best; but, as being more familiar, and at the same time so thoroughly in harmony with the spirit of the day, I will venture to take it as a motto. 1. It must be confessed that the conduct of professing Christians has often been such as to make the angels' song sound like an ironical sarcasm, rather than an eulogy. Church history, for example, to a passionate lover of peace and good-will, must be very melancholy reading. 2. But I hear some one say," things are improved now-a-days." Well, yes, I suppose they are a little. Still many of those who call themselves Christians seem to be characterized by the very opposites of peace and good-will. I remember that in the preface to the second edition of his Belfast Address, Professor Tyndall said he was not surprised at the bitter things which had been uttered against him by Christians, when he remembered how bitterly they were in the habit of recriminating one another. "'Tis true, 'tis pity; pity 'tis, 'tis true." Peace and good-will—peace, or the absence of quarrelsomeness; good-will, or the actual performance of deeds of kindness, are essential characteristics of genuine discipleship. 3. Let us, to-day, apply this test of discipleship to ourselves. Of all the provisions made for our spiritual welfare, nothing, perhaps, more helpful than the periodical recurrence of days like the present. 4. But it was Christ's aim that every day should be in this respect a Christmas Day. Is that the case with us? There was a curious institution in the Middle Ages called the ecclesiastical truce or peace of God. Feuds legally stopped for four days a week. The bell tolled on a Wednesday. All hostilities were to cease till the following Monday. And until the Monday they were suspended; but then they were always faithfully resumed. Shall it be so with us? After manifesting peace and good-will on the 25th of December, must we relapse again into practical paganism on the 26th? We cannot be always making presents, but we may be always doing good. 5. When peace and good-will are universal, human society will be, as Christ wished to make it, a heaven upon earth.

For lo! the days are hastening on
By prophet-bands foretold,
When with the ever-circling years
Comes back the age of gold—
When peace shall over all the earth
Its blessed banner fling,
And the whole world send back the song
Which now the angels sing.

(*Professor A. W. Momerie.*)

The angelic hymn:—The song consists of three propositions, of which two are parallel, and the third forms a link between the other two. In the first, "Glory to God in the highest places," the angels demand that, from the lower regions to which they have just come down, from the bosom of humanity, praise shall arise, which, ascending from heavens to heavens, shall reach at last the supreme sanctuary, the highest places, and there glorify the Divine perfections that shine forth in this birth. The second, "Peace on earth," is the counterpart of the first. While inciting men to praise, the angels invoke on them peace from God. This peace is such as results from the reconciliation of man with God; it contains the cause of the cessation of all war here below. These two propositions are of the nature of a desire or prayer. The verb understood is ἔστω, *let it be*. The third, which is not connected with the preceding by any particle, proclaims the fact which is the ground of this twofold prayer. If the logical connection were expressed, it would be by the word *for*. This fact is the extraordinary favour shown to men by God, and which is displayed in the gift He is bestowing upon them at this very time. The sense is: "for God takes pleasure in men." In speaking thus, the angels seem to mean, "God has not bestowed as much on us" (Heb. ii. 16). The idea of "good-will" recalls the first proposition, "Glory to God!" while the expression, "towards men," reminds us of the second, "peace on earth!" (*F. Godet, D.D.*)

The Gloria in excelsis:—In the account of this eventful night, the words heard are alone mentioned; one might be pardoned for wishing we had also the score! We

all know how an interesting strain of melody will fix itself in our memories; sometimes we can hardly keep from humming it over, repeating snatches of it we have caught, and rehearsing to others the way it went, so as to give an idea. It may be that the shepherds remembered parts of this; but if so, we have no means of ascertaining it. Only the words reach us; but they are well worth the study of the world. The startling abruptness with which this seraphic anthem fell on the ears of the shepherds that first Christmas night, adds greatly to the dramatic effect of the scene. Hardly lingering for their leader to end his communication, that choir of singers "suddenly" burst forth with loud volume of exquisite harmony, celebrating the praises of Jehovah, whom they saw in a fresh field of splendid display. There were a vast number of singers—"a host," that is to say, an army; "an army celebrating a peace." Surely there was enough to inspire their music; and great armies of voices sing together quite often with immense power of rich and voluminous harmony. It was an exaggeration, no doubt, but ancient history gravely records that, when the invader of Macedon was finally expelled, the victorious Greeks, who heard the news and so learned that freedom had come, and fighting was over, and home was near, raised along the lines and throughout the camp such a shout of "Soter! Soter!"—"a Saviour! A Saviour!"—that birds on the wing dropped down. It may have been so; but what was that little peninsula of Greece, as compared with this entire race redeemed from Satan unto God? What were the actual words of this angels' song? It is well that we all recollect them — "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men!" Three stanzas in one hymn. 1. The first of them, and the foremost in thought, is "Glory to God in the highest." This is not a prayer at all, but an ascription. It was no time to be asking that God be glorified, when the whole universe was quivering with new disclosure of a "Gloria in Excelsis," such as blind men could see and deaf men could hear. Those angels did not pray—Glory *be* to God—but they exclaimed—Glory *is* to God in the highest! And then they rush rapidly into an enumeration of particulars. The connection of thought is close. Glory to God in the highest, because peace has come on the earth, and goodwill has already gone out toward men. These angels are making proclamation that the rebellious race is for evermore subdued. No longer was this planet to circle around among loyal worlds in space, flaunting the defiant flag of a belligerent in the kingdom of heaven. Men should be redeemed; sin should be positively checked; all the ills of a worn-out and wretched existence should be banished; poverty should be removed, sickness and death find a Master; Satan should be foiled by Immanuel in person. Hence this entire vision, which flashed on the awakened intelligence of the angels and inspired their song, was simply reversive and revolutionary. The whole earth seemed to rouse itself to a new being. Cursed for human sin, it saw its deliverance coming. The day had arrived when streams and lakes should gleam in the sunshine, when the valleys should smile and laugh and sing, when flowers should bloom and stars should flash—all to the glory of God! 2. Then "peace on earth"; God was at last in the world reconciling it unto Himself; the hearts of His creatures were coming back to Him; their allegiance was to be restored, their wills were to be subjugated, their minds were to be enlightened; thus peace over all the world would be established, God's wrath would be averted, and the long wrestle of man with Satan would reach its end. For when men are really at peace with God, they will come to peace with each other. 3. And so, at last, "goodwill toward men. That ends this song of the angel; that is what ought to be the beginning of each Christmas anthem and carol. God loves us; oh, how touchingly does the aged Paul in one place tell his young brother Titus about that "kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men!" God cherishes only goodwill toward any of us. Even the wicked; He takes no pleasure in their death. He would rather they would turn unto Him, and live. Oh, happy day is that in which He tells us all this unmistakably, with perfect plainness. Brethren, if God so loved us, then ought we also to love one another. "All ye are brethren." Away with all fancied superiorities and aristocracies on the common Christmas day—the gladsome birthday of Christ! Herdsmen are on a visit to a carpenter at an inn; and they are told to go to the outhouse to find him! Beasts are standing by a manger in which lies the Child—King David the Second! But, for all this seems so democratic and small, please remember that a choir of angels have been singing outside. Who among us is too proud to listen? (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The angelic anthem*:—In this Divine anthem we are taught that—

I. THE INCARNATION WAS A BRIGHT EXHIBITION OF THE GLORY OF GOD. Hitherto

the holy angels had seen the glory of the Divine justice in the punishment of their sinning compeers; and something like mercy in the suspension of the sentence pronounced on man. But here they see justice and mercy blended in a wonderful manner; and they give vent to their ecstasy in shouts of praise. II. THE INCARNATION WAS THE MEANS OF BRINGING PEACE UPON EARTH. 1. Sin had created war in every man's own bosom. Christ alone can put an end to that war, by procuring pardon of sin, peace for the conscience, tranquillity for the passions, subordination of the appetites—reconciling reason to conscience, and conscience to the law of God. 2. Sin had created a horrible war between man and man. Strife, envy, jealousy, oppression, ambition, prevailed; Christ came to preach and exemplify universal charity. Wherever the influence of His gospel is felt, peace follows between man and man; wherever His government is established, man embraces his brother. 3. Sin had caused war between man and his Maker. Terrible contest—the potsherd striving with Him who made it. Christ reconciles God and man. He is Himself both God and man; so He can both pardon sin and bestow needed grace. III. THE INCARNATION WAS A MARVELLOUS DISPLAY OF THE GOODWILL OF GOD TO MAN. 1. Most astonishing condescension. 2. Unparalleled love. 3. Prodigious disinterestedness. 4. Universality. All are included in this goodwill. IV. WHAT OUGHT TO BE OUR VIEWS, AND FEELINGS, AND CONDUCT. 1. They should be laudatory. We have far more occasion to praise God for the Incarnation, than the angels. 2. We should proclaim the Saviour to others. In trying to kindle a brother's faith and devotion, our own will burn brighter and clearer. (*John Stephens.*) I. The choir—singers from the new Jerusalem. II. The theme—salvation. III. The listeners—dwellers in heaven and earth. (*Van Doren.*) *The angels' song*:—What does the angels' song announce to men? 1. Bethlehem's miracle. 2. Jesus' greatness. 3. The Father's honour. 4. The Christian's calling. 5. Heaven's likeness. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *A Christmas motto*:—"With malice toward none, with charity for all." This truly Christian motto of President Lincoln, sounds almost like an earthly echo of the heavenly anthem, and certainly proves its power and influence in the history of the world. (*P. Schaff, D.D.*) *The first Christmas carol*:—I. INSTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS. The angels sang something which men could understand—something which will make men much better if they will understand it. The angels were singing about Jesus who was born in the manger. We must look upon their song as being built upon this foundation. They sang of Christ, and of the salvation which He came into this world to work out. 1. They said that this salvation gave glory to God in the highest—that salvation is God's highest glory. God is glorified in every dewdrop that twinkles in the morning sun. He is magnified in every wood-flower that blossoms in the copse, although it lives to blush unseen, and waste its sweetness in the desert air. He is glorified in every bird that warbles on the spray; in every lamb that skips the mead. All created things extol Him. Is there aught beneath the sky, save man, that does not glorify God? Do not the stars exalt Him, when they write His name upon the azure of heaven in their golden letters? Do not the lightnings adore Him, when they flash His brightness in arrows of light piercing the midnight darkness? Do not thunders extol Him, when they roll like drums in the march of the God of armies? Do not all things exalt Him, from the least even to the greatest? But though creation may be a majestic organ of praise, it cannot reach the compass of the golden canticle—Incarnation! There is more in that than in creation, more melody in Jesus in the manger than there is in worlds on worlds rolling their grandeur round the throne of the Most High. See how every attribute is here magnified. Lo! what wisdom is here. God becomes man that God may be just, and the justifier of the ungodly. Lo! what power, for where is power so great as when it conceals power? Behold, what love is thus revealed to us when Jesus becomes a man! Behold what faithfulness! How many promises are this day kept; how many solemn obligations discharged? 2. When they had sung this, they sang what they had never sung before. "Glory to God in the highest," was an old, old song; they had sung that from before the foundations of the world. But now, they sang as it were a new song before the throne of God; for they added this stanza—"on earth, peace." They did not sing that in the Garden of Eden. There was peace there, but it seemed a thing of course, and scarce worth singing of. But now man had fallen, and since the day when cherubim with fiery swords drove out the man, there had been no peace on earth, save in the breast of some believers, who had obtained peace from the living fountain of this incarnation of Christ. Wars had raged from the ends of the world;

men had slaughtered one another, heaps on heaps. There had been wars within as well as wars without. Conscience had fought with man; Satan had tormented man with thoughts of sin. There had been no peace on earth since Adam fell. But now, when the newborn King appeared, the swaddling band with which He was wrapped up was the white flag of peace. 3. And, then, they wisely ended their song with a third note. They said, "Goodwill to man." Philosophers have said that God has a goodwill toward man; but I never knew any man who derived much comfort from their philosophical assertion. Wise men have thought from what we have seen in creation that God had much goodwill toward man, or else His works would never have been so constructed for their comfort; but I never heard of any man who could risk his soul's peace upon such a faint hope as that. But I have not only heard of thousands, but I know them, who are quite sure that God has a goodwill towards men; and if you ask their reason, they will give a full and perfect answer. They say, He has goodwill toward man, for He gave His Son. No greater proof of kindness between the Creator and His subjects can possibly be afforded than when the Creator gives His only begotten and well beloved Son to die. Though the first note is God-like, and though the second note is peaceful, this third note melts my heart the most. II. EMOTIONAL THOUGHTS. Does not this song of angels stir your hearts with happiness? With confidence? III. PROPHETIC UTTERANCES. The angels sang, "Glory to God," &c. But I look around, and what see I in the wide, wide world? I do not see God honoured. I see the heathen bowing down before their idols; I see tyranny lording it over the bodies and souls of men; I see God forgotten. IV. Now, I have one more lesson for you, and I have done. That lesson is PRECEPTIVE. I wish everybody that keeps Christmas this year, would keep it as the angels kept it. Now, Mr. Tradesman, you have an opponent in trade, and you have said some very hard words about him lately. If you do not make the matter up to-day, or to-morrow, or as soon as you can, yet do it on that day. That is the way to keep Christmas, peace on earth and glory to God. And oh, if thou hast anything on thy conscience, anything that prevents thy having peace of mind, keep thy Christmas in thy chamber, praying to God to give thee peace; for it is peace on earth, mind, peace in thyself, peace with thyself, peace with thy fellow men, peace with thy God. And do not think thou hast well celebrated that day till thou canst say, "O God,

'With the world, myself, and Thee
I ere I sleep at peace will be.'"

And when the Lord Jesus has become your peace, remember, there is another thing, goodwill towards men. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Spreading the news of peace:*— At the close of the last war with Great Britain, I was in the city of New York. It happened that, on a Saturday afternoon in February, a ship was discovered in the offing, which was supposed to be a cartel, bringing home our commissioners at Ghent from their unsuccessful mission. The sun had set gloomily before any intelligence from the vessel has reached the city. Expectation became painfully intense as the hours of darkness drew on. At length a boat reached the wharf, announcing the fact that a treaty of peace had been signed, and waiting for nothing but the action of our government to become a law. The men on whose ears these words first fell rushed in breathless haste into the city to repeat them to their friends, shouting as they ran through the streets, "Peace, peace, peace!" Every one who heard the sound repeated it. From house to house, from street to street, the news spread with electric rapidity. The whole city was in commotion. Men bearing lighted torches were flying to and fro, shouting like madmen, "Peace, peace, peace!" When the rapture had partially subsided, one idea occupied every mind. But few men slept that night. In groups they were gathered in the streets and by the fireside, beguiling the hours of midnight by reminding each other that the agony of war was over, and that a worn out and distracted country was about to enter again upon its wonted career of prosperity. Thus, every one becoming a herald, the news soon reached every man, woman, and child in the city; and in this sense the city was evangelized. All this, you see, was reasonable and proper, but when Jehovah has offered to our world a treaty of peace, when men doomed to hell may be raised to seats at the right hand of God, why is not a similar zeal displayed in proclaiming the good news? Why are men perishing all around us and no one has ever personally offered to them salvation through a crucified Redeemer? (*Dr. Wayland.*) *The perfections of the In-*

carnation:—Before the Incarnation God showed some, but not all, His perfections. He showed—1. His goodness, in creating man after His own image. 2. His love, when He led Eve and the animals to Adam. 3. His pity, by clothing Adam and Eve with coats of skins. 4. His power, in creating the world out of nothing. 5. His justice, in expelling our first parents from Paradise, deluging the wicked world, wasting the cities of the plain. 6. His wisdom, confounding the tongues of the builders of Babel. 7. His providence, in saving Egypt by means of Joseph. In the Incarnation these perfections shone out with greater clearness. We note here—I. THE GOODNESS OF GOD. He clothed Himself with our nature, that His virtues, grace, and glory, yea, and Himself, He might communicate to us. 1. Naturally, by preserving the order of nature. 2. By the supernatural order of grace. 3. By His particular personality. II. THE LOVE OF GOD. Seen in the close union between God and man (Rom. viii. 32). 1. He became incarnate to suffer and die for man. 2. And that for man, His enemy. III. THE PITY OF GOD. In person coming to relieve our miseries, making Himself capable of sorrow and suffering (Heb. iv. 15). IV. THE POWER OF GOD. Uniting the highest nature with the lowly nature of man; the human and the Divine, without any confusion of substance, in unity of person. V. THE JUSTICE OF GOD. Not rescuing man from sin and death by might or by power, but paying a full and sufficient satisfaction for all men's sins: making an infinite satisfaction for infinite sin. VI. THE WISDOM OF GOD. In planning the redemption of man. Neither man nor God, singly, could redeem man; it needed a God-man to do this. VII. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD. Which saw how to help and enrich man, when he was poor and naked, and destitute of all things. (*M. Faber.*) *A dying saint*:—This doxology of the angels has sometimes filled the thoughts of dying saints. The final words of the Rev. Edward Perronet, author of the hymn, "All hail the power of Jesus' name," were, "Glory to God in the height of His Divinity! Glory to God in the depth of His humanity! Glory to God in His all-sufficiency! and into His hand I commend my spirit." The last words, too, of Rev. Doctor Backus, first President of Hamilton College, were, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." *Universal peace*:—Happy the day when every war-horse shall be houghed, when every spear shall become a pruning-hook, and every sword shall be made to till the soil which once it stained with blood! This will be the last triumph of Christ. Before death itself shall be dead, death's great jackal, war, must die also; and then there shall be peace on earth, and the angel shall say, "I have gone up and down through the earth, and the earth sitteth still, and is at rest: I heard no tumult of war nor noise of battle." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The song of the angels*:—I. THE SCENE. It was a fine Eastern night, not cold like one of our Decembers, with frosts or nipping gales freezing through blood and marrow. "The shepherds were abiding in the fields," *i.e.*, making their bivouac in them. The evangelist's style seems to quiver with the sudden surprise which came upon the shepherds. "And lo, an angel of the Lord came upon them, and glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they feared with sore fear. And that angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, as being that which shall be to all the people of God." His message declares four things. The wondrous Child to be born is a Saviour, who comes in pity for a fallen race; Christ, who, as the Anointed One, has so long been expected; the Lord, who is Divine as well as human; in David's city, to fulfil literally the oracle of Micah, and the anticipations which might have been awakened by the Psalm that speaks of a great Priest-king in connection with Bethlehem, and God's remembrance of David's life of affliction. "And this shall be a sign unto you;" a sign, in its quiet but amazing contrast to all exhibitions of this world's royalty. "Ye shall find a babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" Among the angels of heaven there was silence until the point when that angel visitant to the shepherds had touched the lowest point in the abyss of the humiliation. The armies of earth raise a shout or song. The armies of heaven (the "heavenly soldiers," as it is grandly rendered in the old English version) have theirs—but it is a song of peace. Much of that choral ode was, probably, unheard by mortal ears—lost in the heights above. One fragment alone of the song is preserved. It is a triplet. 1. "Glory to God in the highest." The angels speak from the point of view of this earth. We may understand either "Let it be," or "It is." If the former, they pray that from the bosom of humanity glory may rise to God in the highest heaven. If we understand the latter, they affirm that it does, at that moment, actually ascend. There is a little poem, possibly more beautiful in idea

than in execution, which tells of a child dying in a workhouse. As her simple hymn, "Glory to Thee, my God, this night," ascends from the pallet-bed, it floats up and up, until the last faint ripple touches the foot of the throne of God. Then, wakened by the faint, sweet impulse, a new strain of adoration is taken up by angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven—a grander and a fuller "glory." Something in this way, in this passage, the angels seem to view the best adorations of this earth. 2. "On earth peace." The peace spoken of in Scripture as effected by the Incarnation, is fourfold—between God and man; between man and angels; between man and man; between man and his own conscience. It is, of course, too darkly true, that as regards one form of this peace—that between man and man—history seems a long cynical satire on the angels' words. The earth is soaking with blood at this moment, and families are in mourning for the slain in battle. Still, among Christian nations, and in the case of Christian soldiers, there are soft relentings, sweet gleams of human—or rather superhuman—love. Society, too, is full of prejudice and bitterness. In our homes there are tempers which drop vitriolic irritants into every little wound. It was a wholesome memory of the angels' song which led men to examine their souls at Christmas, and to seek for reconciliation with any between whose souls and theirs stood the veil of quarrel or ill-will. But there is something beyond this. It means enmity done away, harmony restored, not only with one's fellow-man, but with oneself. The unholy man has no true feeling of friendship, no friendly relations with himself. Worst of all, man may be in a state of estrangement from God, from Christ, from His Church, from hope—hostile in his mind, which lies immersed, and has its very existence in those evil works of his. 3. (*For*, understood) "Among men *is* good-will." It is well known from Keble's beautiful lines, and his note upon Pergolesi's setting of the Vulgate version, that some manuscripts read, "among men of goodwill." This interpretation, though it may please the fancy at first, will scarcely be accepted by the maturer judgment. (1) It is not very concurrent with St. Luke's universal aim, and constant setting forth of the bold broad sympathy of the purpose of the Incarnation. God's love, at that moment, would not be viewed by the angels as restricted to the comparatively righteous. It was a work whose result was to be offered to all our fallen race through Him who is the son of Adam. Men of goodwill, according to the Scripture use of the word, might be too high an attribute even for the elect people of God. The third line appears to give the cause and foundation of the two which precede it. The "Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes" is He who not only brings, but is personally the Truth, the Peace, the Righteousness, the Salvation, the Redemption. Just as He is the personal Peace, so is He the personal incarnate Good-will. There is glory to God in the highest. And there is peace upon earth, for God's goodwill is amongst men. It is the equivalent of Emmanuel—God with us. II. We may now OBSERVE WHERE THE ANGELS' HYMN STANDS IN THE REFORMED LITURGY. In the Roman missal it is found at the beginning of the office; with us it is taken up immediately after we communicate, just before the parting blessing. In that magnificent burst of praise, the "Angelic Hymn," or "Gloria in Excelsis," is the basis of all that follows. "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men." "We praise Thee" for Thy greatness. "We bless Thee" for Thy goodness, thus made known to us by the voice of angels. "We worship Thee" in our hearts, with beseeming outward reverence. "We glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty"—glorifying and giving thanks with the confession of the mouth. Then we address the sacrificed Son, the Lamb, who is also our God. "O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us." It is thus indicated that He is the subject of the angelic song, that to Him there is glory in the highest, with the Father and the Holy Ghost. "Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father." We worship with angels—in angels' words. We worship *them* not. Therefore into the texture of our eucharistic "Gloria in Excelsis" is woven a golden thread from another New Testament song—the poem of victory upon the sea of glass. A psalmist had exclaimed, "They shall praise Thy name, great and terrible; holy is it. Exalt ye Jehovah our God, and worship at the mountain of His holiness; for holy is the Lord our God." The writer of the Apocalypse hears it applied to Jesus. And His believing Church incorporates this into her golden com

mentary of praise upon the "Gloria in Excelsis." "Thou only art holy, O Christ." Only He is holy of Himself: of His holiness we have all received. To an ignorant and superstitious woman, now many years ago, a kindly visitor read the Gospels, with little but the most simple commentary, and without a single word of controversy. A day or two before her death, the poor woman mentioned a dream which she had, valuable only because it appeared to be the reflection of her waking thoughts. She seemed to be in a vast and magnificent church, thronged with thousands upon thousands. High in the distance rose a glorious altar, with a living form towering above it—the Lamb as it had been slain; below, down to the rails which separated the altar from the body of the church, were orders of angels, stoled and vested priests, the Virgin-mother. Moved by some impulse, one after another came to the chancel-gate, and was either received inside with a burst of joy that filled the distance, or sorrowfully sent away. At last the dying woman presented herself in her turn. Sternly, yet not without a tone of regret, a priest put her back, and said, "You cannot pass." Sweetly, with tender sorrow, an angel whispered, "Alas! I cannot help you." With trembling voice, the mother of Jesus told her that "her prayers could not open those gates, nor open a way to the eternal presence of her Son." Then, with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, the woman was turning away, to wander she knew not where, when suddenly the form above the altar—not white, and wan, and stirless, like the crucifix, but living and glorious—stood by the guarded gate. And He opened it, and bade her come in and fear not. "For," said He, "those who come unto Me I will not cast out." And a glorious music arose in the distance. In the same spirit, in this hymn, we pass by saints and angels, and raise our chant, "Thou only art holy." None holy, and therefore none tender as Christ. In thanksgiving for angels' food we borrow angels' words. The song of angels is our communion song. May it not also be made our communicant's manual? For instance, let us take that single line, "on earth peace." That man who did something to insult or injure me—that, perhaps, very wretched woman, with her bitter tongue and cutting jeer—have I forgiven her for Christ's sake? This evil peevish temper, which embitters the fountains of family life, have I set about sweetening it? Am I trying to improve it? This dark hopelessness of God's forgiveness, this despair of the power of God's Spirit to help and sanctify, this unbelief in grace, as if an apostle's pen had never written, "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" this unbelief in the power of the Cross, this faithlessness which turns the bread of the sacrament into a stone in our hands, and makes us too deaf to hear "for thee!" again and again—is this passing away? Am I ready to take Him at His own word? If not, I cannot really join in the "Gloria in Excelsis." I have nothing to say to one line, at least, of the blessed triplet—"On earth peace"—and therefore the whole harmony is untuned for me. The first "Gloria in Excelsis" died away over Bethlehem. What then? "It came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, then the men, even the shepherds, said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem." The men, the "shepherds" (so the Evangelist seems to say), represent the whole race of men. Even so, the Church keeps unending Christmas, keeps a new Christmas with every communion. The shepherds did their simple work of announcement. "They made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child;" while Mary, with her deeper and more reflective nature, "kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." Then "the shepherds returned, glorifying God" for His greatness, and "praising Him" for His goodness, laying the foundation for their glorification and praise "upon all the things which they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." The glory and music of angels did not tempt them from their work, but made them do it more gladly upon their return. There was more of heaven about it. So will it ever be with those who seek Him faithfully, and join truly in the "Gloria in Excelsis." (*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*) I. Glory to God in the highest. This glory arises from three sources—the matter of the gospel, the manner of its dissemination, and the effects it has produced upon the hearts and habits of men. 2. Glory to God arises from the manner and success of the dissemination of the Word of God, as well as from its matter and contents. 3. Glory is given to God from the effects which this gospel produces among men. In the experience of many it already begins a new heaven and a new earth. II. "On earth peace." Let us first ascertain the nature of this peace, and secondly, the way in which the Word of God promotes it, in order that

we may be able to seek peace also, and pursue the right way of hastening on its reign. There is the peace of ignorance, but this is the peace of delusion. There is peace from compromise, but this is the peace of hell. True peace between man and God, or between man and man, can flourish on true principle, and on nothing else. Let us briefly glance at a few features of this goodwill; next, at the way in which God exerts it, and lastly, infer the manner in which we also should show goodwill toward our fellowmen. It is a distinctive goodwill. Why did God pass by the angels that fell, and throw the arms of love around the children of men? It was also an undeserved goodwill. Before the Saviour came we lifted up no cry for the interposition of the mercy of God. Such is God's goodwill, and such His way of showing it. God will show His goodwill to the sinner, just by showing him his sin and his peril. If you saw a brother asleep, amid the darkness of night, enjoying the most delightful dreams, and at the same hour the house on fire around him, would you show him more goodwill by leaving him undisturbed, or by rousing him rudely from his sleep, and pointing his eye to the danger of his situation? This is God's way of manifesting His goodwill to men. (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) *Angels' acclamations*:—There never was such an apparition of angels as at this time; and there was great cause; for—1. There was never such a ground for it, whether we regard the matter itself, the incarnation of Christ. 2. Or whether we regard the benefit that comes to us thereby. Christ by this means brings God and man together since the fall. I shall especially stand upon those words; but somewhat is to be touched concerning the apparition of these angels. 1. The circumstances of their apparition. They appear to poor seepherds. God respects no callings. He will confound the pride of men, that set so much by that that God so little respects, and to comfort men in all conditions. 2. Again, the angels appeared to them in the midst of their business and callings; and indeed God's people, as Moses and others, have had the sweetest intercourse with God in their affairs; and ofttimes it is the fittest way to hinder Satan's temptations, and to take him off, to be employed in business, rather than to struggle with temptations. 3. And then they appeared to them in the night. God discovers Himself in the night of affliction. Our sweetest and strongest comforts are in our greatest miseries. God's children find light in darkness; nay, God brings light out of darkness itself. We see the circumstances then of this apparition. He calls these angels "a heavenly host" in divers respects, especially in these: (1) An host for number. Here are a number set down. A multitude is distinct from an host; but in that they are an host, they are a multitude; as in Dan. vii. 10, "Ten thousand times ten thousand angels attend upon God." And so, Rev. v. 11, there are a world of angels about the Church. In Heb. xii. 22, we are come to have communion with an "innumerable company of angels." Worldly, sottish men that live here below, they think there is no other state of things than they see. There is another manner of state and frame of things, if they had spiritual eyes to see the glory of God, and of Christ our Saviour, and their attendants there—an host, a multitude of heavenly angels. (2) An host likewise implies order; or else it is a rout, not an host or army. "God is the God of order, not of confusion" (1 Cor. xiv. 33). If you would see disorder, go to hell. (3) Again, here is consent; an host all joining together in praising God: "Glory to God on high." Christ commends union and consent (Matt. xviii. 20). Agreement in good is a notable resemblance of that glorious condition we shall enjoy in heaven. (4) An host of angels, it shows likewise their employment. But here is our comfort; we have a multitude, an host of angels, whose office is to defend the Church, and to offend the enemies of the Church, as we see in Scripture. (5) Again, an host implies strength. We have a strong garrison and guard. Angels severally are strong creatures. We see one of them destroyed all the first-born in Egypt; one of them destroyed the host of Sennacherib the Assyrian in one night. "And suddenly there was," &c. "Suddenly," in an unperceivable time, yet in time; for there is no motion in a moment, no creature moves from place to place in a moment. God is everywhere. "Suddenly," it not only shows us—1. Somewhat exemplary from the quick despatch of the angels in their business—we pray to God in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" that is, willingly, "suddenly," cheerfully;—2. But also it serves for comfort. If we be in any sudden danger, God can despatch an angel, "a multitude" of angels, to encamp about us "suddenly." What is the use and end of this glorious apparition? In regard of the poor shepherds, to confirm their faith, and in them ours; for if one or two witnesses confirm a thing,

what shall a multitude do? If one or two men confirm a truth, much more an host of heavenly angels. Therefore it is base infidelity to call this in question, that is confirmed by a multitude of angels. And to comfort them likewise in this apparition. We see by the way that for one Christian to confirm and comfort one another, it is the work of an angel, an angelical work; for one man to discourage another, it is the work of a devil. Thus much for the apparition. 2. Now the celebration is "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God." The word signifies "singing" as well as praise. It implies praise expressed in that manner; and indeed "praising God," it is the best expression of the affection of joy. The angels were joyful at the birth of Christ their Lord. Joy is no way better expressed than in "praising God;" and it is pity that such a sweet affection as joy should run in any other stream, if it were possible, than the "praising of God." God hath planted this affection of joy in the creature, and it is fit he should reap the fruit of his own garden. It is pity a clear stream should run into a puddle, it should rather run into a garden; and so sweet and excellent an affection as joy, it is pity it should be employed otherwise than "in praising God" and doing good to men. They express their joy in a suitable expression—"in praising God." The sweetest affection in man should have the sweetest employment. See here the pure nature of angels. They praise God for us. We have more good by the incarnation of Christ than they have; yet notwithstanding, such is their humility, that they come down with great delight from heaven, and praise and glorify God for the birth of Christ, who is not their, but our Redeemer. Some strength they have. There is no creature but hath some good by the incarnation of Christ; to the angels themselves, yet, however, they have some strength from Christ, in the increase of the number of the Church; yet He is not the Redeemer of angels. And yet see, their nature is so pure and so clear from envy and pride, that they even glorify God for the goodness showed to us—meaner creatures than themselves; and they envy not us, though we be advanced, by the incarnation of Christ, to a higher place than they. Let us labour therefore for dispositions angelical, that is, such as may delight in the good of others, and the good of other meaner than ourselves. And learn this also from them: shall they glorify God for our good especially, and shall we be dull and cold in praising God on our own behalf? There is some difference in the readings. Some copies have it, "On earth peace to men of goodwill," to men of God's goodwill; and so they would have it two branches, not three. If the word be rightly understood, it is no great matter. 1. First, the angels begin with the main and chief end of all. It is God's end; it was the angels' end, and it should be ours too, "Glory to God on high." 2. Then they wish the chief good of all, that whereby we are fitted for the main end, "peace." God cannot be glorified on earth unless there be peace wrought. 3. Then, thirdly, here is the ground of all happiness from whence this peace comes: from God's goodwill; from his good pleasure or free grace "to men of God's goodwill." To begin with the first: "Glory to God in the highest." The angels, those blessed and holy spirits, they begin with that which is the end of all. It is God's end in all things, His own glory. He hath none above Himself whose glory to aim at. And they wish "Glory to God in the highest heavens." Indeed, He is more glorified there than anywhere in the world. It is the place where His Majesty most appears; and the truth is, we cannot perfectly glorify God till we be in heaven. There is pure glory given to God in heaven. There is no corruption there in those perfect souls. There is perfect glory given to God in heaven. Here upon earth God is not glorified at all by many. In the mean time, let me add this by the way, that in some sort we may glorify God more on earth than in heaven. Here upon earth we glorify God in the midst of enemies; He hath no enemies in heaven; they are all of one spirit. In this respect, let us be encouraged to glorify God, what we can here: for if we begin to glorify God here, it is a sign we are of the number that He intends to glorify with Him for ever. The verb is not set down here; whether it should be, Glory *is* given to God; or whether, by way of wishing, "*Let* glory be given to God;" or by way of prediction or prophecy for the time to come, "Glory *shall be* to God," from hence to the end of the world. The verb being wanting, all have a truth. "Glory to God on high." Glory is excellency, greatness, and goodness, with the eminency of it, so as it may be discovered. There is a fundamental glory in things that are not discovered at all times. God is always glorious, but, alas! few have eyes to see it. In the former part of the chapter "light" is called the "glory of the Lord" (ver. 9). Light is a glorious creature. Nothing expresseth glory so much as light. It is a sweet creature, but

it is a glorious creature. It carries its evidence in itself; it discovers all other things and itself too. So excellency and eminency will discover itself to those that have eyes to see it; and being manifested, and withal taken notice of, is glory. In that the angels begin with the glory of God, I might speak of this doctrine, that the glory of God, the setting forth of the excellencies and eminencies of the Lord, should be the end of our lives, the chief thing we should aim at. The angels here begin with it, and we begin with it in the Lord's Prayer, "hallowed be Thy name." It should be our main employment (Rom. xi. 36). Well then, the incarnation of Christ, together with the benefits to us by it, that is, redemption, adoption, &c., it is that wherein God will show His glory most of all. That is the doctrinal truth. The glory and excellency of God doth most shine in His love and mercy in Christ. Every excellency of God hath its proper place or theatre where it is seen, as His power in the creation, his wisdom in His providence and ruling of the world, His justice in hell, His Majesty in heaven; but His mercy and kindness, His bowels of tender mercy, do most appear in His Church among His people. God shows the excellency of His goodness and mercy in the incarnation of Christ, and the benefits we have by it. Many attributes and excellencies of God shine in Christ, as—His truth: "All the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ" (2 Cor. i. 20). And then His wisdom, that he could reconcile justice and mercy, by joining two natures together. Likewise here is justice, justice fully satisfied in Christ. And of His holiness, that He would be no otherwise satisfied for sin. Therefore "glory to God in the highest heavens," especially for His free grace and mercy in Christ. Now that you may understand this sweet point, which is very comfortable, and indeed the grand comfort to a Christian, do but compare the glory of God, that is, the excellency and eminency of God's mercy, and goodness, and greatness of this work of redemption by Christ, with other things. 1. God is glorious in the work of creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God," and the earth manifests the glory of God. 2. Nay, the glory of God's love and mercy shined not to us so, when we were in Adam; not in Adam, for there God did good to a good man: He created him good, and showed goodness to him. That was not so much wonder. But for God to show mercy to an enemy, to a creature that was in opposition to Him, that was in a state of rebellion against Him, it is a greater wonder and more glory. That which I shall next stand upon, shall be to show (1) how we may know whether we glorify God for Christ or no; (2) and then the hindrances that keep us from glorifying God for this excellent good; (3) and the means how we may come to glorify God. 1. For the first, of glorifying God in general, I will not speak much. It would be large; and the point of glorifying God is most sweetly considered, as invested in such a benefit as this, when we think of it, not as an idea only, but think of it in Christ, for whom we have cause to glorify God, and for all the good we have by Him. (1) First, then, we hold tune with the blessed angels in giving glory to God, when we exalt God in our souls above all creatures and things in the world; when we lift Him up in His own place, and let Him be in our souls, as He is in Himself, in the most holy. God is glorious, especially in His mercy and goodness. Let Him be so in our hearts, in these sweet attributes, above all our unworthiness and sin. For God hath not glory from us till we give Him the highest place in our love and joy and delight, and all those affections that are set upon good, when they are set upon Him as the chief good; then we give Him His due place in our souls, we ascribe to Him that divinity, and excellency, and eminency that is due to Him. (2) Then again, we give glory to God for Christ, when we take all the favours we have from God in Christ, when we see Christ in everything. "All things are ours because we are Christ's" (1 Cor. iii. 23). (3) Then again, we give glory to God when we stir up others. All the angels consent. There was no discord in this harmony of the angels. (4) Again, we glorify God in Christ, when we see such glory and mercy of Christ, as it doth transform us and change us, and from an inward change we have alway a blessed disposition to glorify God, as I showed out of 2 Cor. iii. 18. Therefore if we find that the knowlege of God in Christ hath changed our dispositions, it is a sign then we give glory to God indeed. For to glorify God is an action that cannot proceed but from a disposition of nature that is altered and changed. The instrument must be set in tune before it can yield this excellent music, to glorify God as the angels do; that is, all the powers of the soul must be set in order with grace by the Spirit of God. (5) Again, we glorify God when we take to heart anything that may hinder, or stop, or eclipse God's truth, and obscure it; when it works zeal in us in our places as far as we can; when it affects us deeply to see the cause of religion hindered any way. If

there be any desire of glorifying God, there will be zeal. (6) Again, if we apprehend this glorious mystery of Christ in the gospel aright, it will work in us a glorious joy; for joy is a disposition especially that fits us to glorify God. 2. This being so excellent a duty, to which we are stirred by the angels, "Glory to God on high," &c., what are the main hindrances of it that we give not God more glory? (1) The main hindrances are a double veil of ignorance and unbelief, that we do not see the glorious light of God shining in Jesus Christ; or else if we do not know it, we do not believe it; and thereupon, instead of that blessed disposition that should be in the soul, there comes an admiration of carnal excellencies, a delighting in base things. (2) So likewise unbelief, when we hear and see and know the notion of mercy and of Christ, and can dispute of these things, like men that talk of that they never tasted of. 3. Now, the way to attain to this glorious duty, to glorify God. (1) First, therefore, if we would glorify God, we must redeem some time to think of these things, and bestow the strength of our thoughts this way. The soul being the most excellent thing in the world, it is fit it should be set on the excellentest duty. (2) Now, to help this, in the next place, beg of God the "Spirit of revelation" to discover to us these things in their own proper light, "for they are spiritually discerned." (3) And let us labour daily more and more to see the vanity of all things in the world. "Peace on earth." The same holy affection in the angels that moved them to wish God to have his due of glory from the creature, it moves them to wish peace to men likewise; to show this, by the way, that there can be no true zeal of God's glory but with love to mankind. They were not so ravished with the glory of God as to forget poor man on earth. Oh no! They have sweet, pure affections to man, a poorer creature than themselves. Therefore let them that are injurious and violent in their dispositions, and insolent in their carriage, never talk of glorifying God, when they despise and wrong men. There are some that overthrow all peace in the earth for their own glory, but he that seeks God's glory will procure peace what he can; for they go both together, as we see here, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth." Now, their end of wishing peace upon earth, it is that men might thereby glorify God, that God being reconciled, and peace being stablished in men's consciences, they might glorify God. Hence observe this likewise, that we cannot glorify God till we have some knowledge of our peace with him in Christ. The reason is, peace comes from righteousness. Christ is first the "King of righteousness," and then "King of peace;" righteousness causeth peace. Now, unless the soul be assured of righteousness in Christ, it can have no peace. For can we heartily wish for the manifestation of the glory of him that we think is our enemy, and him that we have no interest in his greatness and goodness? The heart of man will never do it, therefore God must first speak peace to the soul—the angels knew that well enough—and then we are fit to glorify God. "Peace on earth." What is peace? It is the best thing that man can attain unto, to have peace with his Maker and Creator. Peace, in general, is a harmony and an agreement of different things. 1. First, there is a scattering and a division from God, the fountain of good, with whom we had communion in our first creation, and His delight was in His creature. 2. Then there is a separation between the good angels and us; for they being good subjects, take part with their prince, and therefore join against rebels, as we are. 3. Then there is a division and scattering between man and man. 4. And then there is a division and separation between a man and the creature, which is ready to be in arms against any man that is in the state of nature, to take God's quarrel, as we see in the plagues of Egypt and other examples. 5. And they have no peace with themselves. Then if we be at peace with God, all other peace will follow; for good subjects will be at peace with rebels, when they are brought in subjection to their king, and all join in one obedience. Therefore the angels are brought to God again by Christ. And so for men, there is a spirit of union between them. The same Spirit that knits us to God by faith, knits us one to another by love. And we have peace with the creature, for when God, who is the Lord of hosts, is made peaceful to us, He makes all other things peaceable. All peace with God, with angels, and with creatures is stablished in Christ. And why in Christ? Christ is every way fitted for it, for He is the Mediator between God and man; therefore by office He is fit to make peace between God and man. He is Emmanuel, Himself God and man in one nature; therefore His office is to bring God and man together. 1. It is fit it should be so in regard of God, who being a "consuming fire," will no peace with the creature without a mediator. It

stands not with His majesty, neither can there ever be peace with us otherwise. 2. It was also fit, in respect of us, it should be so. Alas! "who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa. xxxiii. 14). Who can have communion with God, who is a "consuming fire?" No. We cannot endure the sight of an angel. 3. If we look to Christ Himself, He being God's Son, and the Son of His love, for Him to make us sons, and sons of God's love. Is it not most agreeable, that He that is the image of God, should again renew the image of God that we lost? "Peace upon earth." Why doth He say, "peace on earth"? Because peace was here wrought upon earth by Christ in the days of His flesh, when he offered Himself "a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to His Father." Because here in earth we must be partakers of it. We ofttimes defer to make our peace with God from time to time, and think there will be peace made in another world. Oh, beloved, our peace must be made on earth. But to come to some trials, whether we have this peace made or no; whether we can say in spirit and truth, there is a peace established between God and us. 1. For a ground of this, that may lead us to further trial, know that Christ hath reconciled God and us together, not only by obtaining peace, by way of satisfaction, but by way of application also. He gives a spirit of application to improve that peace, to improve "Christ, the Prince of peace," as their own. To come to some more familiar evidences, whether we be at peace with God, and whether we have the comfort of this peace, established by Christ, or no. 2. Those that are reconciled one to another have common friends and common enemies. 3. Another evidence of "peace" made in Christ between God and us, is a boldness of spirit and acquaintance with God (Job xxii. 21). 4. A Christian that hath made his "peace" with God, will never allow himself in any sin against conscience. 5. Again, where there is a true peace established, there is a high esteem of the word of peace, the gospel of reconciliation, as St. Paul calls it (2 Cor. v. 18). 6. Lastly, those that have found peace are peaceable. In the next place, to give a few directions to maintain this peace actually and continually every day. 1. To walk with God, and to keep our daily peace with God, it requires a great deal of watchfulness over our thoughts,—for He is a Spirit, over our words and actions. Watchfulness is the preserver of peace. 2. And because it is a difficult thing to maintain terms of peace with God, in regard of our indisposition, we fall into breaches with God daily; therefore we should often renew our covenants and purposes every day. 3. Again, if we would maintain this peace, let us be always doing somewhat that is good and pleasing to God. In the same chapter (Philip. iv. 8), "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure," &c., "think of these things. Now, to stir us up more and more to search the grounds of our peace, I beseech you, let us consider the fearful estate of a man that hath not made his peace with God. "Goodwill towards men." Divers copies have it otherwise, "On earth peace to men of goodwill." Some have it, "Goodwill towards men." The sense is not much different. Peace on earth, "To men of God's goodwill, of God's good pleasure." That God hath a pleasure to save, or "goodwill towards men," of God's good pleasure; "Peace on earth," to men of God's goodwill and pleasure; or God's good pleasure towards men. 1. God shews now good pleasure towards men. The love that God bears towards man hath divers terms, from divers relations. Now this free goodwill and grace, it is towards men, towards mankind. He saith not, towards angels. And learn this for imitation, to love mankind. God loved mankind; and surely there is none that is born of God, but he loves the nature of man, wheresoever he finds it. 2. This *εὐδοκία*, "goodwill of God," to restore lapsed man by the sending of His Son, is the ground of all good to man, and hath no ground but itself. I come to the last point, because I would end this text at this time. 3. This free love and grace of God is only in Christ. (*R. Sibbes.*) *The angels' song*:—But what did the heavenly choir mean? They could not mean that, at that moment, there was "Peace on the earth"? Was it a prayer? "May there be glory to God in the highest, and may there be peace on earth, and may there be goodwill toward men!" Or was it propheoy? Did they foresee that the time would come that this would be the blessed condition of our world?—a time not yet arrived. The angel who led the band, had spoken of joy, only joy, "great joy," prophetic joy, "which should be to all people," a joy prophetic still. But the rushing "multitude of the angel host" carried the note higher, and gave no limit of time; and they did not say joy, but peace—"Peace on earth." Is it that, even to an angel's mind, peace is above joy? Or, was it that they thought and knew that this was what our world most wanted? They had been accustomed to

look upon the peace of heaven, where everything has found its resting-place, and everything is calm: where there is not a sound which is not like the flow of waters: where a discordant note is never heard: where all hearts are in one sweet concord: where all is dove-like gentleness! No wonder, then, that they drew their anthems from the scenes they lived in. We have to do now only with peace. And the stress lies in the words, "On earth." No marvel if there should be peace in heaven. No angel would care to proclaim a thing so certain. A "peace" that has sadly left us, since that day when sin came in! Observe the course of the facts of our world's history. Adam and Eve who, till that moment, were as one, now wrangled, which is the guiltiest? The first death upon this earth is fratricide; and the murdering brother, in his callous heart, cares nothing! The whole world is at enmity with God; and, save a few elect of every kind, every creature perishes in one vast engulphing flood! The earliest building upon record ends in a confusion, and is stamped a Babel! Even Abraham and Lot have to part; and Isaac quarrels with Ishmael; and Jacob with Esau; and Joseph has no peace with his brethren. "Peace on earth!" where is it? Where does she hide herself? Is she in the valleys? is she among the mountains? Is she in the high places of kings? Is she in the cottage? Is she in the Church? Is she, as she ought to be, in any one single man that walks this earth? But what is "peace"? The after creation—the rest of the soul—the concord of hearts—the reflection of heaven—the image of God. We must examine it more closely. It is human peace the angels sang: "Peace on earth." What is the peace of a man? First, there must be peace with God. God has said it universally, "There shall be no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." But peace makes peace. Peace with God in the soul, makes peace in the soul, and peace in the soul makes peace with the world. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The influence of Christianity on the temporal condition of mankind:*—I. ON NATIONAL CHARACTER. II. ON SOCIAL INTERCOURSE. 1. Christianity imparts to social intercourse a principle of equity. 2. A character of mildness to the intercourse of social life. 3. A principle of benevolence. III. ON THE DOMESTIC SCENE. IV. ON THE INDIVIDUAL. 1. It secures his property. 2. It promotes his health. 3. It guards his reputation. (*T. Raffles, D.D.*) *National peace:*—And indeed national feuds are the more odious and unchristian, by how much Christ hath called all people to the sprinkling of the same water, and to alike participation of His body and blood at the same table. And it was well apprehended of one, that God hath given unto men more excellent gifts in the skill of navigation since His son is born, than ever they had before; that He might show the way how all the kingdoms of the earth should be sociable together: for Christ hath breathed His peace upon all the kingdoms of the world. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Christ adverse to some kinds of peace:*—Yet very true that none is a greater adversary than our Saviour to some sorts of peace. The peace of Christ breaks the confederacy which sinners have in evil; it defies the devil and the vain pomp of the world; it draws the sword against blasphemy and idolatry; it will not let a man be at quiet within himself when he is full of vicious concupiscence. To make a covenant with hell, as the prophet speaks, or to have any fellowship with the works of darkness. (*Ibid.*) *Peace and sanctity not incompatible:*—The very name of peace is sweet and lovely: it is the calm of the world, the smile of nature, the harmony of things, a gentle and melodious air struck from well-tuned affairs; a blessing, so excellent and amiable, that in this world there is but one preferable before it, and that is, holiness. And, certainly, great glory doth dwell in that land, where these two sister-blessings, righteousness and peace, do meet and kiss each other, as the Psalmist speaks (Psa. lxxxv. 9, 10). I know, that there are hot and turbulent spirits enough abroad, who are apt to suspect whatsoever is spoken on the behalf of peace, to be to the disadvantage of holiness: and, perhaps, some men's zeal may be such a touchy and froward thing, that, though an angel from heaven, yea an innumerable multitude of them, proclaim it; yet they cannot believe there may be glory to God in the highest, whilst there is peace on earth. Indeed, if peace and sanctity were incompatible, or if any unhappy circumstances should compel us to redeem the one at the price of the other; we ought rather to follow righteousness through thorns and briars, than peace in its smoothest way strewed with roses. But there is no such inconsistency between them: for, certainly, that God, who hath commanded us to follow both peace and holiness (Heb. xii. 14), supposeth that they themselves may well go together. We may well suspect that zeal to be but an unclean bird of prey, that delights to quarry upon the dove; and those erratic lights, which make the vulgar gaze and the wise fear, to be but glaring comets, whose

bloody aspects and eccentric irregular motions threaten nothing but wars, ruin, and desolations. Righteousness doth not oblige us, so soon as anything is passed contrary to our present judgments and persuasions, nay suppose it be contrary to the truth also, straight to furbish our weapons, to sound an alarm, and to kill others in defence of that cause for which we ourselves rather ought to die. This is not to part with peace for righteousness; but to sacrifice both peace and righteousness, to injustice and violence. The cause of God, of piety and religion, may frequently engage us to forego our own peace, as sufferers and martyrs; but never to disturb the public peace of our country, as fighters and warriors. (*E. Hopkins, D.D.*)

Ver. 15. **Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see.**—*Bethlehem's wonder*:—Every year the Christian heart takes, in thought, the shepherd's pilgrimage to Bethlehem. In this district lay the fields of Boaz in which Ruth gleaned. Here the son of Obed was born. David was anointed in Bethlehem. Best of all, in Bethlehem was Christ revealed. It was not without significance that Bethlehem, "The House of Bread," should be the birthplace of Him who had come down from heaven to be the Bread of Life for men, and that He, who was in after years to be the Friend of the people and Saviour of the world, to be Himself so straitened as often to have nowhere to lay His head, should commence His earthly pilgrimage within the precincts of a stable. Let us ask what it was that the Bethlehem manger contained. I. A VIRGIN'S CHILD. II. ISRAEL'S MESSIAH. III. THE WORLD'S SAVIOUR. IV. GOD'S SON. Transcendent mystery! Thought is paralyzed when it attempts to conceive how the Eternal could become a child of days, how the Infinite could be reduced to dimensions, how the Adorable Creator could become one with His own creature. Let it kindle our gratitude that we can understand something of the purpose of this sublime mystery, if even we can learn nothing of its manner. The Son of God became incarnate, that He might reveal the Father, that He might exemplify human virtue, that He might take away our sins, and that He might be able thereby to make us partakers of His own Divine nature. (*T. W.*) *The first pilgrims to the stable of Bethlehem*:—1. Their pilgrim mind. 2. Their pilgrim staff. 3. Their pilgrim hope. 4. Their pilgrim joy. 5. Their pilgrim thanksgiving. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *How men receive the good news of God*:—I.—1. In order that man may possess the blessings which are brought upon earth in the Person of the Incarnate Word, he must be willing to obey the Divine Voice which bids him seek if he would find. 2. The shepherds are not content with wondering at the Divine mystery which has been made known to them, nor yet with listening to the angelic song, but they hasten to Him who is born their Saviour. Being thus obedient they are filled with the angelic spirit, and they are also able to glorify God for that which they have seen and heard. Simple faith and obedience lift up the humblest to share in the work of the angels of God. 3. Yet there are many, who hearing these things, regard them only with idle and fruitless wonder (ver. 18) instead of pondering them in their hearts as Mary did. II.—1. The gospel message that God is made man is for ever ringing in our ears. How does it affect us? There are many who are ready to study Christian doctrine as an interesting phase of human thought, or as a bright poetic vision, but who never find the Child of Bethlehem as a Saviour in very deed. 2. If we have thus found Him, our belief will show itself, either (1) by summoning us to enter into the company of those elect few who, like Mary, are absorbed in meditation on the Divine mysteries, or (2) by giving us power to praise and glorify God in the common occupations of daily life, in union with these shepherds who returned to the work of their sheepfolds, filled with a new life from on high. 3. Let us pray, at any rate, we be not among those to whom the gospel is a mere matter of curiosity and empty wonder, exercising no influence on their lives, and forgotten in the excitement of some new incident of an unusual kind. (*Canon Vernon Hutton, M.A.*) *The faith of the shepherds, true faith*:—1. Its foundation. (1) God's Word. (2) God's deed. 2. Its properties. (1) Emotion of heart. (2) Activity of life. 3. Its aim. (1) The spreading of the kingdom of God upon earth. (2) The glory of God. (*Harless.*) *The shepherds as patterns for imitation*:—1. They seek the Child in the stable and the manger. 2. They spread the gospel message everywhere. 3. They praise God with thankful joy. (*Ahlfeld.*) *The shepherds' celebration of Christmas*:—1. Their going. 2. Their seeing. 3. Their spreading abroad the saying. 4. Their return to their avocations. (*Arndt.*) *A pilgrimage to Bethlehem*:—God gives men information to put them upon action. No sooner are the shepherds informed of the Saviour's birth, than they say, "Let

us, then, go and see Him." It will be well for us to imitate them, and take a pilgrimage to Bethlehem. I. Let us go to Bethlehem, and see DEITY DISPLAYED. It was necessary for our redemption that the Saviour of men should be a man; for the same nature that sinned must bear the punishment of sin. In what manner the human nature was united to the Divine, we cannot tell. It is enough for us to know that it was so united (Matt. i. 23; John i. 1, 14; 1 Tim. iii. 16, 16). Jesus Christ is God manifested in the flesh. Let us go to Bethlehem, and see this great sight. Angels desire to look at it. Glorious mystery! II. Let us go to Bethlehem, and behold MAN REDEEMED. The redemption of fallen, guilty, helpless man, was the grand design of the Saviour's birth. There is something delightful in the name "Saviour." Cicero, the Roman orator, said, that when travelling in Greece, he saw a pillar inscribed with this word—Saviour. He admired the fulness of the name, but he knew not its Christian meaning. How much more may the redeemed sinner admire it! We must have perished, had He not come and saved us. III. Let us take another turn to Bethlehem, and see SATAN RUINED. Ever since, in the garden of Eden, he seduced our first parents, Satan has ruled the children of disobedience, and led men captive at his will. At the birth of Christ his throne began to totter, and it will go on shaking until it is utterly destroyed. Christ by His death has destroyed him that had the power of death, and by His rising again has delivered all who were held in bondage by Satan. (*George Burder.*) *Teaching from Christ's cradle*:—You all feel more or less the trials, the mystery of life, its sufferings and its sins. One and One only can alleviate for you those trials, can explain that mystery, can remove that suffering, can heal those sins. Would you understand anything either of this life or of the life beyond? You can only do so by watching the life of your Saviour, by coming to Christ's cradle, by standing behind His cross, by sitting with the deathless angel in His forsaken tomb. Follow Him with the eagle eye of faith, and then you may see the heavens open and Jesus Christ standing on the right hand of God. I ask you, then, for a moment or two to stand with me beside the cradle of your Lord, in the manger at Bethlehem, and catch something of what we there may learn. 1. Some of you are poor. How glad for you, beyond all utterance, should be the meaning of Christmas! Your Lord was, as you are, poor—as poor as any of you. The lot which He chose for His own was your lot. Look at your own little children with love and reverence, for He, too, was the child of the poor. Your rooms, in garret or in celler, are not more comfortless than that manger at Bethlehem; nor is your labour humbler than His in that shop of the village carpenter at Nazareth. It was to the poor, to the humble, to the ignorant, to those poor shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night, that the heavens flashed forth with angel wings. They were the first to see in that cradle the Blessed Child. Cannot you, in heart or mind, go with them. Let Christ's cradle teach you to respect yourselves, to reverence with a nobler self-esteem the nature which He gave you and took upon Himself, and which, by taking upon Himself, He redeemed. 2. And some are rich. Oh! come ye also to the manger-cradle of your Lord, for rich men did come both to His cradle and to His tomb. From the far East came those three wise men—the "three kings of the East," as they are called—they came, as the rich should come, with the gifts, willing and humble gifts, not doled forth with murmurs as a burden, but lavished as a privilege with delight. First of all they gave, as we all may and must give, themselves—the gold of worthy lives, the frankincense of holy worship, the myrrh of consecrated sorrow. They might have kept their gold and their treasures for their own selfishness, for their own gratification, for the enhancement of their personal luxury, for the enrichment of their sons and daughters. They might have stamped their substance with a vulgar commonplace possession; but do not you think it was happier for them that they made their gifts immortal by offering them at the cradle of their Lord? You may do the very same thing to-day. You may give your gifts at the cradle of your Lord to-day. If you give to one of the least of these your brethren, you give it unto Him. 3. Many of you are sorrowful. So was He. Whatever be the form of your sorrow, and it may be very varied—be it loneliness, or agony of body, or anxiety of mind, or the sorrows inflicted by the vulgarity or baseness of other men—He bore it all, even to the cross. That soft and tender Child by whose cradle we stand to-day, the shadow of His cross falls even on His cradle, the crimson of His sunset flushes even His golden dawn; and, perfected by suffering, He would teach every one of us out of our sorrows to make springs of tenderness and strength and beauty. 4. All of you are sinners; and to you the news of that birth is indeed "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and

goodwill towards men." While you may see there how much God hates the sin, you may see also how tenderly, how earnestly He loves the sinner. Let us come to this cradle: let the lepers come, and let the outcasts come, and the mourners with their tear-stained cheeks, and the sinners with their broken hearts, and the young man with his selfwill and his strong unconquered passions, and the poor with their struggling lives, and the rich with their many temptations, and let them kneel and drink freely of the waters of Siloam which flow softly, and let them bathe their sick and shivering souls in the golden tide of heaven's beatitude, and stand in the circle of heaven's own free light, undarkened by any shadow; let them escape the errors which darken the mind, the lusts which destroy the body, the sins which corrupt the soul; and so one and all wish one another a happy Christmas time, as I do from my heart to all of you to-day. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *The festival of Christmas:*—This, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing," &c., was the resolution of the shepherds on the original Christmas Day. May it be our own! "Come and see," is written upon the gospel. There is no secrecy and no concealment in it. It challenges inquiry. I. WE HAVE A FACT BEFORE US: "UNTO YOU IS BORN A SAVIOUR." It is a summary of revelation. 1. It presupposes a ruin. 2. It assumes that salvation must come from without. 3. It declares that the Deliverer, though He comes from without the creature, must enter into it by incorporation. There must be a birth to bring in the Saviour into the Cosmos. "Unto you is born a Saviour"—Incarnation makes Him such. II. When we try to obey the summons the first thing which we notice is, that CHRISTMAS DAY IS THE FESTIVAL OF REDEMPTION AS A WHOLE. It presents to us, not so much one part or one element of the gospel, but rather the intervention of God in Christ to save sinners as a single and complete act, containing in itself all that was necessary to give it validity and efficacy. III. But the festival of Christmas, though its foundation lies so deep, has a thought for all natures. It is in an especial sense THE FESTIVAL OF THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF CHRISTIANITY. IV. Christmas is by common consent THE FESTIVAL OF THE FAMILY AND THE HOME. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Let us now go even unto Bethlehem:*—And what shall we find when we get there? I. THAT OTHERS HAVE BEEN THERE BEFORE US. 1.—Here are the shepherds. Let us ask them to tell their story. They say that they were watching their flocks on the hill-side, with no sounds to break the stillness but the occasional bleating of the sheep, when suddenly they became aware that they were in the presence of a glory brighter than that of noonday. An angel stood there, and as they shrank in affright from the wondrous vision, the angel spoke, and said, "Fear not," &c." And then there appeared with him "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God," &c. And—

When such music sweet,
Their heart and ears did greet,
As never was by mortal fingers strook,
Divinely warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took
The air such pleasure loathe to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolonged each heavenly close.

The anthem died away. The light faded from the hills. The angelic host departed. And the shepherds leaving their flocks, as afterwards the woman (John iv. 28) left her waterpot, set out to see the new-born Saviour whom the angels sang. They found what? The splendour and magnificence befitting His birth who was heir of all things, and King of kings? No, but "Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." And still, though that was what they saw, they returned glorifying and praising God. 2. But not only the shepherds—others also, and men very different from these, have been to Bethlehem before us. They are not shepherds but sages. They have come not from some near hill-side. They are travel-stained and weary, for they have travelled long and far. They tell us that they have seen a new star, blazing and flashing in the sky, and that, led by that star, they have come to the place where lay the young Child and His mother; have worshipped Him, and presented to Him precious gifts. And now, their quest ended and rewarded, and the star having paled before the Sun of Righteousness who has arisen with healing in His wings, they are wending their way home by another route, with a new hope born in their hearts. 3. And not only shepherds and sages, but a countless multitude through all the Christian centuries, have been heart-pil-

grims to Bethlehem before us, and have declared that "this thing which had come to pass" was the one thing needed to give them peace here below and the hope of heaven hereafter. II. BUT WHAT WENT THEY ALL OUT TO SEE, AND WHAT SHALL WE SEE IF, LIKE THEM, WE GO NOW EVEN UNTO BETHLEHEM? 1. The reality of Christ's humanity. 2. The self-sacrificing power of Divine love. Our gladness cost Christ grief. Our salvation His humiliation. 3. The perfection of Christ's example. As we stand by the manger and know that that cradle means the cross, let us pray that "the same mind may be in us which was also in Christ Jesus." (*J. R. Bailey.*) *This thing*:—I. Is of supreme interest as an event in the world. Outweighs all other great events of history. II. Has to do with all time and all men. III. Should be seriously inquired into by each one of us personally. IV. Should receive our serious attention without delay. 1. Because you are losing happiness in proportion to your neglect of Christ. 2. Because you are missing the Divine method of spiritual life and heavenward growth. 3. Because with present conduct are bound up the solemn issues of the eternal future. (*W. Manning.*) *The visit of the shepherds*:—I. How came they to make this visit? They were directed by the angel. II. There was no delay in the visit: "Let us go now." That is the secret of finding Christ. III. Why did they go away rejoicing? Because they found everything just as God had said. So if we seek and find Jesus we shall go joyfully on our journey. (*Sermons for Boys and Girls.*) *Which is come to pass*:—Every Divine prophecy has its counterpart and fulfilment sooner or later in the events of human history. If God has said, "It shall come to pass," the time will come at which men shall say, "It is come to pass." (*J. R. Bailey.*) *Which the Lord hath made known to us*:—Mark that. When there is anything specially important it is the Lord that makes it known to us. You would never have heard a syllable of this, if the Lord had not made it known to you. (*T. Mortimer, B.D.*) *The adoration of the shepherds*:—I. THE TRUTH INVESTIGATED. "The shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." It will be felt at once that there was very little room in their case for scepticism. The manner of the revelation had been supernatural, and they could scarcely doubt the correctness of the information who had received it through the ministration of angels. The inquiry must be conducted in a humble and teachable spirit. It is of no use coming to it at all if we come in the spirit of self-sufficiency. Some men seem wonderfully baffled by the mysteries there are in grace. And, after all, it is no real calamity that there is mystery connected with all the departments of knowledge. Twilights are not altogether destitute of enjoyment: even the indistinct apprehension of truth has its pleasures; and these experiences do but herald the coming light. The objector may say, "Then what is the use of inquiring? You ask us to test the truth concerning Christ, and then you practically check our inquiry by telling us that there is mystery and that we must trust!" "Not so," we reply. All we want you to see is that nature and revelation are alike in this respect, that in each department there are profound mysteries, problems you cannot solve; and just as you accept this in reference to the former, and take this for granted in all your researches into her domain, so we ask you candidly to accept this in relation to the latter; and further, just as you search into Nature, and form your own conclusions from what you can clearly apprehend, so we ask you in the same spirit to test the claims of Christ. Be assured His life and character, and His influence and power over human hearts will bear the closest scrutiny; and if the investigation is approached in the right spirit, then, despite all mysteries, the inquirer shall be led to Christ, and adoringly shall say unto Him: "Thou art the Son of God: Thou art the King of Israel!" "Immanuel, God with us." II. THE TRUTH PROCLAIMED. "And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child." Let us look at these first heralds or proclaimers, that we may get a little stimulus, as Christian workers, from what is recorded respecting them. Clearly, they were not men of culture: they were humble, unpretending shepherds. Yet, for all this, they were genuine preachers of the truth concerning Christ. The lack of intellectual endowments or of educational advantages must not be pleaded in excuse for the neglect of this duty. "Go, tell the good news to thy neighbour." "Let him that heareth say, Come!" These men, if unlettered, could at any rate speak from experience. They had heard the voice from heaven and had seen the young child. And it was this personal experience which fitted them for service and inspired them with a true enthusiasm.

And then, their hearts were full of love. The scene they had witnessed had touched their hearts with love to the new-born King, and the sweet songs of angels to which they had listened, proclaiming "peace on earth and goodwill toward men," had fired their souls with the spirit of a true brotherhood. Dr. Tholuck relates how that one who had been a great traveller said to him that he had scarcely ever fallen into company with fellow-travellers without speaking to them of the heavenly journey. Tholuck almost questioned the propriety of forcing such conversation. "Ah," responded his friend, "I endeavoured never to speak till I was certain that I loved. I figured to myself that we are all brothers one of another, and this never failed to soften my heart, and when there was love in mine I soon found a bridge into that of the stranger. It was as though the breath of God had drawn out a thread from the one and had fastened it to the other." Nor must we overlook the fact that these proclaimers kept to the one theme, Christ. They made known "the saying" concerning Christ, but they did so with a view of leading those who heard them to Him. III. THE TRUTH EXEMPLIFIED. "And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things which they had heard and seen, as it was told them." They not only tested and proclaimed the truth concerning Christ, but they exemplified it in their conduct and life. Too many, alas! are content with a very defective Christian life and character. The eminent Church historian, Neander, in speaking of the Stoics, remarks that there were many among them who did nothing more than make an idle parade of the lofty maxims of the ancient philosophers, embellishing their halls with their busts, whilst their own lives were abandoned to every vice. And even so there are to be found among the professed disciples of Jesus those who are very unworthy representatives of Him, and who by their failings bring dishonour upon His cause. (*S. D. Hillman, B.A.*) *Quiet thoughts, after high revelations*:—I pretend not, brethren, to sum up in these few words what such aims and endeavours should be; but to set forth the spirit of them is enough. 1. You cannot, for example, go to seek Him "in the flesh," who was sought of old time in the stable at Bethlehem; but there are other humble roofs, and uninviting abodes, where you may seek, and haply find, "the Lord of life!" For Christ yet abides with His own; and very especially among the poorest and most helpless of His flock. Go to them, and you go to Him. Keep up a kindly, habitual compassion for their trials. 2. So again, you have no heaven-sent marvels of which to tell; you cannot report to others of the descent of the Angel of the Lord; nor of the gathering of an host of "ministering spirits" from above, chanting their adoration "to God and the Lamb!" But you can tell, perhaps, of the peace you may yourselves have read beneath the burning stars of some Christmas night. You can tell, perhaps, of some rough way that you yourselves have trod, and found, by God's grace, consolation and "hope in its end." 3. And need I point to one deeper and dearer realization of our subject yet? It stands in the fact that this sacred season has many opportunities for Holy Communion; for that best and most privileged way in which we can "keep the Feast." He will be veiled in His Sacrament, as aforetime in His flesh; but the same Immanuel, "God with you!" And, surely, you will return to your own paths and your own ways, like your proto-types of Bethlehem, praising and glorifying God for all the benefits that He hath done unto you; having received the Cup of Salvation, and having been answered in the name of the Lord! (*J. Puckle, M.A.*) *The significance of Christmas*:—I. Here is a lesson of doctrinal theology. II. A lesson of intellectual theology. A new revelation of God is given to man in the incarnate Christ. III. A lesson in experimental theology. IV. A lesson in emotional theology. It is a theophany of love. V. A lesson of practical theology. The shepherds and wise men came in the spirit of earnest consecration. VI. A lesson of consolation, of gladness, of rapture. (*C. Wadsworth, D.D.*) *Faith outliving its special occasions*:—The trial of men's faith comes after God's awakening angels have gone away. To us God's favouring messengers are stripped of their miraculous raiment. They take the shape of merciful providences to relieve and comfort us, of Christian ordinances to strengthen us, festivals to reawaken our thanksgiving, and human hearts to enrich the poverty of ours with their affection. In the fresh mercy of some gracious deliverance, from sadness or pain or accident or threatened sorrow, men cast their thank-offering into the treasury of the Church, and wonder that they should ever be forgetful of God's care. In the stillness of a sanctuary, when all the harmonies of holy times and places seem to shut out temptation, to set open the windows of heaven, and fill the uplifted spirit with hearty praise, men say, "Would to God all days and places were like this; for

then faith, and zeal, and charity never would grow cold!" In the warmth of the feast it is easy to be glad. But these hours pass by. The angels are gone away into heaven. The festive lights are put out; the temple-doors are shut; the winter snow lies white and smooth on the little grave in the burial-ground. The world comes crowding, beseeching, flattering, threatening, almost forcing its way back, with its noise and its guilt, into the unguarded and yielding heart. Then comes the test of the reality, the sincerity, the power, of your Christian principles. When the song ceased, the first Christmas Eve, and the bright host vanished from the sky, the shepherds did not fall asleep again, and so have only a dream to tell the next morning. They verified the vision, like earnest and constant men. Secondly: Such willingness to watch and seek commonly leads, as it does here, to an equal readiness to believe when the promise is fulfilled, and they that have sought Christ find Him. They might have said—and if they had been modern philosophers, conceited critics, or ambitious naturalists, they would have been very sure to say—to each other, "Beware how you believe; these, to be sure, are extraordinary phenomena; they look very much as miracles are said to look—brilliant figures plainly seen by many witnesses, nay, by our own eyes, and articulate melodies from their tongues!—but possibly electricity, meteorology, optics, or acoustics may explain them all;—light or sound." They say, "We will look into our books. It is extremely unlikely that nature would interrupt her order, or let in new light by a new channel. Let us take care not to be ridiculed for believing too much." Glories of heaven and earth, grander than telescopes ever pierced among the stars, or hammers ever uncovered in the rocks, pass by, and there is no vision to behold them. Spiritual things not seen for want of spiritual senses! God knew whom He was choosing when He opened Heaven on those clear-hearted keepers of simple flocks. They discredited neither messenger nor message. Thirdly: When faith is prompt, honest, and manly, like this, it comes out as it does in these brave men, to an open confession. The shepherds said what they said frankly, "one to another," and with one consent. So they did not hide their purposes, or play fast and loose with their convictions. Will those men who have resolved to go to Bethlehem and see, really arise and go? Many a Christian life falters and fails in every congregation between these two. Will resolve pass on into action, and a good faith confirm and demonstrate itself in good works? Yes, "they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Visions are transient; the festival is but for a day; the angels go away into heaven. But the indwelling Christ abides. (*F. D. Huntingdon, D.D.*)

Vers. 16–18. **And they came with haste.** The course pursued by the shepherds is vividly typical of that which should be pursued by all Christian inquirers. 1. A process of inquiry. 2. The joy of distinct confirmation. 3. A bold proclamation of the truth which has been realized. The gospel is self-propagating. Wherever it makes a convert it makes a preacher. Have we made known abroad what we ourselves have experienced of the power and love of Christ? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets! We want more than the formal sermon. We need the simple personal testimony of every believing heart. In the case of Mary, it is plain that silence must not always be regarded as a sign of indifference. Her joy and her wonder were too great for speech. She had, indeed, had her period of exultation, and the calmness which followed was but the natural expression of a chastened feeling. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Birthday contrasts*:—On the 5th of September, 1639, in the faubourg St. Germain, of Paris, then a little village surrounding the palace of King Louis XIII., was crowded the blue blood of France. Around that royal home of the kings of France had gathered all that was noble, all that was great in the land, in honour of the birth of a child to the king. In an antechamber within the palace the bishops of the Church were waiting to christen the child on its birth. Soon a nurse entered the room, bearing the child upon a pillow, and kneeling, she said, "Sire, it is my honour to bring you this son and heir." The proud king carried the babe to an open window, and, addressing the waiting multitudes, exclaimed, "My son, gentlemen, my son!" The bells rang, the people shouted, and for a week France was wild with joy. The 19th of March, 1812, 173 years later, was the eve of another great birthday in France. The little Corsican, the man of destiny, was on the throne. He had put away one wife and taken another, and the birth of a child was expected. Twenty-one guns were to be fired if a daughter was born, a hundred if the child was a boy. On the 20th of March, at six o'clock in the morning, the booming of cannon was heard. All Paris

waited and listened. When the twenty-second gun was heard a mighty shout arose, and there was great rejoicing in every part of France. The dynasty of Bonaparte had a son and heir. It is impossible, men and brethren, as we come together this morning to celebrate the anniversary of another birth that the contrast between that one and these should be overlooked. There was no royalty in Bethlehem; the palace was a stable, the cradle was a manger, but what a contrast paid to Him born at that time by a whole world for eighteen centuries. The child born in St. Germain was Louis XIV., the Grand King, who ruled for many years, who first said, "I am the State." But he lived to see that the sun of his dynasty was setting. The other son died ere he had reached man's estate, obscure and neglected. Five years after the guns had fired in honour of his birth his father was a prisoner of war. Looking back to that manger in Bethlehem, we see stepping from it a royalty which has governed the world. What a conquest, what a history is His! It is told in one of the apocryphal books that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem the earth stopped on its axis, and movement upon it suddenly ceased. A great light, an ineffable joy, had come upon the world, and that light, that joy, eighteen crowded busy centuries has not diminished. (*Bishop H. C. Potter.*) *The gospel a source of wonder*:—Many are set a-wondering by the gospel. They are content to hear it, pleased to hear it; if not in itself something new, yet there are new ways of putting it, and they are glad to be refreshed with the variety. The preacher's voice is unto them as the sound of one that giveth a goodly tune upon an instrument. They are glad to listen. They are not sceptics, they do not cavil, they raise no difficulties; they just say to themselves, "It is an excellent gospel, it is a wonderful plan of salvation. Here is most astonishing love, most extraordinary condescension." Sometimes they marvel that these things should be told them by shepherds; they can hardly understand how unlearned and ignorant men should speak of these things. But after holding up their hands and opening their mouths for about nine days, the wonder subsides, and they go their way and think no more about it. There are many of you who are set a-wondering whenever you see a work of God in your district. You hear of somebody converted who was a very extraordinary sinner, and you say, "It is very wonderful!" There is a revival; you happen to be present at one of the meetings when the Spirit of God is working gloriously: you say, "Well, this is a singular thing! very astonishing!" Even the newspapers can afford a corner at times for very great and extraordinary works of God the Holy Spirit; but there all emotion ends; it is all wondering, and nothing more. Now, I trust it will not be so with any of us; that we shall not think of the Saviour and of the doctrines of the gospel which He came to preach simply with amazement and astonishment, for this will work us but little good. On the other hand, there is another mode of wondering which is akin to adoration, if it be not adoration. Let me suggest to you that holy wonder at what God has done should be very natural to you. That God should consider His fallen creature, man, and instead of sweeping him away with the besom of destruction, should devise a wonderful scheme for his redemption, and that he should Himself undertake to be man's Redeemer, and to pay his ransom price, is, indeed, marvellous! Holy wonder will lead you to grateful worship; being astonished at what God has done, you will pour out your soul with astonishment at the foot of the golden throne with the song, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might be unto Him who sitteth on the throne and doeth these great things to me." Filled with this wonder, it will cause you a godly watchfulness; you will be afraid to sin against such love as this. You will be moved at the same time to a glorious hope. If Jesus has given Himself to you, if He has done this marvellous thing on your behalf, you will feel that heaven itself is not too great for your expectation, and that the rivers of pleasure at God's right hand are not too sweet or too deep for you to drink thereof. Who can be astonished at anything when he has once been astonished at the manger and the cross? What is there wonderful left after one has seen the Saviour? The nine wonders of the world! Why, you may put them all into a nutshell—machinery and modern art can excel them all; but this one wonder is not the wonder of earth only, but of heaven and earth, and even hell itself. It is not the wonder of the olden time, but the wonder of all time and the wonder of eternity. They who see human wonders a few times, at last cease to be astonished; the noblest pile that architect ever raised, at last fails to impress the onlooker; but not so this marvellous temple of incarnate Deity; the more we look the more we are astonished, the more we become accustomed to it the more have we a sense of its surpassing splendour of love and

grace. There is more of God, let us say, to be seen in the manger and the cross, than in the sparkling stars above, the rolling deep below, the towering mountain, the teeming valleys, the abodes of life, or the abyss of death. Let us then spend some choice hours of this festive season in holy wonder, such as will produce gratitude, worship, love, and confidence. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Holy work for Christmas*:—This text seems to indicate four ways of serving God, four methods of executing holy work and exercising Christian thought. Each of the verses sets before us a different way of sacred service. I know not which of these four did God best service, but, I think, if we could combine all these mental emotions and outward exercises, we should be sure to praise God after a most godly and acceptable fashion. I. SOME PUBLISHED ABROAD THE NEWS. 1. They had something to rehearse in men's ears well worth the telling. They had found out the answer to the perpetual riddle. 2. That "something" had in it the inimitable blending which is the secret sign and royal mark of Divine authorship; a peerless marrying of sublimity and simplicity; angels singing!—singing to shepherds! Heaven bright with glory!—bright at midnight! God—a Babe! The Infinite—an Infant a span long! The Ancient of Days—born of a woman! What more simple than the inn, the manger, a carpenter, a carpenter's wife, a child? What more sublime than a multitude of the heavenly host waking the midnight with their joyous chorales, and God Himself in human flesh made manifest? 3. The shepherds needed no excuse for publishing their news, for what they told they had first received from heaven. When heaven entrusts a man with a merciful revelation, he is bound to deliver the good tidings to others. 4. They spoke of what they had seen below. They had, by observation, made those truths most surely their own which had first been spoken to them by revelation. No man can speak of the things of God with any success until the doctrine which he finds in the Book he finds also in his heart. II. SOME KEPT CHRISTMAS BY HOLY WONDER, ADMIRATION, AND ADORATION. III. ONE, AT LEAST, PONDERED, MEDITATED, THOUGHT UPON THESE THINGS. 1. An exercise of memory. 2. An exercise of the affections. 3. An exercise of the intellect. IV. OTHERS GLORIFIED GOD, AND GAVE HIM PRAISE. 1. They praised God for what they had heard. 2. They praised God for what they had seen. 3. They praised God for the agreement between what they had heard and what they had seen. (*Ibid.*) *Many ways of serving God*.—Some people get the notion into their heads that the only way in which they can live for God is by becoming ministers, missionaries, or Bible women. Alas! how many of us would be shut out from any opportunity of magnifying the Most High if this were the case. The shepherds went back to the sheep-pens glorifying and praising God. Beloved, it is not office, it is earnestness; it is not position, it is grace which will enable us to glorify God. God is most surely glorified in that cobbler's stall where the godly worker, as he plies the awl, sings of the Saviour's love, ay, glorified far more than in many a prebendal stall where official religiousness performs its scanty duties. The name of Jesus is glorified by yonder carter as he drives his horse and blesses his God, or speaks to his fellow-labourer by the roadside, as much as by yonder divine who, throughout the country like Boanerges, is thundering out the gospel. God is glorified by our abiding in our vocation. Take care you do not fall out of the path of duty by leaving your calling, and take care you do not dishonour your profession while in it; think not much of yourselves, but do not think too little of your callings. There is no trade which is not sanctified by the gospel. If you turn to the Bible, you will find the most menial forms of labour have been in some way or other connected either with the most daring deeds of faith, or else with persons whose lives have been otherwise illustrious; keep to your calling, brother, keep to your calling! Whatever God has made thee, when He calls thee abide in that, unless thou art quite sure, mind that, unless thou art quite sure that He calls thee to something else. The shepherds glorified God though they went to their trade. (*Ibid.*) *Christmas work*:—Every season has its own proper fruit: apples for autumn, holly berries for Christmas. The earth brings forth according to the period of the year, and with man there is a time for every purpose under heaven. At this season the world is engaged in congratulating itself and in expressing its complimentary wishes for the good of its citizens; let me suggest extra and more solid work for Christians. As we think to-day of the birth of the Saviour, let us aspire after a fresh birth of the Saviour in our hearts; that as He is already "formed in us the hope of glory," we may be "renewed in the spirit of our minds;" that we may go again to the Bethlehem of our spiritual nativity and do our first works, enjoy our first loves, and feast with Jesus as we did in the holy, happy, heavenly days of our espousals. Let us go to

Jesus with something of that youthful freshness and excessive delight which was so manifest in us when we looked to Him at the first; let Him be crowned anew by us, for He is still adorned with the dew of His youth, and remains "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The citizens of Durham, though they dwell not far from the Scotch border, and consequently in the olden times were frequently liable to be attacked, were exempted from the toils of war because there was a cathedral within their walls, and they were set aside to the bishop's service, being called in the olden times by the name of "holy work-folk." Now, we citizens of the New Jerusalem, having the Lord Jesus in our midst, may well excuse ourselves from the ordinary ways of celebrating this season; and, considering ourselves to be "holy work-folk," we may keep it after a different sort from other men, in holy contemplation and in blessed service of that gracious God whose unspeakable gift the new-born King is to us. (*Ibid.*) *Second Christmas Day*:—And what can better befit us than to do as these shepherds did? I. THEY RECEIVED THE HEAVENLY MANIFESTATION WITH BECOMING REVERENCE AND AWE. When "the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, they were sore afraid." They instantly thought of God, and referred the whole thing to its proper Divine source. A right mind and a right learning sees God in everything, and beholds in the commonest ongoings of the universe the manifestations of eternal Power and Godhead, as energetic in character, and as wonderful in results, as the setting up of the stars on high, or the calling forth of the world from its nothingness. It sees in every light that shines from heaven the herald of present Deity, and is ready to fall down in holy reverence at every new signal from the sky, as verily the forthcoming of the Almighty Creator and King of the universe, before whom every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, with trembling adoration. But we need especially to know and feel that it is the same dreadful Majesty that approaches us in the proclamation of the Christ. For where the gospel speaks, there God and His angels are. II. THE SHEPHERDS BELIEVED WHAT THE HEAVENLY MESSENGER TOLD THEM. Their ready persuasion in this respect also serves to show how self-evidencing the true gospel is to minds that are unprejudiced and really open to it. Its obstructions are ethical. Its absence in those to whom the gospel is faithfully preached is not the result of the absence of sufficient demonstration, but of the absence of heart and will to be convinced, and to own allegiance to the truth. Men have intuition enough on this subject to do away with dialectics. III. THE SHEPHERDS DILIGENTLY IMPROVED THE LIGHT THEY RECEIVED. They were not satisfied with the mere hearing of the new-born Saviour, but must needs go and see what had occurred. Faith is an active principle. It cannot know of a Saviour and not go in search of Him. Let the impediments be what they may, it will on. There is a most important sense in which He is still here. He is in His word, in His sacraments, in His Church. This is now the Bethlehem to which we must go to seek Him. IV. THE SHEPHERDS WERE AMPLY REWARDED FOR THEIR PAINS. They found the Saviour whom the angel announced. Earnestly seeking, they also joyfully find. V. THE SHEPHERDS, HAVING FOUND THE CHRIST THEMSELVES, FREELY CONFESSED HIM BEFORE THE WORLD. "When they had seen, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child." Christianity deals with men as individuals. But man is a social being, and social results must necessarily follow from the intense impulses which faith kindles in the individual soul. And as our existence must needs affect others, so our personal experiences also have relations, and are meant to have effects, beyond our individual selves. VI. THE SHEPHERDS RETURNED TO THEIR FLOCKS GLORIFYING GOD. True religion was not meant to take men away from the ordinary pursuits of life, but to go with us into them, to consecrate them, and to give us new comforts in them. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Ver. 19. **And pondered them in her heart.**—*Mary's musings*:—Great things were these which she kept, and most fit for earnest pondering. Great were they to all, greatest to her, the "highly favoured" amongst women. Life was opening strangely upon her; and the last few months had crowded into their narrow compass all that was most fit to stir the very depths of her spirit. Brought up in the comparative seclusion which shut in Jewish damsels, the angel of the Most High had stood suddenly beside her, and troubled her mind by the strangeness of his salutation. Then had followed the fears and hopes which the promise of that angel-visitor had interwoven with her very being. The "Desire of all nations" was at last to come, and she should be indeed His mother. From her should spring that mighty Redeemer, to give birth to whom had been the earnest longing

of every Jewish mother. What hopes and wonder must have filled her soul! At length the months of waiting passed away, and the gracious birth was come, the promised Child was born, the Son of hope was given; and still how much was there upon which to muse and ponder! There was the full tide of a mother's love for the Babe which slept beside her; there was the awful reverence of her pious soul for the unknown majesty of Him who of her had taken human flesh. Depths were all around her, into which her spirit searched, in which it could find no resting-place. How was He, this infant of days, the Everlasting Son? How was He to make atonement for her sins and the sins of her people? When would the mystery begin to unfold itself? As yet it lay upon her thick and impenetrable; all was dark around her; mighty promises and small fulfilments seemed to strive together in the womb of time. The angel had called Him Great, the Son of the Highest; but He lay there on her bosom weak and wailing as any other babe. He was to sit upon the throne of David; yet He was cradled in a manger. Angels broke on mortal sight, to make His birthplace known: yet none but the shepherds of Bethlehem had heard their message. A star from heaven guided eastern magi to His feet; but they made their offerings in a stable. She was "highly favoured" who had borne Him; yet a sword should pierce through her own soul. All was full of contradictions; yet amidst all she was unmoved. To the eye of a passing observer she might have seemed perhaps insensible—such a quietness there was about her. Did she know her own greatness? Did she feel the strangeness of all around her? Did her soul yearn over this Babe, and reach forth to comprehend His unknown destiny? or was she indeed destitute of kindling feelings? No; "she kept all these things and pondered them in her heart"; not one escaped her; but the current of her soul flowed far too deeply to babble forth its emotions. The "ornament of a quiet spirit" shrouded the mighty swellings of her heart. She was in God's hands: this one thought was her anchor. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord": this was her talisman. . . . So that this is the lesson taught us in the character of the Virgin Mary. The blessedness of cultivating a quiet, trusting spirit, a deep inward piety, a calm, waiting soul, by musing on God's dealings. This was what distinguished her; this was the groundwork of that strength and nobleness of character which we trace in her. This, therefore, we should likewise cultivate, who would share her blessedness. For this will be to us too, of God's blessing, a means of acquiring that pious cheerfulness of temper which is the natural mother of high and noble conduct. It is not in a loud profession or an obtrusive exterior, but in its silent inner power of bowing our will to that of God, of filling our common life with His presence, that true religion shows itself. (*Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.*) *Significant silence respecting Mary*:—How small a space does Mary hold in the New Testament! how vast a space in the history of the Church! Observe the silence of the record respecting her. Shakespeare, the highest among all who have conceived the human heart or portrayed human life, is marked above all others, as the New Testament is, by the use of significant silence in representing character—led by his deep instinct to know that whatever is peculiarly fine or high can only in this way be hinted to the apprehension. The highest traits of his highest women especially, and in their highest moments, are indicated—how? Just by a few words, a few touches, coming in between silences of far deeper tone, and so the exquisite outline of those wonderful characters is made out. I find the same in the New Testament. Nothing in it is, to me, so deep and bottomless in meaning and effect as the silences of Christ—a stroke or two, a few lines, giving figure and expression to the formless deep lying below. And the same as to Mary. How few the touches!—only just enough to mark out and give character to the deeps of silence, as, when you hear a strain of music at night, the stillness which follows it is made richer still and more musical than any possibility of sound. The evangelists, having given us certain facts as to Mary, do afterwards almost nothing but remain quiet, and not interfere with the inferences of the Christian heart as to the beautiful nature and wonderful consciousness of the virgin mother. Nothing is said as to her feelings—(silence)—but we understand from a general sense of her character, how meek and submissive that silence is. In things which are above her thought, and which seem to men impossible, in things which bring glory to her, or in things which bring shame, the characteristic of this woman is deep, meek, silent submission; and this, as it is the natural top of true womanhood, so also is it of true Christianity. What she was, her son was also in His wider and grander relations to God. (*A. G. Mercer, D.D.*)

The inwardness of Mary's character:—Observe what I may call the inwardness of Mary's character. On several occasions, when a common nature would have exulted, when vanity would have babbled, or when common wonder and doubt would have gone asking for explanations, it is said of her, "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." Now this would not have been repeated as it is, if it had not been a peculiarity and observable. This I call inwardness. There was a hush of awe about it, a disposition to keep a sacred thing sacred; to hide the depths of the heart away from common talk, and to keep their inexpressibleness hidden to God; to keep all doubts and demurs submissively for His solution; to "judge nothing before the time"; to draw inward, and compose and hush the entire nature at the footstool of God; in short, her whole heart seems to have been expressed in the one sentence, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word." (*Ibid.*) *Hearing should be followed by meditation*:—Musing makes the fire to burn, and deep and constant thoughts are operative, not a glance or a slight view. The hen which straggles from her nest when she sits a brooding, produces nothing; it is a constant incubation which hatches the young. So when we have only a few straggling thoughts, and do not set a-brooding upon a truth, when we have flashes only, like a little glance of a sunbeam upon a wall, it does nothing; but serious and inculcative thoughts (through the Lord's blessing) will do the work. (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Value of meditation*:—Any benefit to be derived from hearing the Word exceedingly depends on meditation. Before we hear the Word, meditation is like a plough, which opens the ground to receive the seed; and after we have heard the Word, it is like the harrow which covers the new-sown seed in the earth, that the fowls of the air may not pick it up: meditation is that which makes the Word full of life and energy to our souls. What is the reason that most men come to hear the Word, as the beasts did in Noah's ark: they came in unclean, and they went out unclean? The reason is, because they do not meditate on the truths they hear; it is but just like putting money into a bag with holes—presently it falls out. The truths they hear preached are put into shallow, neglected memories, and they do not draw them forth by meditation. It is for this reason, that hearing is so ineffectual. Hearing the Word merely is like indigestion, and when we meditate upon the Word, that's digestion: and this digestion of the Word by meditation produces warm affections, zealous resolutions, and holy actions; and therefore, if you desire to profit by hearing the word, meditate. (*H. G. Salter.*) *Comfort by meditation*:—Meditation, as it advances the graces of the soul, so the comfort of the soul. God conveys comfort to us in a rational way; and although He is able to rain manna in the wilderness, and to cast in comfort to our souls without any labour of ours, yet usually He dispenses comfort according to the standing rule. He that does not work shall not eat—he that does not labour in the duties of religion shall not taste the sweetness of religion. Now, meditation is the serious and active performance of the soul to which God has promised comfort. The promises of the gospel do not convey comfort to us as they are recorded in the Word merely, but as they are applied by meditation. The grapes, while they hang upon the vine, do not produce that wine which cheers the heart of man: but when they are squeezed in the wine-press, then they yield forth their liquor, which is of such a cheering nature. So the promises which are in the Word barely, do not send forth that sovereign juice which cheers our hearts; but when we ponder them in our souls, and press them by meditation, then the promises convey the water of life to us. Meditation turns the promises into marrow (Psa. lxiii. 5, 6); it conveys the strength of them to our souls. (*Ibid.*) *Meditation nourishes the soul*:—Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and our best abundance of the heart must be slowly and in quietness prepared. The cattle, when they rest, are yet working to prepare from the grass that sweetest and most wholesome of beverages—milk. So must we prepare the abundance of the heart. If the milk of our word is to flow from us nourishingly, we must turn the common things of life—the grass—by slow and quiet processes, into sweet wisdom. In retired, meditative hours, the digesting and secreting powers of the spirit act; and thus ourselves are nourished, and we store nourishment for others. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *Meditation must be experienced to be appreciated*:—The advantage of meditation is rather to be felt than read. He that can paint spikenard, or musk, or roses, in their proper colour, cannot with all his art draw their pleasant savour; that is beyond the skill of his pencil. (*T. Swinnock.*) *The Incarnation a subject for devout study*:—No one can absolve himself from the duty of spiritual thought. The words which I have chosen for a text presents the duty to us with

almost startling force. The mother of the Lord had received that direct, personal, living revelation of the purpose and the working of God which none other could have; she had acknowledged in the familiar strain of the Magnificat the salvation which He had prepared through her for His people; she might well seem to have been lifted above the necessity of any later teaching; but when the simple shepherds told their story, a faint echo as we might think of what she knew, she "kept all these things, &c.," if haply they might show a little more of the great mystery of which she was the minister: she kept them waiting and learning during that long thirty years of silence, waiting and learning during that brief time of open labour, from the first words at the marriage feast to the last words from the cross. And shall we, with our restless, distracted lives, with our feeble and imperfect grasp on Truth, be contented to repeat with indolent assent a traditional confession? Can we suppose that the highest knowledge and the highest knowledge alone is to be gained without effort, without preparation, without discipline, and by a simple act of memory? Is it credible that the law of our nature, which adds capacity to experience and joy to quest, is suddenly suspended when we reach the loftiest field of man's activity? 1. The SPIRIT of our study of the Incarnation must be love illuminated by faith, attested by the heart. 2. It follows that the AIM of our study will be vital and not merely intellectual. 3. If we have felt one touch of the spirit which should animate our contemplation of Christ Born, Crucified, Ascended, for us: if we have realized one fragment of the end to which our work is directed, we shall know what the BLESSING is: know what it is to see with faint and trembling eyes depth below depth opening in the poor and dull surface of the earth; to see flashes of great hope shoot across the weary trivialities of business and pleasure; to see active about us, in the face of every scheme of selfish ambition, powers of the age to come; to see over all the inequalities of the world, its terrible contrasts, its desolating crimes, its pride, its lust, its cruelty, one overarching sign of God's purpose of redemption, broad as the sky and bright as the sunshine; to see in the gospel a revelation of love powerful enough to give a foretaste of the unity of creation, powerful hereafter to realize it. To us also the Christ has been given. To us also the message of the angels has been made known. To us also the sign of the Saviour has been fulfilled. Happy are we—then only happy—if we keep all these things and ponder them in our hearts. (*Canon Westcott.*) *The profoundest mystery yet is the origin of child-life:*—It is an unexplored history. The sublimest results often are in the child, and yet not a step can we trace with definiteness backward to know the cause of which this is the little effect. The future beams with revelations in its behalf; but of the particles which go to make it up who can guess? Who knows anything about it? The great Sphinx—standing alone in Egypt half-buried in the sand—what mind conceived that? what hand carved it? what has it to say for itself? or who shall speak for it? Yet every cradle has a sphinx more unreadable and mysterious than the old Sphinx of the desert. It is chiefly this future over which parents brood. A mother's heart is a miracle. She sees what is not there. She creates what she sees and recreates it when a breath blows it all away. She loves what has no lovable quality. The child is a mere prophecy. These feet shall yet walk, but not now. These eyes shall beam, but now they sleep. These hands shall work, or caress, or carve, or carry the sword, but they are helpless now. "She kept all these things and pondered them in her heart" is true of every Mary, and of every other name by which the mother is known. She ponders the miracle of the babe, and is herself another miracle creating the life which is to come, and which is purely the myth of her imagination. The things spoken by the angels and the shepherds of the Messiah, the mother of Jesus pondered, and every mother is a Mary, and ponders the little traveller knocking at the door of life or sleeping in the hospitable cradle. The unwritten poetry of a mother's heart would give to the world a literature beyond all printed words. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS.

Sleep, sleep, mine Holy One!
My flesh, my Lord! what name? I do not know
A name that seemeth not too high or low,
Too far from me or heaven.
My Jesus, that is best! that word being given
By the majestic angel whose command

Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
When I and all the earth appeared to stand
In the great overflow.
A light celestial from his wings and head
Sleep, sleep, my saving One.

* * * *

The slumber of His lips meseems to run
Through my lips to mine heart.

* * * *

And then the drear sharp tongue of prophecy
With the dread sense of things which shall be done,
Doth smite me inly, like a sword.

(*Mrs. E. B. Browning.*)

THE MOTHER MARY.

Mary, to thee the heart was given,
For infant hands to hold,
Thus clasping, an eternal heaven,
The great earth in its fold.

He came, all helpless, to thy power,
For warmth, and love, and birth;
In thy embraces, every hour
He grew into the earth.

And thine the grief, O mother high,
Which all thy sisters share,
Who keep the gate betwixt the sky
And this our lower air.

And unshared sorrows, gathering slow;
New thoughts within thy heart,
Which through thee like a sword will go,
And make thee mourn apart.

For, if a woman bore a son
That was of angel-brood,
Who lifted wings ere day was done,
And soared from where he stood;

Strange grief would fill each mother-moan,
Wild longing, dim and sore;
"My child! my child! He is my own,
And yet is mine no more."

So thou, O Mary, years on years,
From child-birth to the cross,
Wast filled with yearnings, filled with fears,
Keen sense of love and loss.

(*G. MacDonald.*)

Musings of mothers:—I think that the most wonderful book that could be written would be a book in which an angel should write all the thoughts that pass through a faithful mother's mind from the time that she first hears the cry of her child, and knows that it is born into the world, and rejoices in the midst of her griefs; from the moment of her absorption, or annihilation, pouring herself into the child. Her wonderful gladness of fatigue; her unwillingness to divide her care with any; her heroic sacrifice of all that is brightest and best in life, with no prospect of remuneration except the satisfaction which she feels in serving that little mute and helpless child—these are past description. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 20. **And the shepherds returned.**—*Dignifying common life*:—And then they returned to their fields, to their flocks, to their ordinary life; giving thus a beautiful example of pious diligence and fidelity in their vocation. An extraordinary privilege has been granted to them. They are not lifted up by it into pride and pretension and self-sufficiency and idleness. They are cheered by it in their common toil. This is all the gospel that some of them would hear on earth. They would die, probably, as they lived, tending their sheep, before the Good Shepherd openly appeared. In their example, they sanctify, they glorify, what we call common life. They dignify the duty, it may be the drudgery of the day. But what, after all, is common life? It is a relative phrase. Common life to these shepherds is the keeping of the sheep on those very fields where David was shepherd-boy before them, where Ruth gleaned after the reapers. Common life to the angels lies in the heavenly spheres, serving at the bidding of the King. This visit to the earth, on such an errand, is a remarkable exception to their ordinary experience. It is, if we may use the phrase, a point of high romance in their history. (*Dr. Raleigh.*) This is how all true-minded, simple-hearted inquirers have returned from their Christian investigations. It is questionable whether any man has ever closed the Bible in a mood of dissatisfaction who opened it with reverent determination to know how far it was a testimony from heaven. Christian investigation is not finished until it has brought into the heart a joy altogether unprecedented. The mere letter never brings gladness. Critics and disputants have found little in the Bible but a great waste of words; but penitent and earnest inquirers have returned from its examination with hearts overflowing with a new and imperishable joy. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Shepherds glorifying God for the birth of a Saviour*:—We will contemplate the things for which, and the manner in which, they glorified God, and will intermingle some practical reflections. I. WE WILL CONSIDER THE MATTERS FOR WHICH THEY GLORIFIED AND PRAISED GOD. These were the things, which they had heard and seen. 1. They glorified God that the promised Saviour was now born. They seem to have been some of those pious people who looked for redemption in Israel. 2. They rejoiced that this Saviour was born for them. The angel says, "Unto you is born this day a Saviour." Conscious of their impotence and unworthiness, they felt their need of a Saviour, and esteemed it a matter of great joy that He was come to bring salvation to them. They doubtless admired the distinguishing grace of God in visiting them first of all with the glorious tidings. 3. The shepherds rejoiced that the Saviour was born for others, as well as themselves. "I bring you good tidings," says the angel, "which shall be to all people." 4. The shepherds glorified God for what they had seen, as well as what they had heard. II. CONSIDER THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY GLORIFIED HIM. 1. They glorified God by faith in the Saviour, whom He had sent. They believed the heavenly message. By faith in the Redeemer we give glory to God. 2. They glorified God by a ready obedience. Being informed by a heavenly messenger where the Saviour lay, they came to Him with haste. They made no delay, but immediately obeyed the Divine intimation. Faith operates in a way of cheerful obedience. 3. They glorified God by confessing and spreading the Saviour's name. "When they had seen Him, they made known abroad what had been told them concerning the Child." They were not ashamed to own Him as the Messiah, even in His infant state. You see that true faith will prompt you to honour Christ before men. 4. They glorified God by an attendance on the means of faith. The angel who announced the Saviour's birth gave them a token by which they might know Him. "This shall be a sign to you. Ye shall find the babe wrapt in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And they came with haste, and found as he had told them." God gave them a particular sign for the confirmation of their faith; and He has appointed standing means to strengthen and enliven ours. Jesus Christ is exhibited to us in His Word, in His sanctuary, and at His table. Here we are to seek Him, and converse with Him, that we may increase our faith and warm our love. 5. They glorified God with the voice of praise. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*) *The changed world*:—The day after Christ's birth was a new day in the world's history. The old era had passed, the new had begun; and only the angels knew what a revolution had been wrought by the quiet power of God. The wonder has grown with the years. Christianity has been an increasing miracle of the Lord's presence on earth. That song, which a few shepherds heard, has sung itself into the thought of the world, and is the keynote and harmony of all peace and goodwill on earth. I. THE CHRISTIAN CHANGE OF

THE WORLD'S HISTORY IS A FACT. The influx through Christ of a new power into the life of humanity is a known fact of experience, as certain as the battle of Gettysburg, or the dawn of day. This fact of the new power in the world, through the birth of Christ, belongs to a series of facts. The religion of the Bible presents a continued succession, and reveals an exalted order of facts. Christianity is a positive religion of historical facts from Moses to Christ, from Christ to the last Church organized and the last communion table spread. II. THE NATURE AND REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS FACT. 1. In Christianity we breathe a different air. Midway down the Simplon Pass the traveller pauses to read upon a stone the single word "Italia." At this point he passes a boundary line, and every step makes plainer how great has been the change from Switzerland to Italy. The air becomes warm and fragrant, and vines line the wayside, and below, embosomed in verdure, Lake Maggiore expands before him. As that traveller rests at eveningtime, he recognizes that the entrance into a new world was marked by the word "Italia" upon the stone on the pass. Humanity has crossed a boundary line: up to Bethlehem, bleak and cold—down from Bethlehem, another and a happier time. 2. This new transforming power was, to the disciples, Jesus Himself. He made all things new to them. 3. Jesus has been to the world a new revelation of God. God is essentially and eternally Christlike. 4. Jesus is also a new revelation of man. Man is in Christ another man. You pass a man in the streets, and you used to feel that you did not want to know or help such a poor creature—he lived below your world, and his name was not found in your book of life. Now it is different, for you have been baptized into the name of Christ, in whom our whole common humanity exists, redeemed and capable of a great salvation. CONCLUSION: We close by asking ourselves, "Am I living, by faith in the Son of God, in this changed world?" Is it, in the history of my soul, the day before, or the better day after, Christmas. (*Newman Smyth, D.D.*)

Ver. 21. **For the circumcising of the Child.**—*Circumcision and baptism:*—The teaching of Jewish circumcision resembles the teaching of Christian baptism. Both exhibit the putting away of the filth of the flesh; the first by a wounding of the body (which aptly recalls the severity of the elder dispensation); the second by an outward washing. This, which may be called the practical bearing of the present festival (Circumcision of Christ, 1st January), is brought out in the collect for the day, wherein we beseech God to grant us "the true circumcision of the spirit." And it is worth observing that this was seen, from the very first, to be the mystical teaching of the rite. Thus Moses, in the book of Deuteronomy (which abounds in the loftier class of doctrine), speaks plainly (x. 16; xxx. 6) of circumcising the heart; and the prophets (Jer. iv. 4) use the same expression. St. Stephen's language, when he addressed his countrymen for the last time ("Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," Acts vii. 51), seems to show that this continued throughout the whole history of the Jewish people to be the well-understood meaning of the rite; while St. Paul's witness on the point (Rom. ii. 28, 29) is express. It is interesting to observe how closely this observance was connected with holy baptism, besides being typical of the Christian sacrament, and, indeed, a kind of anticipation of it: a rite performed in infancy, and made the occasion of bestowing a new name. (*Dean Burgon.*) *Spiritual nature of circumcision:*—Circumcision was the seal of the gospel covenant made by God with Abraham (Gen. xvii. 2, 4, 9); which the law, added—as the apostle teaches (Gal. iii. 17)—four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul. This was a covenant of faith, quite distinct from the covenant of works (Ex. xxiv. 8) made through Moses; it was an evangelical, not a legal, covenant. And it foreshadowed what was to be in the latter days, though the people knew it not, would not know it. They relied on being naturally descended from Abraham, and gave no heed to our Saviour's declaration that, if they were indeed Abraham's children, they would do the works of Abraham (John viii. 39); in other words, that God's promise to the patriarch's seed was a spiritual promise, fulfilled to as many as showed the like faith with himself (Gal. iii. 7, 29). While, therefore, our Saviour's submission to be circumcised—whereby, in one respect, He fulfilled all righteousness—conveys an obvious lesson of obedience, and conformity to the laws of the Church, to which we belong; the gospel fulfilment which Christ gave to that sacred rite, and to the covenant with Abraham of which it was the seal and pledge, brings to mind the high spiritual teaching of all His other ancient laws, the design of which was to guide man's heart to the future Messiah. God's ancient law was spiritual through-

out; no dead letter, but a living reality, trying the very heart and reins. (*Ibid.*) *The circumcision of our Lord:*—There is no part of our Saviour's life uninteresting, or that will not yield instruction. We ask, then, why did He submit to circumcision? 1. Christ was circumcised in order to fulfil the law. By His perfect obedience to all its precepts, He abolished its force and condemning power over every transgression. For us He was circumcised and baptized; for us He exhibited entire legal obedience, that He might bring us under the tender, merciful, encouraging covenant of the gospel, by "fulfilling all righteousness." 2. Christ's circumcision was necessary to obtain for Him a hearing among His own people. The Jews looked upon every uncircumcised person as unclean. Christ could have had no access to them without submitting to this ceremony. To manifest Himself of the seed of Abraham, to satisfy in this respect the requisitions of His nation, to substantiate His pretentions to be their Messiah, and deprive them of what would have been an unanswerable plea for rejecting Him, He graciously condescended to endure this painful rite. What an example has He set us of the excellency of submitting to privations and pains in advancing the happiness of our fellow-beings! Did Jesus bear the marks of an humbling rite in His own precious body, that His own people, when He came to them, might not be offended in Him; and shall not we yield to all innocent compliances with the habits and feelings of others, which may facilitate our usefulness to them, and bear with contentment the labours and crosses, self-denials, expenses, and cares, which may be necessary in promoting their salvation or happiness? 3. The institution of this ceremony, and Christ's compliance with it, suggests to us the propriety and efficacy of visible rites and sacraments. Here was a seal of a covenant established by God. It was to be a token for distinguishing the faithful, a sign of cleansing from pollution, and an assurance of blessing from Jehovah. Without some visible rite it is hardly conceivable how this or any Church could be preserved distinct. Some sacrament is necessary, and, if necessary, obligatory upon every one who would support the Church, for which it is hallowed, and enjoy all its privileges. Accordingly, all systems of religion have had their rites, mysteries, symbols. What circumcision was to the Jews, baptism is to Christians. Both of Divine appointment, significant of incorporation into the Church of God, requiring faith, representing purification from the defilements of sin, and implying consequent self-denial, holiness, obedience. 4. In the circumcision of Christ we are strikingly taught the propriety of submitting to all the precepts and institutions of the revelation under which we live. Christ was made under the law, consequently the law had authority over Him. With singular truth, He might have asked, "Can I be benefited by this rite, and by these simple ceremonies?" With peculiar force He might have inquired, "What connection can there be between these outward forms and My spirit; what efficacy can they have upon My heart?" With more propriety than any mortal He might have said, "I can be safe and perfect without all these." But he did not stop to scruple their utility; He did not find fault with their nature. They were ordained by the Being who established the law under which He lived. This was sufficient for Him. And so throughout His life. He kept the passover; He observed the Sabbath; He went up to the feasts; He neglected no precept of the revelation which He knew came from God, and was authoritative till superseded by His new and better dispensation. In this conduct of His life our Saviour has set an example, excellent in itself, and fit for His disciples to revere. It points to us the necessity of obeying every precept, and observing every rite to which the gospel gives the seal of Divine authority. To neglect baptism or holy communion because, as men think, they may be as good and as safe without them, or because they cannot see their efficacy, is taking a ground which the all-perfect Son of God was too modest to assume. Whether men may be saved without these means, how they effect what is attributed to them, whether they are the best which might have been selected, are points with which we have nothing to do. The questions which concern us are, Whether Christ instituted baptism and the eucharist; and, if He did, whether His injunctions are binding upon us or not? On this plain ground every man may easily form a just determination concerning the propriety of observing all the precepts and institutions of the revelation under which he lives. His observance of them should be a simple act of faith and obedience, by which he should testify both to God and men. (*Bishop Dehon.*) *Early suffering:*—Thus early did Jesus suffer pain for our sakes, to teach us the spiritual circumcision, the circumcision of all our bodily senses. As the east catches at sunset the colours of the west, so Bethlehem is a prelude to Calvary,

and even the Infant's cradle is tinged with a crimson reflection from the Redeemer's cross. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *The circumcision of Christ*:—(First Sunday after Christmas.) I. THE RITE OF CIRCUMCISION WHICH, AS ON THIS DAY, WAS ADMINISTERED TO THE INFANT JESUS HAD A TWOFOLD SIGNIFICANCE. 1. Its existence was a testimony that mankind is fallen and needs purification. 2. Circumcision was not only an act of humility, it was also an act of obedience to the law of God. II. THE CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS THUS REVEALS TO US THE FOUNDATIONS ON WHICH HIS HUMAN LIFE WAS BUILT, viz., HUMILITY AND OBEDIENCE. Can there be truer foundations for any human life than these? Is it not the very ideal of Christian childhood? Humility, which is the expression of our own insufficiency; obedience, which is the recognition of our dependence upon God. III. It has been well pointed out by many devout Christian thinkers that THE HUMAN LIFE WHICH THE SON OF GOD LIVED IN THE FLESH IS THE VERY SAME AS THE LIFE WHICH HE LIVES IN US; it is produced in the same manner, and progresses according to the same law. After His spiritual birth in us comes our spiritual circumcision (Col. ii. 11). As this life grows within us, we shall find that it has also its epiphany, its baptism, its temptation, its active ministry, its passion, its cross, its resurrection. Enough for us to-day to consider its circumcision. Not without reason do we pray in the Litany, "By Thy holy nativity and circumcision, good Lord deliver us." IV. The circumcision was distinguished from all other acts of our Lord's humiliation IN THAT IT WAS WITHOUT ANY COMPENSATING GLORY, and was accepted by Him without any protest from God or man, declaring that He needed it not for His own sake. Yet there was even in His circumcision a glory bestowed upon Him which men could not at the time recognize, but which has proved to be the greatest of all the honours of His incarnate life. IT WAS THEN THAT THERE WAS BESTOWED UPON HIM THE NAME OF JESUS, God our Saviour. The name thus given Him in His humiliation has become the name in which He has triumphed over His enemies, the name which has been blessed by millions of penitent sinners, and adored in rapture by ten thousands of His saints. V. Trembling, anxiously, WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD INTO THE UNCERTAINTY OF A NEW YEAR. If we begin the year in the spirit of Him who began His earthly life in humility and obedience, we may know that, however galling to our natural unrenewed will may be the humility which alone becomes us, however difficult may be the obedience which God demands from us, there is yet to be manifested a glory that exalteth, in comparison with which the trials of this present life are but as nothing. (*Canon V. Hutton, M.A.*)

The year begins with Thee,
And Thou beginn'st with woe,
To let the world of sinners see
That blood for sin must flow.

Thine Infant cries, O Lord,
Thy tears upon the breast,
Are not enough—the legal sword
Must do its stern behest.

Like sacrificial wine
Poured on a victim's head
Are those few precious drops of Thine,
Now first to offering led.

They are the pledge and seal
Of Christ's unswerving faith
Given to His Sire, our souls to heal,
Although it costs His death.

"*Jesus*," *the watchword*:—I. FOR THE CHURCH AND FOR THE HOME. II. FOR JOY AND FOR SORROW. III. FOR LIFE AND FOR DEATH. (*Dr. Gerok.*) *The circumcision and naming of the Child*:—Boys were circumcised eight days after their birth. Tradition said that this day was chosen because the mother ceased to be unclean on the seventh day if she had borne a boy. He who circumcised the child used the following words: "Blessed be the Lord our God, who has sanctified us by His precepts, and given us circumcision." The father of the child con-

tinued: "Who has sanctified us by His precepts, and has granted us to introduce our child into the covenant of Abraham our father." The child was named the same day, because it was said that God changed the names of Abraham and Sarah when He gave the covenant of circumcision. (*E. Stapfer, D.D.*) *The circumcision of Christ:*—1. It signifies purification. Christ committed no sin, but stood for sinful man. 2. It signified obedience (Gen. xvii. 12). He was "made under the law" (Gal. iv. 4). 2. It signified consecration. This ordinance was part of the covenant between God and the Jewish nation, whereby they were to be counted "a peculiar treasure" unto God "above all people" (Exod. xix. 5). (*D. Hughes, M.A.*) *New Year's Day:*—I. CIRCUMCISION WAS A RITE WHICH TOLD OF A MISIMPROVED PAST. The first account of it occurs in the history of Abraham, in whose case Paul says it was given as a sign and seal of the righteousness which is obtained by faith (Rom. iv. 11). The state of uncircumcision was thus a state of unrighteousness. Paul also tells the Colossians, that they had been dead in their sins and the uncircumcision of their flesh (Col. ii. 13). Circumcision, therefore, carried with it the remembrance and acknowledgment of a bad and unsatisfactory past. It told of alienation from God, and of faithlessnesses and infidelities. It carried with it a retrospect of failure and sin. Even the circumcision of "the holy child Jesus," was an acknowledgment of the fallen condition of the race, with which he identified Himself, in its humiliation, that He might become its perfect Saviour. II. CIRCUMCISION WAS A SIGN OF THE CUTTING OFF AND CASTING AWAY OF SIN. The fleshly incision was a token of a spiritual one, which consisted in separation from moral impurity and evil (Rom. ii. 29). III. BUT CIRCUMCISION SET APART TO OBEDIENCE, AS WELL AS SEVERED FROM IMPURITY. It was the ceremony of initiation into the covenant, and pledged the subject to obey it. It was part of the redemption-work of Christ to obey the law. IV. CIRCUMCISION CONFERRED AND FIXED ON CHRIST HIS TRUE DESCRIPTIVE NAME. V. But, for the encouragement of those who feel their deficiencies and miseries, there is still one other particular connected with the text. HE WHOM GOD HATH APPOINTED TO BE OUR JUDGE, TOOK THE NAME OF JESUS. He is a Saviour, and a great one. Hopefully His circumcision day so proclaims Him to us. Yea, saith the apostle, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Heb. vii. 25). (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Vers. 22, 24. **The days of her purification.**—*The presentation in the temple:*—I. 1. Consider the inner meaning of the law which was here fulfilled by the Infant Jesus. Ever since the day that Israel had been delivered from bondage by the death of the first-born of the Egyptians, the first-born had been considered especially dedicated to the service of God. 2. Here the First-born, not of Mary only, but of all creation, is presented to the Father. Is He not the Only-begotten Son, begotten before all worlds? Now that He has come in the substance of our flesh He is the true Head of the human race, the First-born of a restored humanity. It is as such that He makes His first visit to Jerusalem—type of the heavenly Jerusalem—the Church of the First-born; and His first entry into the Temple, the Home of God upon earth. 3. "Unto us a Son is given;" as the Son of Man, the Hope of the Human Race, our First-born, He is presented to the Father as our best and only offering. From this day forward He is "in the presence of God for us." 4. Inasmuch as we are members of Christ, we too are presented in His presentation. We also become the first-born, joint-heirs with Him, the first-fruits of creation, a royal priesthood, a chosen nation. II. 1. Realize that we are ever being presented in the Temple of God through our union with our Head, even Jesus Christ. 2. Realize this especially in the Holy Eucharist, in which we plead before our Father the one perfect and sufficient sacrifice and oblation for the sins of the whole world, and at the same time, sharing in His life, we offer and present ourselves a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice. 3. Realize that as the first-born is especially claimed for the service of God, this sacrifice of ourselves must include the offering of our first-born, our best energies, our truest thoughts, our highest talents, our richest possessions. (*Canon Vernon Hutton, M.A.*) *Dedication to God from early youth:*—In congratulating Simeon and Anna on having seen the salvation of Israel, we should not overlook the fact, that by long preparation and longing they made themselves worthy of embracing the Saviour. If you desire the same happiness, make the same preparation. Do not defer it to your old age, but in order to ensure the friendship of Jesus then, devote yourself to Him now I. THIS IS A SACRIFICE EXCEEDINGLY WELCOME TO GOD. 1. God has a predilection for youth, and selects them as His instruments to attain His designs. Joseph, David,

Daniel, Stephen. 2. The young are eminently fit for heaven (Matt. xiv. 14). 3. So much the more does He value the self-sacrifice of youth, the devotion to Him from childhood being (1) Firstlings (Gen. iv. 4). He who dissipates his youth, and in old age turns to God, offers fruits of which the sweetest have been tasted by the devil; and ears, the best grain of which has been taken by him. (2) A sacrifice free from selfishness. (3) A stainless offering (Mal. i. 8). (4) An example to others. II. VERY PROFITABLE FOR ONESELF. 1. Because you are led to perfection, which is the true beauty and riches of man. (1) Virtue is a tree that strikes deeper roots in young hearts. Greater susceptibility—fewer storms internal and external. The coldness and miseries of life are not so much felt. The soul is not yet enervated by passions, nor petrified by custom and stupidity. (2) The stem of this tree is harder and more solid. Virtue, like vice, is hardened into habit and passion. The conversion of old age is often unstable. (3) This tree bears more delicious fruits, and in greater measure. The wine first taken from the press is the most delicious. Virtue is an art acquired by exercise. 2. Because you will gain happiness here on earth. (1) Inner peace—the consciousness of being God's friend. (2) The prospect of proximate, abundant, eternal reward. (3) The love and esteem of all who are of good will. 3. Happiness in the next world. (*Q. Rossi.*) *Consequences of good education:*—Mary is the happiest mother, because she carried in her arms the best Child. Where is there a father or mother who would not desire to have good children? The attainment of this wish is often frustrated by parents themselves. Yet they would find urgent motives to realize it, if they would consider the happy results of giving a wise and religious education to their children. I. CONSEQUENCES TO THE PARENTS. Children well educated are—1. An honour to their parents. Their good name reflects on those who brought them up. 2. Their joy, consolation, and help, in every condition of life. 3. Their eternal crown. II. CONSEQUENCES TO THE CHILDREN. Parents wish nothing more than to see their children happy. Now it is on good education that—1. Their temporal happiness depends. 2. Their eternal weal. You have planted for heaven, and in heaven, therefore, you will reap your reward. No dowry equals this. III. CONSEQUENCES TO POSTERITY. 1. In regard to the family (Psa. iii. 2, 3). 2. In regard to civil society. Good and bad morals are rapidly spread and are kept up for a long time. (*Tirinus*) *The purification:*—The question meets us, If the blessed Virgin conceived the Son by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and if He Himself were absolutely and entirely pure, then what need of purification? What defilement was there, from which the Virgin Mother could be purified? And an answer is ready to hand which seems abundantly sufficient, namely, that as Jesus was circumcised, so Mary was purified; in each case there was submission to the letter of a Divine law, and there was no desire and no attempt to establish an exception. Our Lord was a Jewish boy, and was treated as Jewish boys were treated; Mary was a Jewish mother, and acted as Jewish mothers were wont to act. Our English version speaks of the days of her purification, and this is what we might have expected, but it should not be concealed that the best copies of the original Scriptures give, some of them His, some of them their purification; and there can be little doubt that this last form of the sentence is the correct one (so Revised Version). It would seem to indicate that, in the popular belief and feeling of the Jews the sacrifice which was instituted for the purification of the mother (Levit. xii.) did in reality also apply to the child; and this being so, St. Luke appears not to have hesitated to use a phrase, which, literally interpreted, would imply the need of purification on the part of our blessed Lord Himself. This is only another instance of the complete and unreserved manner in which the Head of our race is identified with ourselves. Perhaps the most interesting point in these verses is the incidental testimony to the poverty of the Holy Family. The offering might be a lamp and a turtle-dove if the parents were rich, and two doves or two pigeons if they were poor. Hence the mention of the "pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons" marks the worldly condition of the Blessed Virgin and Joseph; they came with the poor man's and poor woman's offering; and thus again the poverty of our Lord was declared in the most striking manner during His infancy. (*Bishop Goodwin.*) *The days of purification:*—When the fixed time of purification was passed (seven days for a boy and fourteen for a girl), the mother still remained at home thirty-three days for a boy and sixty-six for a girl. Then she went up to the Temple. (*E. Stapfer, D.D.*) Her forty days were no sooner out than Mary comes up to the Holy City. She comes with sacrifices, whereof one is for a burnt-offering, the other for a sin-offering; the one for thanksgiving, the other for expiation; for expiation of a

double sin—of the mother that conceived, of the Child that was conceived. We are all born sinners, and it is a just question whether we do more infect the world, or the world us. They are gross flatterers of nature that tell her she is clean. But, O the unspeakable mercy of our God! we provide the sin, He provides the remedy. Every poor mother was not able to bring a lamb for her offering; there was none so poor but might procure a pair of turtles or pigeons. God looks for somewhat of every one, not of every one alike. Since it is He that makes differences of abilities (to whom it were as easy to make all rich), His mercy will make no difference in the acceptation. The truth and heartiness of obedience is that which He will crown in His meanest servants. A mite, from the poor widow, is more worth to Him than the talents of the wealthy. The blessed Virgin had more business in the temple than her own. She came, as to purify herself, so to present her Son. Every male that first opened the womb was holy unto the Lord. He that was the Son of God by eternal generation before time, was also, by common course of nature, consecrated unto God. It is fit the Holy Mother should present God with His own. Her first-born was the first-born of all creatures. It was He whose temple it was that He was presented in, to whom all the first-born of all creatures were consecrated, by whom they were accepted; and now is He brought in His mother's arms to His own house, and, as man, is presented to Himself as God. Under the gospel we are all first-born, all heirs; every soul is to be holy unto the Lord; we are a royal generation, an holy priesthood. Our baptism, as it is our circumcision, and our sacrifice of purification, so is it also our presentation unto God. Nothing can become us but holiness. O God! to whom we are devoted, serve Thyself of us, glorify Thyself by us, till we shall by Thee be glorified with Thee. (*Bishop Hall.*) *No myth*:—A mythus generally endeavours to ennoble its subject, and to adapt the story to the idea. If, then, the gospel narrative were mythical, would it have invented, or even suffered to remain, a circumstance so foreign to the idea of the myth, and so little calculated to dignify it as the above. A mythus would have introduced an angel, or, at least, a vision, to hinder Mary from submitting the child to a ceremony so unworthy of its dignity; or the priests would have received an intimation from heaven to bow before the infant, and prevent its being reduced to the level of ordinary children. (*A. Neander.*) *Early dedication to the Lord*:—The old Romans used to hold the face of all their new-born infants towards the sky, to denote that they must look above the world to celestial glories. We solemnly and prayerfully dedicate our children to God in baptism, &c. And, remembering their immortality and the uncertainty of their life, should we not also constantly devote them to God, and train them for Him and for heaven! My dear mother's prayers with and for me influenced me more to what is good than any earthly thing besides ever did. Richard Cecil spoke of his mother as one that had great nearness to God in prayer, and he says she was to him as an angel of God in her counsels and prayers, which most deeply impressed him. At a college were one hundred and twenty young men were studying for the ministry, it was found, as the result of special inquiry, that more than a hundred of them had been converted mainly through a mother's prayers and labours. But Sunday-school teachers, ministers, church members, young people themselves, and everybody should join in loving, prayerful efforts to present young people and others to the Lord. And if God's grace be obtained for them, will they not be restrained from evil, and also led to good? Then children themselves should humbly, earnestly, lovingly, and through faith in Christ, present themselves to the Lord. A dear boy, who was soon after killed in a moment, prayed, "Lord, make me quite, quite ready, in case Jesus comes for me in a hurry." (*Henry R. Burton.*) *Early piety a safeguard*:—In one of the public enclosures of Philadelphia the fountain was recently left to play all night. During the hours of darkness a sharp frost set in; and those who passed by next morning found the water, still playing indeed, but playing over a mass of gleaming icicles. But that was not all. The wind had been blowing steadily in one direction through all these hours, and the spray had been carried on airy wings to the grass which fringed the pool in which the fountain stood. On each blade of grass the spray had fallen so gently as hardly to bend it, descending softly and silently the whole night long. By slow and almost imperceptible processes each blade became coated with a thin layer of ice; by the same noiseless processes each layer grew thicker, until in the morning what before had been a little patch of swaying grass was a miniature battle-ground of upright, crystal spears, each holding within it, as its nucleus, a single blade of grass, now cold, rigid, and dead. In human life, in like manner, it may seem a light thing to

leave a young heart outside of Christ's fold, and exposed to the "cold winds of the world's great unbelief." There is no violent transformation of the character in such a case. Yet silently and surely the world's frost settles upon the flowers of the heart, covering them with the chill spray of doubt, binding them with soft bonds which harden into chains of ice, encasing them in a coat of crystal mail, polished, cold, and impenetrable. You have met persons in whose heart this freezing process has been accomplished. You have seen beneath the icy surface the nucleus of good which might have grown to so fair a harvest, just as you have seen the dead blade of grass preserved at the core of the icicle. You can do little now for either the person or the plant: nothing but heaven's sunshine can melt the ice which holds them in its deadly thrall. But you can take care that none of those for whom you are responsible will be left out in the world's cold, to suffer so deadly a change. You can bring them within the warm influences of Christian life, where no frost will gather upon them, and where the soul's highest powers will be gently wooed to their best growth. *Training children for the Lord:*—An aged Christian, a widow of fourscore years, relates the following experience of her early days. When she first entered upon her married life, she and her husband could lock their cottage door, and go together, forenoon and afternoon, to the house of God. After the birth of their first son they had to enjoy this privilege in turn; one going in the forenoon, and the other in the afternoon. But the sickness or fretfulness of the child not unfrequently detained the mother at home during the whole of the Sabbath. This she felt to be a great privation. On one such occasion a neighbour, coming in to inquire about her welfare, found her in tears. The dejected young mother was a Christian; she had early been brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; she was a lover of the Lord's house, and of the Lord's day; she trusted in Jesus as her Saviour; but she had not yet learned lovingly to accept all His discipline. There were things connected with it "too painful for her." She did not know what was to compensate her for the want of the days in the courts of the Lord; and so she told her neighbour the cause of her dejection. "Woman," replied her neighbour, in the broad dialect of that land, "d'ye no mind the word that says, 'Take this child, and nurse him for Me; and I will give thee thy wages'?" It was a word in season; and, with greater or less power, it sustained and comforted that mother during the whole of her subsequent nursing of ten children. Her home in the valley of the Tweed was long ago exchanged for one on the banks of the Mohawk. But the God whose Word thus comforted her in early womanhood is with her still when she is old and greyheaded; and she can gratefully speak of her eleven children, nursed for Him, as all walking in the ways of God on earth, or taken away to another home, into which sickness and death can never come. (*Mothers' Treasury.*) *Holy education of children:* — Good laws will not reform us, if reformation begin not at home. This is the cause of all our misdeeds in Church and State, even the want of a holy education of children. (*R. Baxter.*) *Permanence of early impressions:*—The late Rev. Richard Knill, a most devoted and useful missionary in Russia, returned home to his native village. It so happened that he slept in the chamber where he had slept as a boy. All night long he lay awake thinking of the mercy and goodness of God to him through life. Early in the morning he looked out of a window, and saw a tree in the garden beneath which his mother had prayed with him forty years before. He went out, and on the same spot knelt down and thanked God for a praying mother. Here was the reward of a mother who trained her children in the way to heaven.

Vers. 25–35. **Whose name was Simeon.**—*Readiness for God's will:*—"Some years ago," says a lady, "I made the acquaintance of an old peasant in a little German village, where I for some time resided. He was called Gottlieb, a name which has the very beautiful signification, 'The love of God.' The old man was well worthy of it, for if ever heart was filled with love to God and to all God's creatures it was his. Once when walking I came upon him as he was stooping to pick up a fallen apple. 'Don't you weary, Gottlieb,' I asked, 'stooping so often, and then lying all alone by the roadside?' 'No, no, miss,' he answered, smiling, and offering me a handful of ripe pears, 'I don't weary; I'm just waiting—waiting. I think I'm about ripe now, and I must soon fall to the ground; and then, just think, the Lord will pick me up! O miss, you are young yet, and perhaps just in blossom; turn well round to the Sun of Righteousness, that you may ripen sweet for His service.'" (*New Cyclopædia of Anecdote.*) *Waiting for the Lord:*—

Everybody knows and loves the story of the dog Argus, who just lives through the term of his master's absence, and sees him return to his home, and recognizes him, and rejoicing in the sight, dies. Beautiful, too, as the story is in itself, it has a still deeper allegorical interest. For how many Arguses have there been, how many will there be hereafter, the course of whose years has been so ordered that they will have just lived to see their Lord come and take possession of His home, and in their joy at the blissful sight, have departed! How many such spirits, like Simeon's, will swell the praises of Him who spared them that He might save them. (*Augustus Hare.*) *Waiting for the chariot:*—Mrs. Cartwright, wife of the famous American preacher, was, after her husband's death, attending a meeting at Bethel Chapel, a mile from her house. She was called upon to give her testimony, which she did with much feeling, concluding with the words: "The past three weeks have been the happiest of all my life; I am waiting for the chariot." When the meeting broke up she did not rise with the rest. The minister solemnly said, "The chariot has arrived." *Simeon's blessed hope:*—I. SIMEON'S EXPECTATION. He was "waiting." He did not wish that the tabernacle of his body might be dissolved; but he did hope that, through the chinks of that old battered tabernacle of his, he might be able to see the Lord. II. THE FULFILMENT OF THIS EXPECTATION. He had the consolation for which he waited, and all the people of God now have it, in Jesus. But a little while ago I heard of an ungodly man who had a pious wife. They had but one daughter, a fair and lovely thing; she was laid on a bed of sickness: the father and mother stood beside the bed; the solemn moment came when she must die; the father leaned over, and put his arm round her, and wept hot tears upon his child's white brow; the mother stood there too, weeping her very soul away. The moment that child was dead, the father began to tear his hair, and curse himself in his despair; misery had got hold upon him; but as he looked towards the foot of the bed, there stood his wife; she was not raving, she was not cursing; she wiped her eyes, and said, "I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me." The unbeliever's heart for a moment rose in anger, for he imagined that she was a stoic. But the tears flowed down her cheeks too. He saw that though she was a weak and feeble woman, she could bear sorrow better than he could, and he threw his arms round her neck, and said, "Ah! wife, I have often laughed at your religion; I will do so no more. There is much blessedness in this resignation. Would God that I had it too!" "Yes," she might have answered, "I have the consolation of Israel." There is—hear it, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!—there is consolation in Israel. Ah! it is sweet to see a Christian die; it is the noblest thing on earth—the dismissal of a saint from his labour to his reward, from his conflicts to his triumphs. The georgeous pageantry of princes is as nothing. The glory of the setting sun is not to be compared with the heavenly coruscations which illumine the soul as it fades from the organs of bodily sense, to be ushered into the august presence of the Lord. When dear Haliburton died, he said, "I am afraid I shall not be able to bear another testimony to my Master, but in order to show you that I am peaceful, and still resting on Christ, I will hold my hands up;" and just before he died, he held both his hands up, and clapped them together, though he could not speak. Have you ever read of the death-bed of Payson? I cannot describe it to you; it was like the flight of a seraph. John Knox, that brave old fellow, when he came to die, sat up in his bed, and said, "Now the hour of my dissolution is come; I have longed for it many a-day; but I shall be with my Lord in a few moments." Then he fell back on his bed and died. III. THE EXPLANATION OF THIS FACT. 1. There is consolation in the doctrines of the Bible. What sayest thou, worldling, if thou couldst know thyself elect of God the Father, if thou couldst believe thyself redeemed by His only-begotten Son, if thou knewest that for thy sins there was a complete ransom paid, would not that be a consolation to you? Perhaps you answer, "No." That is because you are a natural man, and do not discern spiritual things. The spiritual man will reply, "Consolation? ay, sweet as honey to these lips; yea, sweeter than the honeycomb to my heart are those precious doctrines of the grace of God." 2. There is consolation in the promises of the Bible. Oh! how sweet to the soul in distress are the promises of Jesus! For every condition there is a promise; for every sorrow there is a cordial; for every wound there is a balm; for every disease there is a medicine. If we turn to the Bible, there are promises for all cases. 3. Not only have we consolatory promises, and consolatory doctrines, but we have consolatory influences in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Scripture biography of Simeon:*—What a biography of a man? How short, and yet how complete! We have seen

biographies so prolix, that full one half is nonsense, and much of the other half too vapid to be worth reading. We have seen large volumes spun out of men's letters. Writing desks have been broken open, and private diaries exposed to the world. Now-a-days, if a man is a little celebrated, his signature, the house in which he was born, the place where he dines, and everything else, is thought worthy of public notice. So soon as he is departed this life, he is embalmed in huge folios, the profit of which rests mainly, I believe, with the publishers, and not with the readers. Short biographies are the best, which give a concise and exact account of the whole man. What do we care about what Simeon did—where he was born, where he was married, what street he used to walk through, or what coloured coat he wore? We have a very concise account of his history, and that is enough. His "name was Simeon;" he lived "in Jerusalem;" "the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him." Beloved, that is enough of a biography for any one of us. If, when we die, so much as this can be said of us—our name—our business, "waiting for the consolation of Israel"—our character, "just and devout"—our companionship, having the Holy Ghost upon us—that will be sufficient to hand us down not to time, but to eternity, memorable amongst the just, and estimable amongst all them that are sanctified. Pause awhile, I beseech you, and contemplate Simeon's character. The Holy Ghost thought it worthy of notice, since he has put a "behold" in the sentence. "Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon." He doth not say, "Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was King Herod;" he doth not say, "Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, who was high priest;" but "Behold!"—turn aside here, for the sight is so rare, you may never see such a thing again so long as you live; here is a perfect marvel; "Behold," there was one man in Jerusalem who was "just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him." His character is summed up in two words—"just and devout." "Just"—that is his character before men. "Devout"—that is his character before God. He was "just." Was he a father? He did not provoke his children to anger, lest they should be discouraged. Was he a master? He gave unto his servants that which was just and equal, knowing that he also had his Master in heaven. Was he a citizen? He rendered obedience unto the powers that then were, submitting himself to the ordinances of man for the Lord's sake. Was he a merchant? He overreached in no transaction, but providing things honest in the sight of all men, he honoured God in his common business habits. Was he a servant? Then he did not render eye-service, as a man-pleaser, but in singleness of heart he served the Lord. If, as is very probable, he was one of the teachers of the Jews, then he was faithful; he spoke what he knew to be the Word of God, although it might not be for his gain, and would not, like the other shepherds, turn aside to speak error, for the sake of filthy lucre. Before men he was just. But that is only half a good man's character. There are many who say, "I am just and upright; I never robbed a man in my life; I pay twenty shillings in the pound; and if anybody can find fault with my character, let him speak. Am I not just? But as for your religion," such a one will say, "I do not care about it; I think it cant." Sir, you have only one feature of a good man, and that the smallest. You do good towards man, but not towards God; you do not rob your fellow, but you rob your Maker. Simeon had both features of a Christian. He was a "just man," and he was also "devout." He valued the "outward and visible sign," and he possessed also the "inward and spiritual grace. (*Ibid.*) *The waiting Church*:—All the saints have waited for Jesus. Our mother Eve waited for the coming of Christ; when her first son was born, she said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." True she was mistaken in what she said: it was Cain, and not Jesus. But by her mistake we see that she cherished the blessed hope. That Hebrew patriarch, who took his son, his only son, to offer him for a burnt offering, expected the Messiah, and well did he express his faith when he said, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb." He who once had a stone for his pillow, the trees for his curtains, the heaven for his canopy, and the cold ground for his bed, expected the coming of Jesus, for he said on his death-bed—"Until Shiloh come." The law-giver of Israel, who was "king in Jeshurun," spake of Him, for Moses said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me: Him shall ye hear." David celebrated Him in many a prophetic song—the Anointed of God, the King of Israel; Him to whom all kings shall bow, and all nations call Him blessed. How frequently does he in his Psalms sing about "my Lord"! "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at

my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." But need we stop to tell you of Isaiah, who spake of His passion, and "saw His glory"? of Jeremiah, of Ezekiel, of Daniel, of Micah, of Malachi, and of all the rest of the prophets, who stood with their eyes strained, looking through the dim mists of futurity, until the weeks of prophecy should be fulfilled—until the sacred day should arrive, when Jesus Christ should come in the flesh? They were all waiting for the consolation of Israel. And, now, good old Simeon, standing on the verge of the period when Christ would come, with expectant eyes looked out for Him. Every morning he went up to the temple, saying to himself, "Perhaps He will come to-day." Each night when he went home he bent his knee, and said, "O Lord, come quickly; even so, come quickly." And yet, peradventure, that morning he went to the temple, little thinking, perhaps, the hour was at hand when he should see his Lord there; but there He was, brought in the arms of His mother, a little babe; and Simeon knew Him. "Lord," said he, "now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." "Oh," cries one, "but we cannot wait for the Saviour now!" No, beloved, in one sense we cannot, for He has come already. The poor Jews are waiting for Him. They will wait in vain now for His first coming, that having passed already. Waiting for the Messiah was a virtue in Simeon's day; it is the infidelity of the Jews now, since the Messiah is come. Still there is a high sense in which the Christian ought to be every day waiting for the consolation of Israel. I am very pleased to see that the doctrine of the second advent of Christ is gaining ground everywhere. I find that the most spiritual men in every place are "looking for," as well as "hastening unto," the coming of our Lord and Saviour. I marvel that the belief is not universal, for it is so perfectly scriptural. We are, we trust, some of us, in the same posture as Simeon. We have climbed the staircase of the Christian virtues, from whence we look for that blessed hope, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*Ibid.*) *The consolation of Israel*:—Piscator observeth that "the consolation of Israel" is the periphrasis of Jesus Christ; because all the consolation of a true Israelite, as Jacob's in Benjamin, is bound up in Christ. If He be gone, the soul goeth down to the grave with sorrow. As all the candles in a country cannot make a day—no, it must be the rising of the sun that must do it, the greatest confluence of comforts that the whole creation affordeth, cannot make a day of light and gladness in the heart of a believer; no, it must be the rising of this Sun of Righteousness. (*G. Swinnock.*) *Waiting is good but hard service*:—Waiting is often the best kind of service a man can render. Indeed we call a good servant a waiter. But it is commonly harder to wait than to work. It was hard for the children, the night before Christmas, to wait until morning before they knew what presents they were to have. Yet there was nothing for them to do but to wait. And if they only would wait, the morning would come—and with it all that had been promised to them for the morning. How hard it is to wait for the fever to turn, when we are watching by a loved one's bedside, and our only hope is in waiting. It is hard to wait from seed-time to harvest, from the beginning of the voyage to its end, from the sad parting to the joyous meeting again, from the sending of a letter until its answer can come back to us. How much easier it would be to do something to hasten a desired event, instead of patiently, passively waiting for its coming. It is so much easier to ask in faith than to wait in faith. The minutes drag while the response tarries. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *Waiting is harder than doing*:—Waiting is a harder duty than doing. In illustration of this compare Milton's beautiful sonnet on his blindness, and that part of "The Pilgrim's Progress" which tells of Passion and Patience. Jesus Himself had to wait patiently for thirty long years before He entered upon His mission. In a certain battle a detachment of cavalry was kept inactive. It was hard for the men to do nothing but wait, while the fight was going on before them. At last, in the crisis of the battle, the command was given them to charge, and that body of fresh men, sweeping down like a torrent, turned the tide of battle. So, in the battle of life, waiting is often the surest means to victory. And it is comforting to know that where we see only the unsightly bud, God sees the perfect flower; where we see the rough pebble, He sees the flashing diamond. (*Sunday School Times.*) *Patient waiting*:—Those who have read the story of Agamemnon will remember the glorious beauty of its opening. A sentinel is placed to watch, year after year, for the beacon-blaze, the appointed signal to announce the taking of Troy. At last it is lighted up; on many a hill the withered heath flares up to pass on the tidings being given; from many a promontory the fire rises in a pillar, and is reflected tremulously on the ridged waves, till at last it

is lighted upon the mountains, and recognized as the genuine offspring of the Idean flame. And then the sentinel may be relieved. Even so it is with Simeon. He is a sentinel whom God had set to watch for the Light. He has seen it, and he feels now that his life-work is over. (*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*) *Simeon and the child Jesus:*—1. It is saying much for Simeon that he was both a just and a devout man. These two features of Christian character are needful the one to the other. A just man may be rigidly and legally righteous, yet his character may be hard and cold; but a devout man is one of a warmer, gentler spirit, who is not only good, but makes goodness attractive. Simeon's devout spirit adorned his justice, and his just spirit strengthened his devotion. 2. No Christian grace is finer than the grace that waits for the consolation of Israel. Waiting higher than working. The passive virtues of the Christian require and display a greater faith and a profounder humility than the active. To those who wait in faith, submission, and holy living, the consolation of Israel will always come. 3. All Christians may not depart in raptures, but they may at least expect to "depart in peace." Many good people are greatly concerned lest they should not be ready to die. If we are ready to live we may leave dying to the Lord. Simeon's life had been passed in peace with God. In the same peace he was ready to die. 4. The salvation of Christ is no meagre and limited scheme. It is for all peoples. Christ is both "a light to lighten the Gentiles," and "the glory of God's Israel." Before His throne will be gathered at last "a great multitude whom no man can number." "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." But what will satisfy His infinite heart, if the kingdom of Satan at last outnumbers His own? 5. Christ has always been "spoken against," but Christianity lives, and is going on in the world "conquering and to conquer." (*E. D. Rogers, D.D.*) *Simeon: saint, singer, and seer:*—Simeon's song was the first human Advent hymn with which the Saviour was greeted, and it has been sung constantly in the Church ever since. I. Contemplate A SAINTLY CHARACTER. II. See further THE SAINT'S ANTICIPATION, resting upon (1) the word of prophecy; (2) a definite personal promise (ver. 26). III. Now think of THE SAINTLY SATISFACTION. Simeon saw Christ. The promise was fulfilled. The vision was enough to satisfy the soul. IV. Let us listen to THE SAINT'S SONG. How honourable was the position which Simeon occupied in uttering this song! A long chain of saints, stretching through the ages, was completed in him. They expected, he realized. They had all died, not having received the promise, he received. They had only foreseen, he actually touched Christ. He struck the first chords of that song which has been taken up already by the ages, and will go on vibrating and increasing in volume so long as earth stands or heaven endures. V. THE SAINTLY PROPHECY of Simeon must not be unnoticed. If there is to be glory, there must also be suffering. He gives a hint of Gethsemane and of Calvary. A sword was to pass through Mary's heart. Here is the "first foreshadowing of the Passion found in the New Testament." It should save us from surprise that Christianity has had to pass through such vicissitudes. The Saviour came to His throne by way of the cross, and His truth will come to be the one power among men by way of frequent dispute and temporary rejection. VI. THE SAINT'S PREPARATION FOR DEATH is suggested in his own words. There is a tradition that this was his "swan-song"—that he passed into the other world when he had finished it. More fitting words with which to die could not easily be found. What a contrast the dying words of such a saint present to the words of the worldling! It is said that Mirabeau cried out frantically for music to soothe his last moments; that Hobbes, the deist, said, as he gasped his last breath, "I am taking a fearful leap into the dark"; that Cardinal Beaufort said, "What! is there no bribing death?" Men with the Christian light have met death in another way. When Melancthon was asked if there was anything he desired, he said, "No, Luther, nothing but heaven." Dr. John Owen said at last, "I am going to Him whom my soul loveth, or rather, who has loved me with an everlasting love." John Brown of Haddington could say, "I am weak, but it is delightful to feel one's self in the everlasting arms." George Washington could say, "It is all well." Walter Scott, as he sank in the slumber of death, "Now I shall be myself again." Beethoven, as he could almost catch the melody of the mystic world, "Now I shall hear." Wesley could cheerily meet death with the words, "The best of all is, God is with us." Locke, the Christian philosopher, exclaimed at dying, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the goodness and knowledge of God!" Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit": Paul, "having a desire to depart"; and, ,, to die is gain." All such utterances accord with the last words of Simeon. Inquiry as

to the character of the individual life, hope, and preparation for the future should be the outcome of these thoughts. Useful and important lessons all may learn as they contemplate the character of the venerable Simeon—saint, singer, and seer. (*F. Hastings.*) *Simeon: a sermon for Christmas*:—Simeon, we are told, waited for the Consolation of Israel. In that short but striking word we discover a thought unknown to the ancient world, and one which gives the Jewish nation incomparable grandeur. Israel is a people that waits. Whilst the other nations grow great, conquer, and extend here below; whilst they think only of their power and visible prosperity, Israel waits. This little people has an immense, a strange ambition; they expect the reign of God on earth. Much that was carnal and selfish mixed up with that ambition. But the truly pious understood in a different way the consolation of Israel. In their case, the question was, before everything else, spiritual deliverance, pardon, salvation. Yet how few they were who were not tired of waiting! For more than four hundred years no prophet had appeared to revive their hope. The stranger reigned in Jerusalem. Religious formalism covered with a winding sheet of lead the whole nation. The scoffers asked where the promise of Messiah's coming was. Yet in the midst of that icy indifference, Simeon still waits. Consider—I. THE FIRMNESS OF HIS HOPE. II. THE GREATNESS OF HIS FAITH. In a poor child brought by poor people to the temple he discovers Him who is to be the glory of Israel, and—something more wonderful still, and wholly foreign to the spirit of a Jew—Him who is to enlighten the Gentiles. It is the whole of mankind that Simeon gives as a retinue to the child which he bears in his arms. Never did a bolder faith launch out into the infinite, basing all its calculations on the Word of God. III. THE FEELINGS AWAKENED IN HIS SOUL BY THE CERTAINTY WITH WHICH FAITH FILLS HIM. All these feelings summed up in one—joy; the joy of a soul overwhelmed with the goodness of God, joy which is breathed out in song. What is the principle of that joy? It is a Divine peace. "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." And on what does that peace rest? On the certainty of salvation. "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." You who know this joy, keep it not to yourselves! (*E. Bersier, D.D.*) *A representative man*:—Sometimes one man seems to stand as the representative of the whole human family. It was so in this instance. All the expectations, desire, hope, and assurance of better things which have moved the heart of man, seem to have been embodied in the waiting Simeon. His occupation is appropriately described by the word waiting. He had probably seen a long lifetime of varied spiritual service, and had passed through his full share of human suffering; and now, with all this discipline behind him, he had nothing to do but to wait for the disclosure of the supreme mercy of heaven. At his age he could not be long, in the usual order of things, before he saw death; and yet, between him and that grim sight there lay the promised revelation of the very beauty of the Father's image. The coming of Simeon into the Temple, though an ordinary act, was invested with extraordinary feeling and significance. Sometimes the habitude of a whole life will suddenly disclose new meanings and adaptations, and the most beaten ground of our routine will have springing up on it unexpected and precious flowers. Persist in going to the house of God, for the very next time you go you may be gladdened by rare revelations! A beautiful picture is this taking of the child into the arms of Simeon, this lifting up of the old man's face, and this utterance of the saint's prayer! Let imagination linger upon the pathetic scene. It is thus that God closes the ages and opens the coming time. The old man and the little child, whenever they come together, seem to repeat in some degree the interest of this exciting scene. Every child brought into the temple of the Lord should be in his own degree a teacher and a deliverer of the people; and every venerable saint should regard him as such, and bless God for the promise of his manhood. It is amazing at how many points we may touch the Saviour. There is Simeon with the little child in his arms, and in that little life he sees the whole power of God, and the light that is to spread its glory over Israel and the Gentiles. Simeon might have given his prayer another turn; he might have said, "Lord, let me tarry awhile, that I may see the growth of this child. I am unwilling to go just yet, as great things are about to happen, such as never happened upon the earth before; I pray Thee let me abide until I see at least His first victory, and then call me to Thy rest." This would have been a natural desire, and yet the old man was content to have seen and touched the promised child; and he who might have died in the night of Judaism, passed upward in the earliest dawn of Christianity. Simeon saw the salvation of God in the little child. Others have seen that salvation is the wondrousness and beneficence

exemplified in the full manhood of Christ. Some have been saved by a simple act of faith; others have passed into spiritual rest through doubt, suffering, and manifold agony. Some have gone "through nature up to nature's God"; and others have found Him in the pages of revelation, in bold prophecy, in tender promise, in profound legislation, in gracious and healing sympathy. Thus there are many points at which we touch the great saving facts of the universe; the question is not so much at what point we come into contact with God as to be sure that our progress is vital and progressive. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Aged evangelists:*— The first evangelists were old people. When the King of kings put off the glory of His heavenly state, and came into this world, no person pronounced His name, or even recognized His face on the day of His first public appearance, but one old man and one old woman. I. THE FIRST MAN IN THIS WORLD WHO WAS HONOURED TO BE AN EVANGELIST WAS AN AGED MAN. An old father named Simeon. Historically, we know nothing about him, not even that he was old; but all tradition says that he was so, and it is the fair, inevitable inference from the spirit of the story that he had reached a stage when, in all human probability, he would not have to live much longer. I think that he began to walk up to the temple with short breath and slow step, and that age had set a seal upon him, which, like the red cross upon a tree marked by the steward to come down, told that he was soon to die. Yet he had in cypher a secret message from heaven, by which he knew that he was safe to live a little longer. It looks as if he had belonged to the predicted few who spake often one to another in the dark hour just before the Sun of Righteousness rose, and that in answer to a great longing to see the Saviour "it was revealed to Him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ." We are not told when this revelation was made. If in his early manhood, it must have been a strange, charmed life that he led ever after. At last the long-looked-for express came. Did he hear in the air or did the voice whisper in his soul words like these: "Go to the temple; the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to His temple this day"? We only know that "he came by the Spirit into the temple." No particular stir in the street that morning, as the old man hurried along, to mark anything out of the common way. No one knows what kind of being Simeon expected to see, but we know that his faith was not shaken by the sight of His King coming as a mere child. All his soul flamed up. The old face shone like a lamp suddenly lighted; then to the delight of the mother and to the amazement of the officiating priests, who almost thought him out of his mind, this servant of the Master in heaven took the child in his arms and spoke like the prophet Isaiah. Let no believer be afraid to die. When the time comes, you will find that, little by little, He has cleared out all the impediments that now seem to you so great; you will be as ready to go as Simeon was; and if you look for Him as he did, you will find that Jesus clasped close to you is still "the antidote to death." II. THE FIRST WOMAN IN THIS WORLD WHO WAS HONOURED TO BE AN EVANGELIST WAS AN AGED WOMAN. Let us take short notes of what is said about her. 1. The fact of her great age is stated. The style of the statement is obscure, but the meaning seems to be that she was a widow about eighty-four years of age; that seven years out of the eighty-four she had been a wife, and that she was quite a young girl when she married. Then she had lived long enough, like Noah, to see an old world die, and a new world born. 2. She was a prophetess. God had said by an ancient seer, "On My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in these days of My Spirit." As the sun sends out shoots of glory and tinges of forerunning radiance to tell that he is coming, so, before the Day of Pentecost was fully come, we have foretokens of it in the prophetic flashes that shone out from the souls of Simeon and Anna. 3. She was of the tribe of Asher. Not an illustrious tribe. No star in the long story of its darkness until now. It had, however, one honourable distinction. To it had been left a peculiar promise, the richest gem in the old family treasure: "And of Asher he said. . . . As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The old prophetess could say of this promise, "I am its lawful heiress. Long have I known it, and always have I found it true. In my young days, in my days of happy wifehood, in my days of lonely widowhood, in my days of weary age; as my days, my strength has been." 4. "She departed not from the temple, but served God," &c. (ver. 37). Looking and listening for the Lord of the temple, she thought that His foot on the stair might be heard at any moment, and she would not be out of the way when He came. When the temple shafts, crowned with lily-work, flashed back the crimson sunrise, she was there; when the evening lamps were lighted, she was

there; when the courts were crowded, she was there; when the last echoes of the congregation died away, still she was there; her spirit said, "One thing have I desired of the Lord," &c. (Psa. xxvii. 4). 5. She took part in making known the joyful tidings. Simeon was in the act of speaking, "and she, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him," &c. (ver. 38). We try in vain to picture her delight. It had been her habit to speak about the glory of which her heart was full to the people who came at the hour of prayer; and now, at this most sacred hour, we are sure that in her holy rapture she would stop this person, put her hand on that, and say in spirit, whatever her words may have been: "Look there on that little child; He is all that we have been looking for; folded up in that lovely little life is all our redemption; that bud will burst into wondrous flower some day. Whoever lives to see it, mark my words, that child will grow up to be the Redeemer of Israel." First things are significant things, especially at the opening of a new dispensation. When, therefore, we find in the gospel-story that the first evangelists were old people, both old and young should take the hint. Old Christians must never tell us any more that they are past service. God has no such word as "superannuated" written against any name in His book. The young Christian, joyful with a soul that colours all things with the freshness and glory of its own morning, can never say of the old Christian, "I have no need of thee." No hand can turn back the shadow on the dial of time; no spell can change the grey hair into its first bright abundant beauty; no science can discover the fountain of youth told about in Spanish tales of old romance; but the grace of God can do infinitely more than that. It can keep the heart fresh; it can make the soul young when the limbs are old. When strength is made perfect in weakness; when many years have run their course; when we are obliged to change the tense in speech about your labours, as Paul did when he said, "Salute the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord," but feel all the while that you are more "beloved" than ever; when, "coming in," you "give thanks to the Lord"; when your inmost life can say, "My hand begins to tremble, but I can still take hold of the everlasting covenant; my foot fails, but it is not far from the throne of grace; my sight fails, but I can see Jesus; my appetite fails, but I have meat to eat that the world knows not of; my ears are dull, but I hear Him, and He hears me; my memory is treacherous, but I remember the years of the right hand of the Most High, and delight to talk of His doings"; when you can thus preach Jesus, be assured that few evangelists do more for the gospel. No sermon moves us more deeply than that of an old, happy, Christian life, and no service more confirms our faith. (*C. Stanford, D.D.*) *Simeon and Anna:*—Simeon had come up by special revelation; Anna needed no such token. Surely her leading was the best. Simeon needed the message, but if Christ had come as a thief at first, as He will at last, Anna would have been there. (*A. Whyte, D.D.*) *The same man was just and devout:*—To be devout means to live always with the consciousness of God's presence; to walk with Him, as the old Scriptures put it, so that all thoughts and acts are thought and done before Him, and ordered so as to be in tune with His character. It means to live in worship of Him, so that honour is paid in everything to that which is God, to truth and mercy, justice and purity. But to be devout without being just is almost useless. For this kind of devotion is liable to extravagances of feeling which dim the clear sight of things. There is nothing more common than the prophecies of pious men who map out the future and run into the wildest follies. The prophet must be a just man, and that means not only the habit of right doing which devoutness almost secures, but the habit of right thinking. (*Stopford A. Brooke.*) *It is hard to wait, and few can do it well:*—But God was with Simeon, and high hopes, and faith. God with him; he had no lonely hours, and it is the loneliness of the heart that makes waiting so bitter. He had that ineffable Presence with him, consciousness of whom would make life Divine, could we but possess it; and the glory of God's life and thought had filled his heart with song. To wait, then, was not hard; for every hour brought peaceful joy, and every joy was a new pledge of the last and most glorious joy. But along with this life with God, and flowing from it as a source, were those high hopes and faiths which were his companions in this abiding old age. Waiting was no hardship to one so companied. (*Ibid.*) *The expectant Simeon:*—We here see three different periods in the career of a believer. I. WAITING. 1. For what? Consolation. The heart requires this (Heb. vi. 18). Redemption. No consolation except through redemption. God's salvation. The Lord Jesus Christ the sum and substance of it all; for when he

saw Him he was satisfied. 2. Relying on what? God's Word. 3. Where? In the Temple. Perhaps because he looked for a special blessing in the house of God (Isa. lvi. 7). Perhaps because of prophecy (Mal. iii. 1). Learn that the Holy Ghost never supersedes Scripture, but leads men to trust it, and wait in faith for the promised blessings. Observe also that He leads men to the sanctuary of God; not to neglect church, but to look for a blessing in it. II. FINDING. We do not know how long he waited. Perhaps years. At length a very insignificant party entered the Temple. A man with a young woman and Child. Poor people. Proved by turtle doves (Lev. xii. 8). 1. He recognizes the sacred character of the Child. The believer recognizes Christ as his Saviour, though men in general may think nothing of Him. 2. He receives Him into his arms (Heb. xi. 13). 3. He blesses God. III. HAVING FOUND. 1. He is at peace. 2. He is ready to die. 3. He is sure of the Divine salvation. (*Canon Hoare.*) *The Consolation of Israel*:—I. THE CHARACTER, UNDER WHICH THEY EXPECTED THEIR MESSIAH, is beautifully expressed in these words of Simeon—THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL. II. Having shown you under what character the Messiah was expected by Simeon and his friends, I proceed now, in the second place, to consider the STATE OF MIND IN WHICH THEY AWAITED HIS ARRIVAL. 1. Simeon waited in full confidence for the Consolation of Israel. He had received the promises of God concerning the coming of that Just One, and by faith he was persuaded of them, and embraced them. He entertained no doubts of their being fulfilled in their season. 2. Simeon waited for the Consolation of Israel with ardent desire. The Incarnation of the Son of God was not merely an event of whose certainty this excellent man was assured: he regarded it as an event most desirable, most happy for himself. 3. Once more; the state in which Simeon awaited the birth of the Messiah, was a state of holy preparation. For the same man was just and devout; and both he and his friends appear to have been very constant in their attendance on the public worship at the Temple. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *Christ our Consolation*:—I. Let us ask ourselves what it is that is here described by the words "the Consolation of Israel." Israel was God's own people. For all the duties, for all the trials, for all the sufferings of life, what had the Greek, what had the Roman, to furnish him, as compared with the poorest peasant in Israel, with one who could go forth in the strength of the Lord his God, and make mention of His righteousness only; who could stay himself on his God in trial, and in suffering could say, "It is Jehovah, my covenant God: let Him do what seemeth Him good"? Which of them could ever cry out, as death drew on, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord?" Of which of them could it ever be said, amidst all the void and unsatisfied yearnings of this life, "When I awake up after Thy likeness I shall be satisfied"? So that, as compared with the nations round, Israel's Consolation was already abundant. Still, Israel had, and looked for, a Consolation to come. God's people differed in this also from every people on earth. When, then, we use the words "the Consolation of Israel," we mean Christ in the fulness of His constituted Person and Office as the Comforter of His people. And when we say "waiting for the Consolation of Israel," we imply that attitude of expectation, anxious looking for, hearty desire of, this Consolation, which comes from, and *is* in fact, Christ Himself. First, then, Christ is the Consolation of His people, inasmuch as He DELIVERS THEM FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN. But, again, Christ consoles His people not only from guilt, but IN SORROW. It is His especial office, as we saw, "to bind up the broken heart; to give the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (*H. Alford, M.A.*)

Ver. 26. **And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost.**—*The leading of the Spirit*:—Observe that Simeon found Christ in the temple, being conducted thither by the Holy Ghost. There was an ancient promise, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His Temple," and this probably drew the holy man to the courts of the Lord. But the Lord might have come, and Simeon might not have been there, or the good old man might have been occupied in some other court of the holy place; but being led of the Spirit he came to the appointed spot at the very time when the mother of Christ was bringing the Babe in her arms to do for Him according to the law. In this Simeon is an instance of the truth that they find Christ who are led by the Spirit, and they alone. No man ever comes to Christ by his own wit and wisdom, nor by his own unprompted will: he alone who is drawn of the Spirit comes to Christ. We must submit ourselves to Divine teaching and Divine drawing, or else Christ may come to His temple, but we shall not perceive Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Simeon's felicity*:—How highly favoured was Simeon!

A glorious anticipation truly for a pious Israelite to entertain! A stupendous assurance to carry about with him! How must it have stirred his inmost soul at times to think upon it! At one time, joy—at another, alarm—must have filled his heart; joy at the thought that God was about to visit and redeem His people; alarm, for who might abide the day of His coming, and who should stand when He appeared? Every rumour which reached him must have made his pulse throb and his heart beat; for he knew that he was destined to look upon Him to whom all type and all prophecy for four thousand years had been steadily pointing. . . . His words of recognition, the inspired hymn which bears his name, must doubtless have flowed from his burning lips like words of fire. His embrace must surely have been an act of unspeakable gratitude, wonder, and joy! (*Dean Burgon.*) *Blessedness found in the path of duty*:—Let us put ourselves in his position from the day that he received the promise, and consider, as far as may be, not merely what we should have felt, but how we should have acted, had we been in his place. It may be thought that we should have adopted one of the most probable opinions as to the manner in which Messiah would appear, and have anxiously expected His manifestation. We might perhaps have gone out of our way in this pursuit; and when the time grew long, we might have fancied that we were called upon to take some step in order to meet the Divine condescension half way. But what was the course adopted by devout Simeon? We find him frequenting the Temple faithfully, as aforetime; until, on a certain day, which was like every other day except in its results to him, the desire of his soul was gratified. A humble pair enter, and the mother bears in her arms a little Babe. There is nothing to distinguish that group from ordinary worshippers. Nay, their attire and their offering bespeak great poverty. Simeon is made aware by a sudden revelation of the Spirit, that in that helpless Child he beholds the Lord's Christ: whereupon he takes Him up in his arms, and blesses God, and pours out his soul in solemn thankfulness. Surely the lesson to be derived from this incident is the same which is taught us by many a page of Holy Scripture besides; namely, that blessedness is to be found in the path of duty. This lesson we dare not overlook, or neglect. Every one is apt to think that there is something in his own position, peculiarly uncongenial to holiness; that his own path of life is peculiarly difficult and embarrassing. Especially are men prone to think that the common round of daily duties affords but little time, and presents yet fewer opportunities, for the service of God. The daily task is so humble, or so uncongenial; so simply worldly, or so extremely private, that many who desire a closer walk with God are apt to wish that they were not exactly what and where they are; but, indeed, almost anything besides. It is our own infirmity, if we thus think. God requires at our hand good things, not great things. He can do without us; and it is He who does in us all that we ever seem to do well. Moreover, if He does but find in us a perfect willingness to serve Him, let us be well assured that He will minister to us occasions of holiness; or rather, that we shall find ample room for the execution of our best designs and desires, in those same daily duties, that same lowly round of perhaps distasteful task, which we half dislike and half despise. (*Ibid.*) *Simeon's character*:—1. The Holy Ghost, his Leader. 2. Faith, his consolation. 3. Piety, his life. 4. The Saviour, his joy. 5. To depart for heaven, his desire. (*Van Doren.*)

"In the huge Temple, deck'd by Herod's pride,
Who fain would bribe a God he ne'er believed,
Kneels a meek woman, that hath once conceived,
Tho' she was never like an earthly bride.
And yet the stainless would be purified,
And wash away the stain that yet was none,
And for the birth of her immaculate Son,
With the stern rigour of the law complied:
The duty paid received its due reward
When Simeon bless'd the Baby in her arm;
And though he plainly told her that a sword
Must pierce her soul, she felt no weak alarm,
For that for which a prophet thanked the Lord
Once to have seen, could never end in harm." (*Hartley Coleridge.*)

The fear of death destroyed by a sight of Christ:—Our text is a joyful exclamation of a venerable old saint upon seeing the Lord's Christ. It seems that when his eyes once looked upon Jesus, he never wished them to gaze on aught more on

earth. Hence he exclaimed, "Now, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." We remark—I. THAT GOD ALWAYS HONOURS PRE-EMINENTLY DEVOTED MEN. "Them that honour Me," saith the Lord, "will I honour." Undevout minds are too worldly, too apathetic, too dull to hear the secret whispering of heaven. 'Tis the spiritual ear alone that can hear the still small voice that comes across the universe from the spirit-world; 'tis the spiritual eye alone that reads the secrets of eternity, that sees passing in review before it the realities of the hidden state. Some simple-hearted Christians were once returning from chapel; they had been to hear the holy Bramwell preach. One of them said to the other, "How is it that Mr. Bramwell has always something new to tell us?" "Ah!" said the other, "I can tell you how it is; he lives very much nearer the gates of heaven than many of us, and God tells him things He does not tell other people." And so it was with Simeon. He lived very much nearer the gates of heaven than many of his day; and God honoured him by telling him this great fact. It was revealed unto Simeon that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ. II. SIMEON WAS A MAN OF PRE-EMINENT DEVOTEDNESS TO GOD. "And, behold," say the Scriptures, "there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon." Observes an eminent divine, "No doubt there were many persons in Jerusalem named Simeon besides this man, but there was none of the name who merited the attention of God so much as he in the text." There are four things said about him in the text, every one of which is an evidence of his great devotedness. It is said of him that he was just, devout, that he waited for the Consolation of Israel, and that the Holy Ghost was upon him. You cannot dispense with one of these elements from eminent piety, reconciliation, devoutness, a waiting upon God, and the possession of the Holy Ghost. A virtuous man said, a philosopher is the noblest work of God; but we would rather say a Christian, a devout man, is the noblest work of God. Such a man is God's jewel, His friend; 'tis with him God delights to dwell; 'tis to him God will tell His secrets; on him confer His richest honours. Simeon was such a man; God honoured him by telling him the great fact, that before death should close his eyes, he should see the Lord's Christ. III. THAT THOUGH SIMEON WAS AN EMINENTLY DEVOTED MAN, HE HAD GREAT DISCOURAGEMENT IN OBTAINING A SIGHT OF THE OBJECT HE SO EXTREMELY DESIRED. What Simeon wanted was to see the Lord's Christ. Unbelief would suggest to him, "Simeon, you are an old man, your day is almost ended, the snow of age is upon your head, your eyes are growing dim, your brow is wrinkled, your limbs totter, and death cannot be at a great distance; and where are the signs of His coming? You are resting, Simeon, on a phantom of the imagination—it is all a delusion." "No," replies Simeon, "I shall not see death till I have seen the Lord's Christ. Yes, I shall see Him before I die." But unbelief would again suggest, "But remember, Simeon, many holy men have desired to see the Lord's Christ, but have died without the sight." "Yes," says Simeon, "I shall see the Lord's Christ." I imagine I see Simeon walking out on a fine morning along one of the lovely vales of Palestine, meditating on the great subject that filled his mind. He is met by one of his friends—"Peace be with you: have you heard the strange news?" "What news?" replied Simeon. "Do you not know Zacharias, the priest?" "Yes, well." "According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense in the temple of the Lord, and the whole multitude of the people were praying without. It was the time of incense, and there appeared unto him an angel standing on the right side of the altar of incense, and told him that he should have a son, whose name should be called John: one who should be great in the sight of the Lord, who should neither drink wine nor strong drink, and he should be filled with the Holy Ghost from his infancy, and that he should go before the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord, and make ready a people prepared for the Lord. The angel was Gabriel, that stands in the presence of God, and because he believed not the angel, he was struck dumb." "Ah!" says Simeon, "that is an exact fulfilment of the prophecy of Malachi iv. 5, 6. This is the messenger of the Lord, to prepare the way; this is the forerunner; this is the morning star; the day dawn is not far off; the great Messiah is on His way—is nigh at hand. I shall not see death till I have seen the Lord's Christ. Hallelujah! the Lord shall suddenly come to His Temple." Simeon ponders these things in his heart, and time rolls on. I imagine I see Simeon again on his morning meditative walk. He is again accosted by one of his neighbours: "Well, Simeon, have you heard the news?" "What news?" "Why, there's a very singular story almost in everybody's mouth. A company of shepherds on the

plains of Bethlehem were watching their flocks; it was the still hour of night, and the mantle of darkness covered the world; a bright light shone around the shepherds, a light above the brightness of the midday sun; they looked up, and just above them appeared an angel glowing in all the lovely hues of heaven; the shepherds became greatly terrified, and the angel said to them, 'Fear not, behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.'" "This is the Lord's Christ. I shall not see death till I have seen the Lord's Christ." Simeon said to himself, "They will bring Him to the Temple to circumcise Him." Away went Simeon, morning after morning, to see if he could get a glimpse of Jesus. Perhaps unbelief suggested to Simeon, "You had better stop at home this wet morning; you have been so many mornings and have not seen Him, you may venture to be absent this once." "No," says the Spirit, "you must go to the Temple." Away went Simeon to the Temple. He would no doubt select a good post of observation. Look at him there, leaning his back against one of the pillars of the Temple; how intently he watches the door! He sees one mother after another bringing her infant to the Temple to be circumcised; he surveys the face of every child. "No," says he, as his eye scans the countenance, "that is not He, and that is not"; but at length he sees the Virgin appear, and the Spirit told him that that was the long-expected Saviour. He grasped the Child in his arms, and pressed Him to his heart, and exclaimed, "Now, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Between Simeon and an awakened sinner there is one point of agreement: they both desire to see one object—the Lord's Christ. "What must I do? I want help: to whom must I look?" Behold, a ray of light breaks in upon him—one single, but bright ray; it keeps him from utter despair, it gives him a faint hope, it enables him tremblingly to say, "Before I see death, I shall see the Lord's Christ." 1. Unbelief suggests, "How do you suppose that you will be permitted to see the Lord's Christ? Do you think the great Jehovah, whose majesty almost confounds the cherubim and seraphim—at least compels them to cover over their bright faces with their wings, and fall before His throne in deep adoration—whose temple is all space, whose arm is around all worlds, who inhabits eternity, at whose bidding the sun lights up his fire, whose empire is so vast that were an angel, with the lightning's swiftness, to fly in a direct line from the centre, he would not in millions of years sweep the outskirts of His creation, 'who sits upon the highest heavens, and sees worlds infinite dance beneath Him as atoms in the sunbeam, you an atom, a shade, a moth, a worm, a flower of the field to-day, and not to-morrow, in the morning, and not to-night, not master of a moment, not a match for a breeze, a dream, a vapour, a shadow,' a sinner born to die—how do you suppose He will show you the Lord's Christ?" Replies the awakened sinner, "One thing I know: I dare not die till I have seen the Lord's Christ. He cares for my body: will He be less concerned about my soul? Will He arrange all nature to minister to my bodily wants, and leave my soul to perish? No; that is unlike Him." 2. Unbelief again suggests: "Are not your sins too great in magnitude and multitude to be forgiven?" 3. But unbelief again suggests, "Do you suppose that the sins of an age can be pardoned in a moment of time—sins that have spread over years of your life?" When we have seen Christ, the sting of death is gone. Simeon pressed the Lord's Christ to his heart, and then he never wished his eyes to gaze on aught more of earth; and when the believing penitent has Christ in his heart, the hope of glory, then he is not afraid of death. A fact will bear out this statement. Some time since, a minister of the gospel was called upon to visit a dying woman. He ascended a flight of stairs that led into a miserable-looking garret; for, though clean and neat, there was scarcely an article of furniture to give an air of comfort to the chamber of death. In one corner of the room there was a bed—a bed of straw! On it lay a dying female, pale, and worn to a skeleton; she was near the verge, the trembling verge, of eternity. The minister drew nigh and said to her, "Well, my friend, how do you feel? What are your prospects for the eternity which is just about to open upon you?" She looked up in the minister's face with a countenance bright with heavenly radiance, and beaming with a brightness she had caught gazing on the visions of God, and said, "Oh! sir,

> "'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
> Whose Spirit shall guide me safe home;
> I'll praise Him for all that is past,
> And trust Him for what is to come.'"

Christianity can make a bed of straw into a bed of down—can convert a gloomy sick chamber into the vestibule of heaven, a chamber where the soul unrobes and plumes herself for her flight. (*J. Caughey.*)

Ver. 27. **Brought in the Child Jesus.**—*Dedicating children to the Lord*:—When the Duke of Kent was dying, he desired that the little princess Victoria should be placed beside him, and then he offered a very affecting prayer that "if ever she became the Queen of England, she might rule in the fear of God." How many of our noble Queen's virtues and good deeds have resulted doubtless from her godly training! In my first Circuit I knew the excellent family of the late eminent Rev. Benjamin Field. At his birth his very godly father solemnly dedicated him to God. He began to preach in his seventeenth year, and by his ministry and by his very good "Handbook to Scripture Doctrines," he has been useful to thousands. Holy children generally live to be "great in the sight of the Lord," and, if faithful, with God's blessings, eminently useful. (*H. R. Burton.*) *Singleness of aim*:—Parents should have one single object before them regarding their children, and that is, to bring them up for the Lord. To that everything else should give way. The natural tendency is to bring them up very genteelly, very respectably, to educate them for some station where they can make a great deal of money. This is the natural tendency on the part of parents. Well, they may obtain the desire of their hearts, but to the injury of the souls of their children. How I would press this on the hearts of my brethren! Of course I do not at all mean they should not have the best of education, and such an education as will be suitable to their station in life. But everything should give way to this point: my son, my daughter, are to be brought up for the Lord. My son, my daughter, are to become heirs of the kingdom that fadeth not away. Everything ought to give way to this one point. If we do not keep this before us, we shall constantly take wrong steps. Let me give an illustration. A Christian gentleman of good position in life articled his son to a very wicked lawyer, notoriously wicked. This son used to come home on the Saturday afternoons to spend the Lord's day with his family. There he attended family prayers. He used to say strong things about his father's petitions, such as, "My father prays for me that God would preserve me in the midst of temptation; he puts me in the lion's mouth, and then asks God to preserve me!" (*George Müller.*)

Vers. 29, 31. **Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.**—*Nunc Dimittis*:—I. Let us start with this great general principle which is full of comfort, that EVERY BELIEVER MAY BE ASSURED OF ULTIMATELY DEPARTING IN PEACE. This is no privilege peculiar to Simeon, it is common to all the saints, since the grounds upon which this privilege rests are not monopolised by Simeon, but belong to us all. 1. All the saints have seen God's salvation, therefore should they all depart in peace. It is true, we cannot take up the infant Christ into our arms, but He is "formed in us, the hope of glory." It is true, we cannot look upon Him with these mortal eyes, but we have seen Him with those eyes immortal which death cannot dim—the eyes of our own spirit which have been opened by God's Holy Spirit. A sight of Christ with the natural eye is not saving, for thousands saw Him and then cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." 2. Believers already enjoy peace as much as ever Simeon did. No man can depart in peace who has not lived in peace; but he who has attained peace in life shall possess peace in death, and an eternity of peace after death. 3. We may rest assured of the same peace as that which Simeon possessed, since we are, if true believers, equally God's servants. The same position towards God, the same reward from God. 4. Another reflection which strengthens this conviction is, that up till now all things in their experience have been according to God's Word. The promises of God, which are "Yea and amen in Christ Jesus," are sure to all the seed: not to some of the children is the promise made, but all the grace-born are heirs. If, then, Simeon, as a believer in the Lord, had a promise that he should depart in peace, I have also a like promise if I am in Christ. 5. The departure of the child of God is appointed of the Lord. "Now lettest Thou," &c. The servant must not depart from his labour without his Master's permission, else would he be a runaway, dishonest to his position. 6. The believer's departure is attended with a renewal of the Divine benediction. "Depart in peace," saith God. It is a farewell, such as we give to a friend: it is a benediction, such as Aaron, the priest of God, might pronounce over a suppliant whose sacrifice was accepted. Eli said unto Hannah, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that

thou hast asked of Him." Around the sinner's death-bed the tempest thickens, and he hears the rumblings of the eternal storm: his soul is driven away, either amid the thunderings of curses loud and deep, or else in the dread calm which evermore forebodes the hurricane. II. SOME BELIEVERS ARE CONSCIOUS OF A SPECIAL READINESS TO DEPART IN PEACE. When do they feel this? Answer: 1. When their graces are vigorous. 2. When their assurance is clear. 3. When their communion with Christ is near and sweet. 4. Saints have drawn their anchor up and spread their sails, when they have been made to hold loose by all there is in this world; and that is generally when they hold fastest by the world to come. 5. Saints are willing to depart when their work is almost done. Ah, Christian people, you will never be willing to go if you are idle. You lazy lie-a-beds, who do little or nothing for Christ, you sluggish servants, whose garden is overgrown with weeds, no wonder that you do not want to see your master! 6. One other matter, I think, helps to make saints willing to go, and that is when they see or foresee the prosperity of the Church of God. Good old Simeon saw that Christ was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of His people Israel; and therefore he said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." It must have reconciled John Knox to die when he had seen the reformation safely planted throughout all Scotland. It made dear old Latimer, as he stood on the fagot, feel happy when he could say, "Courage, brother, we shall this day light such a candle in England as shall never be blown out." III. THERE ARE WORDS TO ENCOURAGE US TO THE LIKE READINESS TO DEPART (See Psa. xxiii. 4; xxxvii. 37; cxvi. 15; Isa. lvii. 2; 1 Cor. iii. 22; xv. 54; Rev. xiv. 13). These promises belong to all believers; each of them is a sure word from God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Nunc Dimittis*:—It seems singular to see these two faces resting so closely together. Infancy and old age are met; second childhood holds first childhood by the hand while it sings a wonderful song.

The first thing that strikes our notice here is THE SINGULAR ILLUSTRATION OFFERED OF THE PARADOX OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. How extraordinary is the disparity between these two persons, and yet how absolutely the one seems to rest in the other! Jesus lies safely in Simeon's arms; Simeon reposes his life for all the untold future in Jesus' Messiahship. Simeon's soul is held up for ever by the Little Child whose body he now holds in his hands! We can explain nothing in this strange scene without considering that Jesus was the true Messiah, and the Messiah was the incarnate God. II. So this presents another lesson: here is A SATISFACTORY STYLE OF PIETY FOR AN UNWAVERING DEPENDENCE. There are faiths and religions, there are rituals and creeds, there are persuasions and experiences, enough almost to fill the world. Only some of them do not meet the end for which they have been commended. Many a man has what he calls his religion; and it does very well when shielded and sheltered, but it goes out ignobly in darkness and betrayal under the wild rush of discipline, or the hurricane gusts of tempestuous passion. It is evident that here in Simeon's case we find a perfectly settled rest for any human soul. His full content with it is edifying and unmistakable. He was willing to take his eternal life on Christ's own terms, and so he was perfectly satisfied. It mattered nothing to him that he was an old man, and this was a Babe, nor that he was a wise man, and this was only a peasant Infant forty days old; he expressed his entire contentment with the plan which infinite wisdom had devised for human reliance. Men may as well start with this; they must begin by accepting terms already made, and cease trying to make new ones. Felix Neff once told even a minister this: "There is much truth in your sermon, but it lacks one important thing: you still wish men to go to Jesus with lace sleeves, instead of going to Him in rags as they are." III. We find here AN INTELLIGENT AND EXEMPLARY APPRECIATION OF THE EXACT PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL. It will be well to put alongside of this song Simeon's prophecy, which comes just after it. This good old man tells that young mother precisely what her Child was "set" for. Christ was appointed to prostrate men from self-dependence, and raise them again into full union with Himself. His heart would be pierced in suffering, and so would Mary's, before the history should be finished. But Christ's sufferings would work out an atonement, by which sinners might be saved. IV. A LESSON OF TRUST FOR NEW-TESTAMENT CHRISTIANS FROM AN OLD TESTAMENT BELIEVER. Picture just that instant in which this old man stands gazing down upon the face of the Infant for the first time. Was this all to which mighty generations had been looking during those thousands of years that were gone? Was it just this weak little peasant Babe that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had seen afar off, and been glad to see? Was He what the ancient prophets had descried in the distance, as they stood peering off from the watch-

towers of a militant Zion, the flashing seer-light in their eyes as they sang? Was this the King, whom King David had so celebrated in his Psalms? Alas for the poor show the new Monarch now made! Yet Simeon accepts Him! Just remember that it was everything or nothing to this old man to make his decision. No half-way allegiance would do. Jesus was the Messiah, or nothing. Surrender to Him would carry time and eternity with it, and he surrendered. V. A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE OF READINESS FOR DEATH. Note the language carefully. Simeon does not use a prayer; he makes a declaration. He does not say—now *let* me depart; he says—now Thou *dost let* me depart. We feel certain that this man has been waiting a good while. Such unusual preparedness for departure was the general growth of years. It was no sudden explosion of experience, but must have had its increments of spiritual increase as many and as various as the rings of fibre in the trunk of a palm-tree. There is an old age full of querulous complaint and peevishness, under every on-coming of infirmity. It wears itself out in discontent; it often vanishes at the last, and makes no sign. On the other hand, there is an old age like this of the illustrious Simeon. The soul has leaned its all on God, and is perfectly satisfied because it knows it is perfectly safe. Not even severe trial can alter the permanence of such trust. For heaven seems the only true thing in the universe, and death is nothing but a kind of rough way of going to it. Remember the beautiful inscription upon Dean Alford's tombstone; how it describes a grave: "The inn of a traveller on the way to Jerusalem!" (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Simeon's Canticle*:—The "Nunc Dimittis" may supply us with useful lessons. 1. Its position in the service of our Reformed Church is an indication of honour paid to the written Word. The New Testament is exalted by the appointment of the Song of Simeon to be used after the second lesson from Scripture at evening service. The New Testament is full of Jesus. The Church has been rent with disputes about the nature of His presence in the sacrament of His love. Every Christian knows that there is a presence also in the Word of His truth. More especially, the thought, the breath, the very heart of Christ may be felt in the Gospels. When we read or hear them, we embrace Him as Simeon did. We cease to be critics when, with the aged saint, we hold Him in our arms. 2. More broadly, the "Nunc Dimittis" is also a Missionary strain. It is fittingly recorded by St. Luke, the Pauline Evangelist, who was as truly the Evangelist, as St. Paul was the Apostle, of the Gentiles. In Simeon's Song we have the history of the ages in one short sentence, in three pregnant clauses, at once original, concise, and oracular. To the Gentiles, Messiah is ever giving "light"; to the Jews, He is ever bringing "glory." 3. This canticle has a tone which is peculiarly suitable to the evening, and may profitably be applied in this spirit by believers of every Church. It is a soothing voice which sings for those who have had a long day's work. It fits into the golden melancholy of the sunset time, or the later hours, when the lamps are lighted in the sanctuary. It is as a prayer with which a mother taught us to lie down in our beds. 4. The "Nunc Dimittis" has always seemed suitable as a prayer for a holy death. In some of the old services there was a touching way of referring Simeon's song to our departure, and to the thought of those who rest in peace. When it was sung in "Holy Week," just at its close the choir burst out into the funeral anthem—"In the midst of life we are in death." The Song of Simeon, thought over with prayer, may lead us to exclaim with Paul, "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." Simeon's holy soul can find no home and rest on the water-floods of life; it desires to return into the ark with the olive-branch of peace. And if any wish to depart in peace like Simeon, let him come in the guidance of the Spirit to the Temple. Let him expect Christ. Let him receive his Saviour into his arms of faith, and cradle Him upon a heart of love. The Old Testament often takes a dark view of death. The writer shudders as he writes. The last words of the great Italian poet, Leopardi, were, "I cannot see you any longer," with a deep sigh. The last words of the sceptical Hamlet are—"the rest is silence." The only Psalm which, in a like spirit, ends as it began, with gloom, is the 88th—

> Lover and friend hast Thou removed from me;
> My intimates are—Darkness.

In such passages as these death is viewed as it is for us all, naturally. But Simeon seems to stand for a gentle picture of the Law—wearied with life-long effort, worn out with age, ready to embrace the gospel, and so "depart in peace." It is of profound and soothing significance that one, who may be almost termed

"the last Old Testament saint," finds death sweet. For him the promise of the Psalmist is fulfilled—

> This God is our God for ever and ever;
> He is our guide, gently leading us over death.

For narrrow though the bridge seems to be that spans the chasm, it is yet broad and strong for those who are thus guided. That bridge is the Cross of Christ. (*Bp. Wm. Alexander.*) *Nunc Dimittis*:—This is a beautiful hymn of sunset—the sunset of the life of a good man which may also be called a hymn of sunrise, for there may be seen in it both the closing of a life and the beginning of a new one. Death is referred to in it, not as the flowing of twilight into darkness, but as a departure. The hymn is a thanskgiving for spiritual blessings, for a Divine light which had been planted by God in the soul, come to its meridian after much patience and long waiting. Beautiful thoughts, bearing fruit in beautiful words, rise in the midst of this noontide. God had sown this thought or impression in Simeon, in his old age, when he had begun to walk through the valley of the shadow. We know by experience how some favourite thought or idea in us may become like a living companion, go with us in our walks, and be with us in our occupations, even in our sleep. So was the Divine impression with Simeon. God is continually giving His children hallowed thoughts and impressions. Simeon's case may say this to us: "Hold the good thoughts which come to you through prayer and other means of grace." If we do this they will certainly bring us peace and consolation. (*E. G. Charlesworth.*) *Our last days should be our best days*:—Orators, though in every part of their speech they use great care and diligence, yet in the close of all they set forth the best of their art and skill, to stir up the affections and passions of their hearers, that then they may leave at the last the deepest impression of those things which they would persuade. Thus ought all of us to do, our whole life being nothing else but a continued and persuasive oration unto our God, to be admitted into His heavenly kingdom; but, when we come to the last act and epilogue of our age, then it is that we must especially strive to show forth all our art and skill, and that our last words may be our best words, our last thoughts our best thoughts, our last deeds our best deeds; whereby stirring up, as it were, all the affections of God, and even the bowels of compassiou, unto us. We may then, as the sun, though always glorious, yet especially at its setting, be most resplendent when we draw near unto our western home, the house appointed for all living. (*Udall.*) *The last scene*:—The evening praises the day, the last scene commends the act. The rivers, the nearer they draw to the sea, the sooner they are met by the tide. Though to guide a vessel safely along in the ocean argues much skill, and such a pilot is worthy of praise; yet at the very entrance into the haven, then to avoid the rocks, and to cast anchor in a safe road, argues most skill, and deserves most praise. Musicians reserve the sweetest strain for the close of the lesson. (*G. Swinnock.*) *Sweet when fading*:—As the perfume of May boughs is sweetest when they are about to fade, so, like them, I endeavour to make the close of my life sweet and fragrant by a worthy deportment and an honourable name. (*Scriver.*) Some hearts, like evening primroses, open most beautifully in the shadows of life. *Simeon's Canticle*:—These words are a sweet canticle, or swan-like song, of old Simeon, a little before his dissolution. He had seen the Messiah before by faith, now by sight, and wishes to have his eyes closed, that he may see nothing after this desirable sight. It is said of some Turks, that after they have seen Mahomet's tomb, they put out their eyes, that they may never defile them after they have seen so glorious an object. Thus did old Simeon desire to see no more of this world, after he had seen Christ the Saviour, but sues for his dismissal. Note here—1. That a good man having served his generation, and God in his generation, faithfully, is weary of the world, and willing to be dismissed from it. 2. That the death of a good man is nothing else but a quiet and peaceable departure; it is a departure "in peace" to the God of peace. 3. That it is only a spiritual sight of Christ by faith that can welcome the approach of death, and render it an object desirable to the Christian's choice. 4. Holy Simeon, having declared the faithfulness of God to himself in the gift of Christ, next celebrates the mercy of God in bestowing this invaluable gift of a Saviour upon the whole world. The world consists of Jews and Gentiles; Christ is "a light" to the one, and "the glory" of the other. A light to the blind and dark Gentiles, and the glory of the renowned Church of the Jews; the Messiah being

promised to them, born and bred up with them, living amongst them, preaching His doctrine to them, and working His miracles before them; and thus was Christ "the glory of His people Israel." (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *Simeon's Song*:—The swan-like song of old Simeon. He speaks like a merchant who has got all his goods on shipboard, and now desires the master of the ship to hoist sail and be gone homewards. Indeed, what should a Christian, who is but a foreigner here, desire to stay any longer for in the world, but to get this full lading in for heaven? (*W. Gurnall.*) *Death tests*:—"Charles, our people die well," said John Wesley to his brother. Why is not that a proper test? We take death-bed words without an oath in a court of justice; a man is honest, if ever, in the moment when the great shadow is coming. Think of the martyr Ridley, the night before he was burned alive at the stake. One of his pitiful friends offered to sit up with him in the prison. "Oh, no!" said the good man, "what would you do with yourself? I mean to go to bed, and sleep as quietly as ever I did in my life. My breakfast to-morrow will be sharp and painful; but I am sure my supper will be right pleasant and sweet!" (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Death welcome with Jesus near*:—When his end was near, Dr. Grierson of Errol, after various Psalms and portions of Scripture had been read to him, asked his children to conclude by singing the hymn, "Safe in the arms of Jesus." After they had sung it, he said, "I feel I am safe there. Death has no power nor fear for me at all now." And when told that it was drawing near the morning, he exclaimed, "Oh, let me go, for the day breaketh! I feel Jesus very near by me. Dear Lord, let me go!" *Light in death*:—The day before he died, John Holland, turning with his own hand to the eight chapter of the Romans, bade Mr. Legh read it: at the end of every verse he paused and gave the sense to his own comfort, but more to the joy and wonder of his friends. An hour or two after, on a sudden, he said, "Oh, stay your reading! What brightness is this I see? Have you lighted any candles?" No, it was replied; it is the sunshine. "Sunshine!" he said; "nay, it is my Saviour's shine. Farewell, world: welcome, heaven!" *Ready to start*:—A saintly man, when nearing his end, once remarked: "I am just like a package that is all ready to go by train; packed, corded, labelled, paid for—waiting for the express to take me to glory!" *Release from school*:—Dr. Judson once said, "I am not tired of my work, neither am I tired of the world; yet, when Christ calls me, I shall go with the gladness of a boy bounding away from school. Death will never take me by surprise: do not be afraid of that; I feel so strong in Christ." *Simeon's Song*:—His Song may give us a glimpse of the man himself, for in it his habitual beliefs, convictions, and hopes rise to their highest and frankest expression. I. In Simeon's Song we have A NOBLE CONCEPTION OF LIFE. "Now art Thou relieving, or setting free, thy slave, O Master (literally, "O Despot"), according to Thy word, in peace." Simeon regards himself as a sentinel whom, by His word or promise, the Great Master, or Captain, had ordered to an elevated and dangerous post, and charged to look for and announce the advent of a great light of hope, a light which was to convey glad tidings of great joy. To him life, or at least his own life, shaped itself as the task of a watchman, or a sentinel on duty—who has to face rough weather and smooth as he paces his weary beat, to confront the fears and hidden perils of the darkness, in order that the camp he guards may be secure; but who is sustained, under the burden of anxiety and weariness, by the hope of receiving a signal, of seeing a light arise in the darkness, which will not only release him from his post, but will also bring the tidings, or the prediction, of a great and final victory. A very noble, though by no means a perfect conception of human life, which is too large and complex to be rendered by any one image. A conception, moreover, which may be very helpful to us in many of the conditions in which we are placed. When life grows as weary and monotonous to us, through the prolonged pressure of samely duties, as to the watchman fixed to Agamemnon's roof or to a dog chained to a post; or when the zest of youth has passed and the infirmities and disabilities of age, or disease, accumulate upon us; or when we are weighed down with a burden of cares, anxieties, and fears, many of which are gross and palpable enough, but to some of which we can hardly give a name; when flesh, or heart, fail us, or both fail us, it surely would sustain and comfort us were we to remember that our post has been appointed us by the Great Captain who makes no mistake; that the duties and the burdens allotted to us have an end of discipline and love, and are intended to make us stronger, wiser, better; and that, however long it may delay its coming, a great Light is to arise upon us; that it is this for which we are watching and serving: and that it will bring with it glad tidings of great joy for all

people as well as for us. II. In Simeon's Song we have A NOBLE CONCEPTION OF DEATH. In his view, the sentinel was also the slave, and the discharge of the sentinel was also the manumission of the slave. Relief from toil, relief from danger, relief from bondage—can any conception of death be more welcome and attractive to weary, world-worn, sinful men? Only one thing could render it more attractive and complete, and this we, who have the mind of Christ, are bound to supply: viz., that our relief from toil will not be an exemption from work, but an added capacity for labour which will take all toil and weariness out of it; that our relief from danger will not release us from that strife against evil in which even the holy angels are engaged, but will bring us an immortal strength and serenity in virtue of which we shall carry on the conflict without fear, and cherish the sure and certain hope that evil must in the end be overcome of good; and that our relief from bondage will not be a discharge from service, but will bring us a vigour and a grace which will make our service a delight, since henceforth we shall serve as sons and not as slaves. III. We have A NOBLE CONCEPTION OF SALVATION. Simeon does but show the true prophetic, *i.e.*, the true catholic, spirit when he conceives of the salvation of God as extending to the Gentile as well as the Jew, and delights in a mercy as wide as the world. And we fall short of that spirit, we sin against the revelation of the Old Testament no less than that of the New, so often as we affect any special personal interest in the fatherly love and compassion of God, or even when we conceive of His salvation as confined to the Church. The Church has been elected, as the Jewish race was elected, solely for the sake of the world, solely that it may carry the news and the power of salvation to those who are outside its pale. If we have seen the Light, it is that we may bear witness to the Light; that we may announce its rising, reflect its splendour, and believe that it will shine on till the darkness is past and every shadow has fled away. If we are sentinels, it is that we may guard and save the whole camp, and not simply our own company or our own regiment. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The glory and work of old age*:—The greatness of man is chiefly in this, that he can say to pain, I will endure; and to death, I will conquer its fear; and to old age, I will not be querulous. The glory of man is chiefly in this, that Christ enables him to go beyond the Stoic, and to say to pain, I will not only endure, but I will make suffering a step towards progress; and to death, I will not only conquer its fear, but open it as the portal of ampler life; and to old age, I will not only not be querulous, but will, therein and thereby, finish my inner development before I go. To crystallise into finished perfection was the aim and the ideal of the Stoic. To grow for ever is the aim and the ideal of the Christian. Death ended the effort and the pain of the Stoic. Death continues the effort, without the pain, of the Christian. What were the gains which blessed Simeon's age? I. PROPHETIC POWER. He saw the Child and he knew that It was the Saviour of the world. This is the glory of a Christian's old age—vividness of spiritual vision. II. Another remarkable gain blessed the old age of Simeon, the possession of A LIBERAL RELIGIOUS VIEW. We find the old man set free from the exclusiveness and bigotry of his time and of his youth. Those were strange words upon the lips of a Jew—"a light to lighten the Gentiles!" They had been said before. But it was not a common thought, nor a national thought, at the time of Christ's coming. Those who heard Simeon would be likely to call him a dangerous Liberal. Tolerance and a wide religious view are natural to old age, and it is very pitiable when we find it without them. III. Simeon wins the crowning blessing of old age—DEEP PEACE. We cannot win that quiet till just before the close. IV. But what is the SPECIAL WORK OF old age? It is partly outward, partly inward. Its outward work is the spreading of charity; the using of experience for the help of others. Its inward work is, however, the most important—the edifying of the heart in noble religion by consideration of the past; the rounding of the soul into as great perfection as possible, in filling up the broken edges of the sphere of life, in consolidating the world of our ideas. In wonder, and in joy that he has been so cared for, and so led into maturity, all thought of self passes from the old man's life, and he throws his whole being in gratitude at the feet of his Saviour and his God. It is, in fact, the first touch, even before death, of the pure and perfect life, the first faint throb of the exquisite existence into which he is going to enter, the half-realization on the borders of the world of light, while yet within the glimmering shadow, of what communion with God may mean. Then, indeed, he feels what Simeon felt when the long-repressed cry rose to his lips, for he sees the very Christ: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant," &c. (*Stopford A. Brooke.*) Simeon felt that little hand that lay hidden in his bosom

as if it was fast loosening the silver cord. He speaks less like a living man than as a kind of Lazarus, alive indeed, but bound. "Lord, loose me," he prays. Younger men must work with the Messiah—his day was done. (*A. Whyte, D.D.*) *Death viewed without terror*:—The Bible seldom speaks of death by its own ugly name. It rather chooses to use expressions which veil its pain and its terror; and so does common speech. But the reason in the two cases is exactly opposite. The Bible will not call death "death," because it is not a bit afraid of it; the world will not, because it is so much afraid of it. The Christian view has robbed death of all its pain and terror. It has limited its power to the mere outside of the man, and the conviction that death can no more touch me than a sword can hack a sunbeam, reduces it to insignificance. Death is a Liberator in the profoundest sense. It is the angel who comes in the night to God's prisoned servant, striking the fetters from his limbs, and leading him through the iron gate into the city. Death is a departure which is an emancipation. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Death is release*:—

> If one had watch'd a prisoner many a year,
> Standing behind a barred window-pane,
> Fettered with heavy handcuff and with chain,
> And gazing on the blue sky far and clear;
> And suddenly some morning he should hear
> The man had in the night contrived to gain
> His freedom, and was safe, would this bring pain?
> Ah! would it not to dullest heart appear
> Good tidings?
>
> (*Helen Hunt.*)

To sift therefore the agreeableness of those two parts, attend to these particulars: 1. Here is a supplicant the servant of the Lord—"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant." 2. The petition of his soul—"to depart." 3. The time which he sets—"Now, Lord, now——." 4. He pleads that he was well prepared to depart, for his heart was in peace, "Lord now——." 5. The assurance in which he trusted that God would grant him his desire, for it was according to His word. 6. And principally: Here is the reason upon which he framed his desire why he would depart, he had seen that which his soul waited for before it flitted away, "For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Servant of God*:—It is great humility to confess one's self a servant, but it is no little dignity to profess one's self such a servant, to be the servant of God, and not the servant of men by vile obsequiousness, nor the servant of a man's own passions by lust and sensuality, nor the servant of sin by giving place unto the devil, this is a freedom that excels all other liberty. (*Ibid.*) Simeon knew the instant of his dissolution was at hand, and yet he sang away the remainder of his life with joy; as who should say, fly away my soul, fly away like a dove and take thy rest, for now I see that the promises of grace and mercy are true; here is Christ thy Saviour in thy hands, thine eyes do see, thine arms do support thy salvation; though thou departest thou shalt not go from Him, for He is man on earth to comfort thee, and God in heaven to glorify thee. (*Ibid.*) *Satisfied*:—As who should say, if I had been summoned to leave my station before this day came, my soul had been in bitterness, and I had been gathered to my fathers in sorrow, but now my pilgrimage hath been prolonged till I am full of happiness, now I am fledged with all my feathers to fly away, for what will satisfy him upon earth whom the sight of a Saviour will not satisfy? He was far stricken in years, and yet not mellow enough to drop off from the tree till the nativity of Jesus was fulfilled, and he a witness of it. He looked many a long look before he beheld his Saviour. And this is the nature of God's promises, they are seldom accomplished till his faith hath been thoroughly tried to whom they are made, and that he doth even languish with expectation. Some will say perhaps, O, I have waited long, this will never fall out as God hath promised. (*Ibid.*) *The best sight*:—Again, reason good he should ask of God to close his eyes, for they could never do him such good service any more, as they did at that instant, when they saw that mighty God in the visible form of a little Infant. The superstition and the barbarisms of the Turks being so well known, I do assent to some stories reported of them, which may seem incredible to civil nations. I instance in this particular, that when some of their zealots have made a pilgrimage to Mecca to do their adorations to the tomb of Mahomet, they

presently draw hot burning steel before their eyes to put them out, that they may never see any other spectacle, after they have been honoured to see that monument of their prophet. Far better a great deal, and without superstition, might Simeon say, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, O Jehovah, now draw their curtains before them, that they may never hereafter see the iniquities of men." (*Ibid.*) *Death better than degeneration*:—O let me not survive to see the infidelity of mine own nation: O let me not live to see Him crowned with thorns. (*Ibid.*) *Excessive spiritual joy*:—The Redeemer is come, let my fetters therefore be broken off; my joy is excessive and superlative, this frail flesh cannot contain it: The new wine is poured in, O let the old bottles break. Thou hast granted me more than ever Thou didst grant to any prophet upon earth; therefore exalt me to Thy saints in heaven. (*Ibid.*) *Seeing the invisible*:—Blessed were the eyes both of his soul and body: his bodily eyes did see the happiest sight in heaven and earth, but the eyes of his soul did respect that which is invisible. (*Ibid.*) *Christ embraced*:—He comes with much impotency and weakness, to be presented in the Temple, and to be redeemed after the custom of the law, with five shekels of silver, but He will redeem us both from the bondage of the law, and from the bondage of sin, with the five wounds of His body. If such salvation as this were only to be glanced upon perfunctorily, this sage Israelite would have been contented to have seen Him, and rested there; but forasmuch as we must incorporate our Saviour in our souls, and endeavour that there be a real union 'twixt Christ and us: therefore in the verse before my text, Simeon took up our Saviour into his arms, and St. John makes that a great mystery of his own, and his brethren's happiness, that their hands had handled the Word of Life. This doth not only betoken faith, but exceeding love; we hug them in our arms whom we have in dear estimation, we catch them in our arms, as if we would grow together: so if we love the Lord sincerely, we are one with Him, and He with us; we dwell in Him, and He in us. (*Ibid.*) *Old age*:—If any are entitled to a peaceful departure, it is those who, like the aged Simeon, have passed through not only the springtime and summer of life, but also through its autumn and winter. To few is it given to do this. For most of us, life closes before old age brings its burdens, its sorrows, or its triumphs. Stern, indeed, is the task which old age imposes upon those who enter her service. The departure of one friend after another, till all the companions of earlier and later years have disappeared, and one belongs to a generation not his own; the gradual failure of the faculties in which have lain the joy and pride of life; the conscious enfeebling of mind and body alike; the defeat, and often the entire reversal, of all one's dreams for the progress and happiness of the race; and the adoption by the world of manners and fashions repugnant to every instinct in which one has been reared,—what trial has youth or manhood to compare with these? All the more beautiful is it, then, when the approach of old age, far from chilling heart or soul, touches life with a more radiant light than had belonged to it before, and brings the powers to a certain dignified maturity; reminding one of the lingering days of Indian summer, when, just as we have ceased to look for sunny skies, and are prepared for November's chilly air, and have bade farewell to the last of the roadside flowers, a soft and dreamy haze falls upon the landscape, coming as if from another clime, and bringing with it a loveliness with which spring and summer can hardly vie. Sometimes, old age seems to lose its withering touch entirely, and, instead of blighting, to bring the intellectual powers to their highest vigour. The wisdom of experience, the deepening insight into truth, and stronger habits of independent judgment come to aid the mind or will and make them capable of their best work. It brings often a beautiful spirit of tolerance. Through many years of waiting and watching, they have learned the lesson, not of despair, but of hope. They have discovered that human systems are transient, the eternal truth and right abiding. The activity of younger minds, instead of awakening jealousy or discontent, moves their admiration, as the poor cripple or worn invalid looks admiringly upon the agile movements of children at their play, and marvels with longing, yet with pride, at his companion's prodigal activity. The years, as they have passed, have taught them charity of judgment and confidence in men's nobler motives. Youth, as we know, is almost of necessity one-sided and limited in its judgments, and liable to bitter prejudices. Again, old age brings not only tolerance and breadth: it brings also, at times, in its rarer manifestations, a vivid and living interest in passing events, which more than makes up for the forced inactivity which age imposes. If they cannot themselves share in the world's activity, they rejoice that others should. Removed from the

toil and scenes they love, they find their compensation in living in the efforts and experiences of younger souls, whose life is still before them. No hearts so young, no hopes so immature, but their sympathies are enlisted for them. Men marvel at their cheerfulness and unfailing animation, little knowing that they have learned the secret of perpetual youth. Where the affections are fresh and the sympathies warm and comprehensive, old age may touch the head with frost and leave furrows upon the brow, but it cannot reach the heart. Again, age seems to bring to those who know how to meet it a more serene and undisturbed happiness than belongs to any other period of life. Happy old age, I suppose, is that which has accumulated resources during its active years sufficient for its years of inaction. It has a full mind. It has thronging memories of a busy past. It has the remembrance of eager and serious effort while effort was possible. It has mental as well as physical faculties which bear witness of thorough use, and which have earned for themselves the right to repose. It has vital sympathies enlisted so long in great interests as to feel still the glow of their old enthusiasms. Then come the composure, the peace, the dignity, which often make old age so winning and attractive. The din of life is far away. Its rancours and enmities have lost their sting. What dignity and grace it lends to the home! How much more, even in its infirmities, it adds to the life around it than it can possibly receive from it; not simply through whatever is venerable in its aspect or demeanour, but rather through the gentle bearing and tender sentiment which it calls into being, and without which our lives would be bare and rude indeed! What can be a better training for childhood than to grow up by the side of venerable forms, whom all are treating with honour and respect? What more refining influence, as one advances in years, than the tender solicitude, the loving care, the gentle deference, which it is the privilege of youth to offer to age? If age would be weary and solitary without youth at its side, youth would certainly be raw and uncouth without the softening presence of age. (*E. H. Hall.*) *A martyr's death-song:* — These words have been the triumphant death-song of true martyrs. One of them, in the fourteenth century, Maximilian Hostialick, told the officer on the scaffold that he would repeat the song of Simeon, and then the executioner might do his duty. He accordingly lifted up his voice: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation"; and then fell the blow that severed his head from the body. (*A. C. Thompson, D.D.*) *Peace of a dying Christian:*—Joseph Addison, the renowned author and linguist, after enduring much physical suffering with fortitude, sent for the young but dissipated Lord Warwick. He came and said, "Dear sir, you sent for me. I believe and hope you have some commands. I shall hold them most dear." "See," said the dying saint, "in what peace a Christian can die!" and breathed his life out like a sleeping infant. *Christ immediately known and embraced:*—Simeon knew Christ as soon as he saw Him, and embraced Him as soon as he knew Him, and enjoyed Him as soon as he embraced Him. So some know the Word of God as soon as they hear it, and believe it as soon as they know it, and feel the comfort of it as soon as they believe it; but others hear it as though they heard it not, like deaf adders, that stop their ears at the voice of the charmer. (*H. Smith.*) *Prepared:*—For there was nothing which had not a tongue to speak for God. Everything was prepared for Him before He came to be revealed. He came not in the beginning nor in the ending. He came not in the ending, that we which come after Him, might long for His second coming. He came not in the beginning, because that such a Prince as He should have many banners and triumphs before Him. He came not in the beginning, because the eyes of faith should not be dazzled in Him, and lest they which should live in the latter times should forget Him and His coming, which was so long before; even as you forget that which I have said as soon as you are gone hence. He came not in the beginning, because if He had come before man had sinned, man would have acknowledged no need of a physician; but He came when man had sinned, and had felt the smart of sin. For when they were cast out of Paradise, they ran unto Christ, as the Israelites did to the serpent. He came not in the beginning, but in the perfect age of the world, to show that He brought with Him perfection, perfect joy, perfect peace, perfect wisdom, perfect righteousness, perfect justice, perfect truth; signifying thereby, that notwithstanding He came in the perfect age thereof, yet He found all things imperfect. (*Ibid.*) *The waiting of Simeon:* — Simeon also waited for the consolation of Israel, until he had embraced in his arms Him whom he so long longed to see and feel. How many waiters be there in the world! yet few wait as Simeon

did; but some wait for honour, some for riches, some for pleasures, some for ease, some for rewards, some for money, some for a dear year, and some for a golden day, as they call it; but Simeon waited, and expected with many a long look, until he had seen and embraced Christ Jesus, the light of the Gentiles, the glory of Israel, the salvation of all that with a faithful and zealous affection and love do wait for His coming, to the comfort of the afflicted, and to the terrifying of the wicked and the ungodly, which have not already waited, neither embraced Him, as Simeon did. (*Ibid.*) *Desiring death*:—May not any man desire death? May not the fastened ship in a strange land desire to be loosed, to hasten to his longed-for port at home? May not a man imprisoned amongst bitter enemies desire to be set at liberty, to return to his own country, in freedom to live amongst his sweet friends? Are we not strangers here, and by unpeaceable, most deadly enemies, our own flesh, the world, and the devil, held prisoners in the chains of sin and manifold infirmities? and is not our home heaven, and the saints and angels our most dear friends? No marvel, then, that Simeon here desireth to be loosed, or let depart. (*Ibid.*) *Spiritual intimations*:—"And it had been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." This pre-intimation, be it observed, was not a mere presentiment; it was a direct revelation by the Holy Spirit. Yet, if Simeon had been questioned about it any time before this memorable day in the Temple, I doubt whether he would have affirmed that he was conscious of having received any distinctively supernatural communication. He probably would have answered: "I have a strong conviction that I shall not die until I behold the Consolation of Israel." However this may have been, I believe that something like this has often occurred in the history of the Church, and may often occur again. Although the Holy Spirit is a supernatural being, yet, generally speaking, He acts so naturally on our feelings and expectations that we are not distinctly conscious of being under His influence. Who shall venture to affirm that those strong presentiments which we sometimes have—for example, concerning the conversion of children or kindred, or the restoration to health and home of far distant sick friends—may not be intimations to us by that Holy One who is emphatically the comforter and teacher and guide and helper and inspirer of His people? If the Holy Spirit can act on us in respect to duty, as we believe He does, why cannot He act on us in respect to desire and foresight? But let us not imagine that every presentiment is His impulse. How often are our saintliest and intensest expectations disappointed! Blessed are we if, like the patriarchs, we die as well as live in faith, although we have not received the promised blessings, but only seen them, and greeted them from afar. In all events, no one who has ever heard the glad tidings need die before he has in the truest sense seen the Lord's Christ. (*G. D. Boardman.*) *Coincidences*:—"And He came in the Spirit into the Temple." The Holy Spirit then not only revealed to Simeon that he would not die before he had seen Jehovah's Anointed: the Holy Spirit also prompted Simeon to visit the Temple the precise hour the Divine Babe was to be brought in. Ah, little do we imagine how many of the blessed coincidences of life are really arranged by that Holy One under whose administration we are living. Little did Simeon, although looking for the Consolation of Israel, imagine that he would see the Lord's Christ that day in His Temple. Little did Joseph and Mary imagine that on that day the Divine Babe would receive such reverential salutation. Little did Cornelius in Cæsarea and Peter in Joppa imagine that the Holy Spirit was arranging for them an interview momentous in consequences. Little did Philip and the treasurer of Ethiopia imagine that they would meet each other on the desert way between Jerusalem and Gaza. Little do we imagine that many of the so-called accidental conjunctions of life are really the gracious arrangements by One who, hidden behind earth's thrones and nature's laws, is administering the affairs of the universe in the interest of Christ and Christ's Church. When will the world and the Church learn that Almighty God is Ruler as well as Maker? The character of Jesus Christ is the universal, infallible prober. The same lancet which lays bare the healthy nerve, lays bare the diseased. The same glad tidings which disclosed and saved a Simon Peter, disclosed and doomed a Judas Iscariot. Jesus Christ is the touch-stone of human hearts. And, first, we cannot but be impressed by the universal welcome which greeted the infant Jesus. Toil welcomed Him in the adoration of the shepherds. Intellect welcomed Him in the adoration of the wise men. Infancy welcomed Him in the adoration of the unborn son of Elisabeth. Old age welcomed Him in the adoration of Simeon and Anna. And well might all classes thus welcome Him; for He is

the Son of man, and so the Christ for all men. Secondly, nothing is more beautiful than a Christian old age. For it brings, as it did to Simeon, three beautiful things. First, it brings depth of spiritual insight: Simeon took the Child into his arms, and blessed God, saying, "Lord, mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Secondly, it brings catholicity of spirit: "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all; a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." Thirdly, it brings peace in view of death: "O Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." The truth is, age does not depend on years. Some are old at twenty, others are young at ninety. As the poet sings:

> "We live in deeds, not words; in thoughts, not breaths;
> In feelings, not in figures on a dial:
> We should count time by heart-throbs.
> He most lives
> Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

Age is far more a matter of indolence, and uselessness, and *ennui*, than of chronology. And a Christian old age is ever youthful. (*Ibid.*) *Character and privilege of Simeon*:—I. HIS PERSONAL PIETY. Who is the devout man? The answer is brief. It is the man who, in consequence of inward, spiritual illumination, entertains correct views of God—of God's nature, character, government, worship, and grace; and who habitually feels, acts, and lives under the living influence of these views. It is the man who has respect to God in all things; it is he who inherits and exhibits the moral glories of the great Father, walks in serene fellowship with Him in a world of storms, and lives and moves in His everlasting love. The devout man prays to his God in secret, makes His Book the reason and rule of duty, leans upon His kind arm when sorrows darken his path, and endeavours everywhere and always to glorify His holy name. But Simeon was not only devout, but also just. And who is the just man? The scriptural idea of him is vast and comprehensive. A just man is one who is universally right—right as to his condition, and right as to his character. His faith, his principles, his practice, are all right. Having accepted the Divine method of salvation, he is treated as though he were just; the Lord imputeth no iniquity to him. Having received the Divine Spirit, he is become actively just towards himself, his race, and his God. In law he is righteous: in life he is righteous. Such is the general idea the Bible gives of a just man. But, in the text, the phrase has evidently a limited signification. It denotes social rectitude. To be just to our fellow-men is to recognize, and, as far as we can, to protect their rights, civil, mental, religious. Now, between these distinct virtues there is an essential connection. They never do, they never can, exist separately. Strictly speaking, they are only two manifestations of the same thing. It is human holiness embracing at once the finite and the infinite as the spheres of its action. Men would sever devotion and morality; but the thing is impossible. Facts as well as philosophy prove it so. How can a truly devout man be unjust? And how can a just man be yet so unjust as to neglect his God? The two virtues we speak of, then, necessarily co-exist. But although these two qualities never exist independently of each other, yet it is a matter of fact, that in many a good man they are far from being equally developed. One man is very devotional as to the current of his thoughts, associations, feelings, hopes, and desires, and yet very defective, to say the least, in the discharge of his social obligations. Another man is remarkably exact, punctual, and conscientious in all his relative duties, who nevertheless is, or appears to be, very careless and cold in the offices of devotion and in the higher exercises of religion. How is this? In the history of practical godliness are four things which it would be well to remember: that different men excel in different virtues; that the same men excel in different virtues at different periods of their history: that in no man do all the virtues shine with equal radiance; and, finally, that the best of men are far from perfection here. Thus we have glanced at the virtues of Simeon; their nature, development, and mutual relation. In him they shone beautifully and harmoniously. His love to God produced universal propriety of conduct towards men; and that is what I would call true religion. II. I now proceed to notice THE PUBLIC SPIRIT OF SIMEON. That is beautifully expressed in these words—"Waiting for the Consolation of Israel." He was not only a just and devout man, but he was also waiting for Him who was to be Israel's consolation and glory and the

Gentiles' light. Simeon was not a man of a narrow, contracted, selfish mind. Oh! no. His thoughts, desires, solicitudes, and hopes were not limited to himself, nor to his own nation; his heart burned for the public good; he was an observer and interpreter of public events. Through the Divine medium of prophecy he surveyed the far-spread scenes of futurity. He had long waited for the day of the Lord: at last it sweetly dawned upon his hopes. Faith and prayer ever wait for those eras of light and renewal, by a succession of which God has promised to draw humanity nearer and still nearer to Himself. Simeon waited for the coming of Messiah: expectation was the habitual attitude of his spirit; it was the theme of his conversation; the breath of his prayers; the bright beam that ever cheered the long path of his pilgrimage. In the teachings of the synagogue, in the sacrifices of the Temple, in the changes which were passing over the institutions of his people, the devout patriarch saw the prophetic signs of the Son of man. His constant waiting for Christ kept his affections in a state of healthy excitement, spiritualized his piety, shed an unearthly lustre around his general character, and raised him far above the men of his age. Simeon gives three distinct views of Jesus. He refers to Him as the object of human hostility; as the cause of great moral revolutions; and, finally, as the source, the Divine source, of spiritual blessings. 1. The text refers to Christ as an object of human enmity, as a sufferer. He was to be a "sign to be spoken against"—the mark of evil men and evil spirits. 2. Simeon pointed to Jesus as the cause of great moral revolutions. He was to be "for the fall and the rising of many in Israel"—"the thoughts of many hearts were to be revealed." Here two great effects are attributed to the presence of Jesus on earth; a revelation of human thoughts, and a revolution in human affairs. One of the mighty works which Jesus came to accomplish was to set men to think—to think with freedom, earnestness, and force; and this He actually did to an extent before unknown. His aim was not to affect the mere surface of our nature, to alter only its moral forms and fashions; but to send His influence down to its very centre. He set mind in motion; He touched the mysterious springs of its power: and this He did by the conjoined influence of two things—His truth and His character. Both these were original, perfect, Divine. The impulse which He thus imparted to our nature has been deepening and widening ever since. He originated a succession of improving changes which can no more be stopped than the course of the stars. The living power of the gospel, by rousing humanity to action, elicited its true character: opposing elements were set in commotion; the good and the evil rose to the surface; and thus "the thoughts of many hearts were revealed." Simeon foresaw also that the Holy Child would be for the fall and rising of many. Here, again, we meet another wonderful principle—we say principle—for risings and fallings in our world are not mere accidents or chances, but events regulated by a fixed law; and that law is administered by the Divine Mediator. We fancy we can see emblems of these moral changes—these risings and fallings—even in the material world. The motions of the heavens—the processes of matter everywhere around us—the revolutions of the seasons—continually remind us of them. This revolutionary principle seems to be in constant operation in the government of our disordered race. It pervades the internal and the external history of humanity; it presides over all the alterations which take place in the ideas, the characters, and the institutions of men. How very remarkably was its energy displayed during the first age of Christianity. Then truth rose higher than it had ever done before: then error and ignorance began to fall; and, blessed be God! they have been falling and falling and falling ever since. Then the old schools of religious teachers fell; and a new one rose under the inspirations of Jesus, which is one day to fill the world with its doctrine. Then the first covenant disappeared, to give place to a better one. Then, in a word, the ancient Church fell, and the new rose into being; and the rise of this new society was one of the grandest results of Christ's descent to our earth; it was, if we may be allowed the expression, the incarnation of one of the sublimest ideas of the Son of God. 3. Simeon speaks still more definitely of the Saviour. He represents Him as the source of all spiritual blessings. Three precious gifts, he predicted, would flow from this Divine Fountain; light, consolation, and glory. He is the light of men. We have already spoken of Christ as the quickener of mind: we must not forget, however, that the great instrument He employs is truth. Having thus meditated a little on the personal holiness of Simeon, and on his enlarged view of Jesus as the Saviour of the world, let us for a few minutes look on the glory that was shed on his latter end. I. He was permitted to embrace the Holy Infant. He had been studying the

predictions and types of the law; he had been long waiting for the Wonderful One, to whom they pointed; and now he was blessed with His presence. "Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God." As he took the Incarnate One into his arms, the sunshine of heaven broke upon his soul: as he pressed Him to his heart, ideas, emotions, and beatitudes unutterable at once overwhelmed it like a flood; and before he uttered a word of gratulation to the blessed mother, he turned to God, and breathed his praises there: he blessed God. Oh! there are hours when the heart is too full to speak to any but its God. What a dreadful thing it is to see death before we see Christ! See death we all must—we all shall, and that soon; perhaps unexpectedly. But have we seen Christ? Have we embraced Christ? Have we, by faith, seen the Divine grandeur of His person, the transcendent excellence of His character, and the preciousness of His cross, as the medium of pardon and the means of perfection? II. Simeon was willing—I may say more—he was desirous to die. "Lord," said the happy man, "Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." This is a comprehensive sentence, and admits of a copious interpretation. First, with what calmness he viewed death. To him, it was only the letting him go—the departing from one place for another, and a better. I have seen, he said, all that is worth seeing in this narrow shadowy sphere; I have seen what I was most anxious to see; now let me be loosed, that I may soar to the world of the blessed. Again: he viewed his death as being entirely under the control of God. How soothing and sustaining this idea of death. The time, the place, the circumstances of our departure, are all pre-ordained by our Father's love. III. Finally, he viewed the last scene as overspread with peace. "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." The departure of the just is peaceful. He has peace with heaven, with earth, and with his own nature. (*Caleb Morris.*) *The Song of Simeon*:—I. Let us notice THE OCCASION of these words. It is an affecting circumstance, that although our Lord came to abolish the whole ceremonial law, He himself submitted to it all. The object of this visit to the Temple was twofold. It was, in the first instance, for Mary's purification. Wonderfully, brethren, amidst all His mercies to us, does a holy God keep up the remembrance of our sinfulness, and command us also to keep it up. We cannot even show our gratitude, lay a thank-offering upon His altar, without approaching His altar in the character of sinners. A grateful heart and a contrite heart must go together. Another object was accomplished by this visit. To keep up the remembrance of His mercy in sparing the sons of the Israelites when those of the Egyptians were destroyed, it was the command of God, that in all succeeding generations, the first-born of Israel, both of man and beast, should be considered as His property. "Sanctify to Me," he says, "all the first-born, it is Mine." The child was to be brought to the Temple as an acknowledgment of God's right to him, and then, after the appointed sum was paid and certain ceremonies gone through, he became free. And this is the ground on which we rest the honour that we pay to our Christian sacraments. They are no more in themselves than the long abolished ceremonies of the Jewish Temple, but, like those ceremonies, they are of Divine appointment, and, according to the example of our Saviour Christ, we will revere them. We may now place before us the scene connected with the text. We must conceive of Mary, her own purification over, as standing in the Temple with the ministering priests before her and a company of other worshippers around her. And then we must imagine an aged man approaching, gazing for a moment at the heavenly Babe in her arms, then taking it into his, and, with a look upwards, bursting forth in the hearing of them all into this happy song. II. Let us consider THE HAPPINESS HE EXPRESSES IN IT. We feel at once that it is happiness he expresses, not that overflowing of delight and joy which we see in Mary at Elisabeth' door, but a calm, subdued happiness; the happiness of one who has been long accustomed to strong emotions, and knows how to govern and restrain as well as indulge them. We are not told that Simeon was an old man, but it is probable from the narrative that he was so, and his happiness seems to be the happiness of old age, less lively and exuberant than that of youth, but as heart-felt and deep or deeper, and, like deep waters, quiet and serene. But in what did Simeon's happiness consist? 1. In praise for a blessing given. "He took Him up in his arms, and"—what? gave utterance at once to the joy that thrilled within him! When some of us have a mercy sent us, we must welcome it, we say; have a little time allowed us to feel that it is ours, to examine it, and delight ourselves in it. Then comes late and slow the thought, that we owe this mercy to a gracious God, and

must thank Him for it. But this is because our joy in our mercies is not holy joy. Holy joy is like the joy of heaven—its natural language is praise, and its happiest language is praise. Blessings become sweeter to us when they draw forth our praise. And it is this looking on Christ as a Saviour provided for us by the everlasting Jehovah, that leads the soul to feel so thankful for Him and rejoice so much in Him. 2. A hope realized was another part of Simeon's happiness at this time. The history represents Simeon to us at first as under the influence of hope. 3. There was yet something more in this man's happiness—delight in a glorious prospect opened to him. Let God give the real Christian what spiritual blessing he may, he immediately longs for more. The blessing he has received seems to bring into his view other blessings, and to kindle his desires for them. With him, therefore, hope realized is a new impulse given to hope. III. Let us now endeavour to draw from his happiness SOME USEFUL INSTRUCTION FOR OURSELVES. And in doing so, we must regard ourselves, brethren, as dying men. Simeon speaks here as a dying man. Job, Elijah, Jonah, all cried out, "Let me die," but they were some of the very worst words these men ever uttered. They were tired of God's dealings with them, weary of the discipline or the work He had allotted them, and they wanted to get away from them. Bring your desire for death then, just as you would bring any other feeling, to the standard of God's Word. It tells you that if it is a holy desire, it is the desire, not of a wretched, but of a happy hour. It is the strongest when the soul's happiness is the greatest. It springs no more from the ills than from the joys of life. It tells you that Simeon's happiness in the prospect of death was happiness in a Saviour. "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," explains it all. And you must understand this, and fully understand it, before you can participate in Simeon's peaceful feelings. Sin is the sting of death. It is guilt on the conscience that makes death so terrible to man. And then, brethren, how shall we look on death? Prospects will open before us, feelings will arise within us, so elevating, that we shall care no more for it, than the eagle cares for the fog or the cloud through which it is piercing to get to the sun. I am going to my Saviour, we shall say, and what matters to me the darkness, or roughness, or loneliness, of the road which leads me to Him? Once with Him, I shall never feel lonely again. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) In entering upon our subject this morning, we shall notice in the first place, the character of Simeon; secondly, his proclamation; thirdly, his desire. I. THE CHARACTER OF SIMEON. This is set forth in the first verse of our text—"And behold there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him." First, as to his justice. The former of these expressions, "and the same man was just," has reference to his conduct towards men; the latter stating that he was "a devout man," has direct reference to the feelings of his mind towards his God. Again, there is reference to his faith. "He was waiting for the Consolation of Israel." This was a name given to the Messiah by those Jews who expected and most anxiously looked for His approach. Again, there is a reference to his gifts—"The Holy Ghost was upon him." This is not intended merely to imply that he was a partaker of the influences of the Holy Spirit, which perform morally a renovation of the mind; but that he was also the subject of that sacred revelation which we find spoken of in the twenty-sixth verse—"And it was revealed unto Him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.' This holy man of God was the partaker of the same mighty agency which characterized the ancient patriarchs, prophets, and seers. II. But we pass on to notice in the second place, HIS PROCLAMATION. Simeon was under the influences of the Holy Spirit, as mentioned in the twenty-sixth verse; and we find it was at the very moment, when the infant Saviour was brought into the Temple to receive according to the custom of the law, that he came also by the Spirit into the Temple. His inspiration now assumed a character of sublimity not to be surpassed; and he makes dignified proclamation of the incarnation of man's only salvation; he calls Him "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." We shall consider under this part of our subject—1. The nature of the work which the Lord Jesus Christ was ordained to accomplish. 2. Again, we notice, that the salvation of man, as a salvation from the guilt and punishment of sin, is a position to be maintained—that this salvation has been accomplished by the atonement of the Cross, is a principle firmly to be upheld—and that the denial of this is unbelief, shutting out all heavenly mercy, and exposing the soul, without any refuge, to a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.

3. We notice again, not only the nature of the work that the Lord Jesus Christ came to accomplish, but also the extent to which it is to be carried. "Which thou hast prepared before all people." We pass on from the character of Simeon, and his proclamation, to consider, thirdly, HIS DESIRE. "And He came by the Spirit into the Temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation; which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." First. He had no other object left to wish to live for on earth. It must have been an interesting sight, for those who were living under the Jewish economy, to see the Messiah in person; and then no doubt many of them, having seen Him who was to be the end of their law for righteousness unto them, wished to see nothing more in the world. Hear the tradesman, when he has made a provision for his family, has set them forward comfortably in life, and has gained all the advantages he could desire from commerce, then he thinks he can die in peace. Hear the philosopher, when he has made grand discoveries in philosophy, and has succeeded in tracing the dependence and fixing the boundaries of what was considered incomprehensible affinities—when he can define unknown properties, and has fully developed the relations of cause and effect, he thinks he has nothing more on earth to accomplish, and he can die in peace. Hear the statesman, when he has brought certain principles of government to work harmoniously together—when by his eloquence and energies he has placed his favourite political tenets in a commanding situation, and has effected his long-wished-for purposes, he thinks he has nothing more to do on earth, he now can depart in peace. Hear the warrior, if he can gain the victory over the enemy—if he can entwine around his martial brow the wreath of undying laurel—if he can emblazon his name on the records of fame, and achieve for himself a corruscation of splendour and military renown that will light up his monument in future ages, he thinks he can die in peace. So you may well imagine that Simeon, who had been waiting anxiously for the appearance of the Messiah, whose mind had been goaded, as it were, with many an anxious desire for His manifestation, when he now beheld Him who was the joy and consolation of Israel, should have nothing more to live for below, but should wish to depart in peace. Secondly. It will be seen that now there was the dismissal of all his doubts and fears, and the completion of all his hopes for eternity. There was in Simeon great faith; but now faith was consummated in the possession of the thing hoped for. (*J. Parsons.*) *Men generally unready to die:*—He says, Now let me depart; he desires no delay. Many would rather say with the Psalmist, O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength before I go hence, and be no more seen. Grant me leisure to settle my affairs, to provide for my family, to examine my conscience, and to put myself in a condition to appear before Thee. But Simeon was not like others, who usually want to put off that evil day. If they could have their choice, there would be no period of life in which they would not have some plea to defer the payment of this debt to nature, and say to death, as the evil spirits said to Christ, Why art thou come to torment us before the time? How many of those pleas can the hopes and fears of vain men invent and set forth to the best advantage? Some would remonstrate that they are young, and that it is a sad thing to be taken off in the flower of their age; others, that they have children, and could wish to see them settled, and in a fair way of prospering; others, that they are engaged in undertakings useful to themselves and their families; others, that they hope to do considerable service to religion or to civil society, to the Church or to the State. Simeon is moved by none of these considerations: he desires not a respite and a reprieve to a distant day, not even to the morrow. Now, says he, let Thy servant receive his dismission. (*J. Jortin.*) *James Hervey:*—James Hervey, the English divine, died on Christmas, 1758. Having thanked his physician for his kind attentions, he exclaimed, with holy exultation, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation!" He added, "Here, doctor, is my cordial. What are all the cordials given to support the dying in comparison with this hope in Christ Jesus?" So saying he closed his eyes, and sang his Christmas carol in paradise. We shall bless God's holy name as we make our Christmas communion to-day, for all His servants who have departed this life in His faith and fear. May He give us grace to follow the good examples thus set before us! **Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.**—*God's salvation:*—

I. God's salvation, as the object of view of which Simeon speaks—"Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." What is it? God's salvation. Then it must be worthy of Himself. Is it God's salvation? Then it is adapted to man's ruin. Is it God's salvation? Then it secures a whole revenue of praise and glory to His great name. Is it God's salvation? Then man has no hand in it. Is it God's salvation? Then it is like the altar which God commanded Moses to build—"If thou lift up a tool upon it, thou hast polluted it." Is it God's salvation? Then it originates with Him; it is accomplished by Him; it is imparted by Him; it redounds to His own glory; in the experience and eternal blessedness of those whom He saves. II. Let us pass on, in the second place, to notice the nature of the sight. "Mine eyes have seen" it. There are men now in the professing Church who see clearly with the mental vision, but without faith. I was once told by an avowed infidel, who had read the Bible a great deal, but whose eyes the god of this world had blinded, "Well, sir, I am brought to the full conviction, that if the Bible be true, your view of it is the right one." Now, he "saw" it. I merely name this to show you that there is such a thing as seeing it without its being a saving sight. I wish my hearers to come to an investigation of this. When Simeon said, "Mine eyes have seen," it was not a desultory, nominal statement of things, as if his eyes had seen a babe only. He saw beyond that. You may have seen some volumes of theology very clearly written, and setting forth the salvation of Christ Jesus with scriptural accuracy; you may say that its arguments are quite irresistible, and be brought to see that they are so; but that is quite a different thing from the sight intended in my text—"Mine eyes have seen." This is the view which faith takes of Christ. And the view that faith takes of Christ implies that faith exists. Moreover, faith views in the official character and work of Christ the relationship that renders the Head and the members one. Moreover, while faith views this precious, glorious Christ in the dignity of His Godhead, in the perfection of His manhood, and in His official character, it goes on to gaze, saying, "Since mine eyes have seen—I may see much more," and examines minutely into the mystery of godliness. Again, it is not only the view which faith thus takes, but this view is by attraction. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." And whenever faith is indulged with a vision of Christ so as to behold in Him all that the poor sinner needs for time and eternity, there is a drawing, a mighty attraction, a desire to come closer to Him, just as in nature, when we are attracted by an object at a distance which appears very beautiful, but scarcely discernible, we desire to approach nearer, and the more clearly we see the object, and the more beautiful it appears, the more vigilantly we draw near to have clearer and clearer views of it. Pass on to mark that the teachings of the Holy Ghost are essential to this. Hence our beloved Lord said, "The Spirit of truth shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you;" and "He shall testify of Me." III. The effects which follow. I am sure that every poor sinner who gets a glimpse of Christ will wonder; wonder at the provision and gift of such a Saviour; wonder at the very name He bears; for His name is "Wonderful." Mark also, that when this sight of Christ is realized, objects terrene are thrown quite into the shade, trampled upon and entirely lost sight of. One thought more, and I will draw to a close. When all objects beside are thrown into the shade, and everything terrene is lost sight of for the time being; when faith has full scope, it seems as if they were all for awhile removed, and our heavenly felicity begun upon earth. (*J. Irons.*) "*Thy salvation*":—As soon as a truly-awakened soul sees Jesus, though it be but the beginnings of Him, it recognizes Him; it recognizes the hem of His garment, and the print of His feet. Though the Lord be seen only as an Infant, and the heart's idea of Him is very incomplete, yet He is perceived to be the Incomparable One, and the soul cries out, "He is all my salvation and all my desire." I. We learn from Simeon that CHRIST IS SALVATION. Not only a Saviour, but Salvation itself. And the only Salvation. And God's Salvation. You have salvation in every aspect of it, and every form of it, as soon as you have obtained Christ. You must trust Him in everything and for everything. II. CHRIST IS TO BE TAKEN UP INTO OUR ARMS AND TO BE LOOKED AT. 1. A grasp of faith. 2. A grasp of love. III. WHEN CHRIST IS TAKEN UP INTO THE ARMS AND LOOKED UPON HE HAS A WONDERFUL EFFECT. 1. Waiting is ended. 2. Simeon was excited to praise the Lord. 3. Now that he had seen the Lord's Christ, he desired to close his eyes upon all else. I have heard of some who have looked on the sun unadvisedly, till they could not see anything else; but this I know, that

he who looks on Christ becomes blind to all rival attractions. If these eyes have once seen the salvation of God, it looks like sacrilege to set them upon the base things of time and sense. Let the gate be closed through which Jesus has entered; it seems profane to allow a single object belonging to this traitorous world to enter our mind by eye-gate any more. Having eaten the white bread of heaven, we want no more of the husks of earth; having had a glimpse of the Incarnate God, what is there more to see? 4. He was now prepared to look on death. 5. Ready to behold the glory of God. We must first look at Christ, and when our eyes have been brightened and strengthened by the mild splendours of Incarnate Deity, they will be fitted to behold the King Himself as He sits upon the throne. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Ver. 32. **A light to lighten the Gentiles.**—*The light of the Gentiles:*—I. EXPLAIN THE IMPORT OF THE TEXT. 1. The character of Jesus is exhibited under the image of light—the most glorious of all the creatures of God. (1) Among the properties of light are penetration and universality. Light would have been an inappropriate image, in reference to Christ, had He not intended to illuminate the world. Not to a district, not to an empire, not to one quarter of the globe, does that glorious boon —light—confine its influences. It visits all in their turn. It burns within the torrid zone, it reaches the dark and distant poles; it proceeds with a gradual, yet inconceivable speed, in its restless career, till it has enlightened the whole. (2) Light is a source of comfort (Eccl. xi. 7). (3) Another quality of light is purity. It is this which renders it a fit emblem of Deity (1 John i. 5). 2. The subjects of His influences—"The Gentiles"—*i.e.*, all nations that have not yet heard the tidings of the gospel in Him. 3. The result of the manifestation of Christ to the world will be universal illumination. He rises upon the nations to "lighten" them. II. APPLY ITS TESTIMONY TO MISSIONARY EXERTIONS. 1. Examine the principles on which they are founded. (1) They are founded in nature. The same cause should produce the same effects. Whoever sincerely loves the Saviour will feel a proportionate attachment to His laws, His people, His interests. He cannot sit down indifferent to the last, any more than he can consent to break the first. (2) They are founded on the purest principles of reason. Missionary effort must be used as a means, to bring about the end in view—the spread of the gospel. God employs in the meantime human instruments for the carrying out of His Divine purposes. (3) They are founded on the purest principles of humanity. The gospel is the only effectual remedy of all this world's evil and misery. (4) They are founded on the purest principles of patriotism. Religious lethargy precedes national ruin; patriotism, therefore, calls for the support of religious zeal. (5) They are founded on the purest principles of religion. 2. The considerations by which we are encouraged. (1) Revelation. (2) Experience. (3) Existing circumstances. Is there not crying need throughout the world of those consolations which the gospel alone can bring, and of the Saviour whom the gospel alone proclaims? (*W. B. Collyer, D.D.*) *Christ the light of all nations:*—He gives the light of truth, of spiritual sight, of knowledge, of holiness, of joy, of heaven. The natives of arctic regions put on their holiday attire, and enthusiastically welcome the returning sun, when after months of absence, he again revisits them with his rays. How much more should we rejoice in the light of "the Sun of Righteousness?" There was a light once on or near the Goodwin Sands, called "The light of all nations," because it was supposed that some of all nations would see it. The "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" will one day "cover the earth." When Christ gives us light, we must reflect it (see Matt. v. 14–16). The lighthouse, when its lights burn truly, will warn the mariner against danger, and enable him to pursue the right and safe way. So we may each guide some from the darkness and danger of sin, to the light and safety of God's mercy in Christ. (*Henry R. Burton.*) *Light an emblem of Christ:*—There is no figure more common nor more beautiful in the Scriptures, than that by which Christ is compared to "light." Incomprehensible in its nature, itself first visible, and that by which all else is so; "light" represents to us Christ, whose generation none can declare, but who must shine on us ere we can know aught aright whether of things Divine or human. Pure, uncontaminated, though visiting the lowest parts of the earth, and penetrating the most noisome recesses; what is "light" an image of, if not of that Divine Mediator, who contracted no stain, though born of a woman, in the likeness of sinful flesh? Instrumental in all the processes of vegetation, so that, without its vivifying power, the earth could not

yield its kindly fruits, nor expose its verdant hues, what is "light" but the emblem of that source of illumination, of whom the Evangelist declares that "He was the Light and Life of men"? And without searching too narrowly into the particular sources by which this resemblance might be proved, we may say that Christ is to the material world what the sun is to the natural; and wherever the gospel has been published and received as a communication from God, the darkness has fled, as night flies before the day; and we know, that wherever the revelation made through Christ has been dispersed, wherever it has vouchsafed its cheering rays, the clouds of ignorance, and superstition, and irreligion have vanished, and holiness purity, and morality have illumined the horizon. It has done more. It has hung the very grave with bright lamps, and re-kindled the blazings of an almost quenched immortality. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) **And the glory of Thy people Israel.**—*Christ the glory of His people:*—We shall now employ the natural Israel as a type of the Lord's elect ones, and surely there is no straining of the text, when we say that Jesus Christ is the glory of the spiritual seed, the redeemed people. And why, with evident propriety, may the saints of God be compared to Israel? 1. Surely because God has made a covenant with them as He did with Jacob. 2. We may be compared with Israel, again, because if we be the children of God we have learned to wrestle with the angel and prevail. 3. It may be that you have another likeness to Israel in the fact that you are much tried. Faith must be tried. God had one Son without sin, but He never had a Son without the rod. 4. The true Israel, which are spiritually the Church of Christ, are said, according to the text, to be the Lord's people. (1) By His eternal choice. (2) By redemption. (3) By voluntary dedication of yourselves to Him. I. When we say that Christ is our glory, we mean that WE GET ALL THE GLORY WE HAVE THROUGH HIM. Some men go to the schools for glory, others to the camps of war. In all kinds of places men have sought after honour, but the believer saith that Christ is the mine in which he digs for this gold, Christ is the sea in which he fishes for this pearl; he gives up all other searchings and looks for glory in Jesus, and nowhere else. 1. The glory of election. 2. The glory of redemption. 3. The glory of adoption. 4. The glory of justification. 5. The glory of sanctification. Thus I might continue showing you that there is not a single treasure which a Christian possesses which does not come to him through Christ. He has nothing in which he can glory but what he is sweetly compelled to say of it, "I gained this in the market of Calvary; I found this in the mines of a Saviour's suffering; all this came to me through my bleeding, buried, risen, coming Lord, and He shall have the glory of it as long as I live." II. WE SEE A GLORY IN CHRIST which swallows up all other glories, as the sun's light conceals the light of the stars. 1. In Christ's person. 2. In Christ's sufferings. 3. In Christ's resurrection. 4. In Christ's ascension. 5. In Christ's intercession. 6. In Christ's second advent. III. The text is true in the sense that WE GIVE GLORY TO HIM. There is life in a look at the Crucified One. There is life in simple confidence in Him, but there is life nowhere else. God send to His Church an undying passion to promote the Saviour's glory, an invincible, unconquerable pang of desire, and longing that by any means King Jesus may have His own, and may reign throughout these realms! In this sense, then, Jesus is and must be the glory of His people. IV. But there is another sense—namely, FROM JESUS IS REFLECTED ALL THE GLORY WHICH IS PUT UPON HIS PEOPLE. Whatever glory they have, and they have much in the eyes of angels, and much honour in the eyes of discerning men, it is always the reflection of the Saviour's glory. I know some holy men and women for whom I cannot but feel the deepest and intensest respect, but the reason is because they have so much of my Master about them. I think I would travel many miles to talk with some of them, because their speech is always so full of Him, and they live so near to Him. V. The text may be read in this sense: Christ is the glory of His people, that is to say, THEY EXPECT GLORY WHEN HE COMES. Our glory is laid up. When you follow Jesus in resurrection, what glory! But we must not begin to speak of that, for we should never leave off at all if we began to talk about that glory—the glory of perfection, the glory of being delivered from sin, the glory of conquest, having trodden Satan under our feet; the glory of eternal rest, the glory of infinite security, the glory of being like Christ, the glory of being in the light and brightness of God, standing, like Milton's angel, in the very sun itself. If you want to know what heaven is, you can spell it in five letters, and when you put the five letters together they sound like this: Jesus. That is heaven. It is all the heaven the angels round the throne desire to know. They want nothing better than this, to see His face, to behold His glory, and to dwell in it world with-

out end. VI. THE PRACTICAL DRIFT OF THE SUBJECT. 1. We would give a word of warning to those of you who seek your glory anywhere else, because as surely as you do so, even if you meet with honour for a time, you will have to lose it. It is always ill to put your treasure where it will be stolen from you. Now, suppose you seek your glory in your learning. Well, well, well! Let the sexton take up your skull after you have been dead a little while, and what learning will there be in it, what show of wisdom will be found in it when it is resolved into a little impalpable brown powder? What will your science, and your mathematics, and your classics do for you in death and judgment? Suppose you seek your glory in fame, and become the favourite of the nation as a great soldier. When the grave-digger rattles your old bones about, what will that signify? You will have great fame, you say, and men will talk about you. But he who hath his glory in Christ, when he openeth his eyes in the next world will see Christ, and so behold his glory safe, and firmly entailed upon him. 2. Another word, and that is a word of rebuke. There are some preachers we know of, and I suppose there will always be some of the genus, who preach, preach, preach, but they never preach what is Israel's glory. They talk of anything but Christ. 3. There are some of you to whom I have a last word to say, and that is, some of you love Jesus Christ, but you are ashamed to say so. Now, since He is the glory of His people Israel, I shall be afraid of you and for you if you do not make Him your glory. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ the glory of Israel:*—Christ was the glory of Israel. 1. Because He was a Jew by birth. 2. Because His history has vindicated all that was peculiar in the Jewish polity. 3. Because He confined His personal ministry to the Jews. 4. Because He has stamped the impress of Jewish thought on the mind of man. 5. Because He has invested the condition and prospects of the Jews with universal interest. (*G. Brooks.*) *The glory of Israel:*—There was salvation in this sight: there was light in it; and there was glory in it also. He will be—said Simeon—"the glory of Thy people Israel." The prophet Isaiah was speaking of this same Saviour, when he said—"They shall hang on Him all the glory of His Father's house" (Isa. xxii. 24). The chief glory that a nation has is made up of the wise, and good, and great, and useful men who have belonged to it. We speak of Washington as the glory of America. We feel it an honour to belong to the nation which could claim Washington as one of its people. In Holland they call William, Prince of Orange, the glory of their nation. England, our grand old mother country, has had so many wise, and good, and great men, that it is hard to tell which to speak of as the best and greatest. They all help to make up the glory of the people of England. And any one who was born in England may feel it an honour to belong to a country which has produced so many good and great men. And in the same way it is the glory of the Jewish nation, or of Israel, as a people, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, belonged to their nation. Jesus was a Jew. And the Jewish people may well feel it an honour to belong to the nation among whom He was born. It is true in this sense that He is "the glory of His people Israel." (*Dr. Newton.*)

Vers. 34, 35. **Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many.**—*Simeon's prediction:*—This prediction has a very gloomy aspect, and speaks with a tone of sad foreboding in strange contrast to the riant tone of the song of thanksgiving which immediately precedes it. But was it too gloomy for the facts? Was not every jot and tittle of it fulfilled within three and thirty years of its utterance? Is it not still finding a wide and large fulfilment? 1. When the word of Christ comes home to you, whether it come to quicken you to a new life, or to convince you of some truth which you had not recognized before, or had not reduced to practice, do not be amazed and discouraged if you stumble at it, if it awaken doubt and contradiction in your hearts, if you find it hard to believe, and still harder to live by. It is no strange thing which is happening to you, but the common and normal experience of all who believe in Him. The advent of Christ in the heart, His coming in power, *must* resemble His advent into the world, must create a strife between the good and the evil in your nature, must disclose so much that is evil in you as to make you fear goodness to be beyond your reach. How, but by the conviction of sin, can you be made penitent, and driven to lay hold on the salvation which takes away sin? And the oftener Christ comes, the nearer He draws to you, the more fully He enters into your life—the deeper will be your conviction of sin, of a tainted and imperfect nature; till, at times, you will fear as if a sword had been thrust into your very soul. This, indeed, is what He comes to you for; to separate between the evil and the good, to make you conscious of evils you did not suspect,

so conscious that you hate and long to be delivered from them. 2. But this is not the only comfort or encouragement which the prediction of Simeon suggests. If he had not foreseen the nearer and immediate results of Christ's advent, we might have distrusted him when he spake of its distant and ultimate results. If he had not told us of the conflict and sorrow, the self-exposure and self-contempt to which a faithful reception of Christ subjects us, we could hardly have believed him when he speaks of Christ as the Consolation for all sorrow, and the Light which is to glorify the whole dark world. But when we find all that he said of the nearer results of Christ's coming to be true, we can hardly help believing him when he speaks to us of its happy ultimate results. Simeon has approved himself a faithful witness; we have found in our own experience that Christ is a Rock of stumbling and offence, a Signal which calls out all the opposition of an imperfect nature, a Sword which pierces the very soul and divides the evil in us from the good, a Touchstone which reveals our most secret thoughts and bents; let us also believe that He will be our Consolation, our Light, our Glory. 3. We may well believe it. *Per angusta ad augusta*, through a narrow way to a large place, through much struggle with many difficulties to a glorious end, through conflict to victory, seems the very motto of the Christian life. And this thought also is contained in Simeon's prediction, which is so framed as to imply that it was by a Divine intention, and in order to realize a gracious Divine end, that Christ was to bring strife on the earth, to kindle an inward war, to disclose the lurking evils of the human heart. He was set, "in order that the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed"—set by God for this very purpose. So that when our thoughts are exposed, when we have to endure the inward conflict between evil and good, when the word of Christ pierces and rends our hearts, all is according to a Divine order, a Divine intention; all is intended to prepare and conduct us to that Divine end, the salvation of our souls. It is all meant to prepare us for a time in which our souls shall be so flooded and suffused with the Divine Light that there shall be no more darkness in us, so penetrated with the Divine Glory that sin and sorrow and shame shall for ever flee away. And if this be God's intention, if this is the end to which He is conducting us, who will not bear the strife and pain and self-contempt of this present imperfect life with patience, nay, with courage and with hope? (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Christ the rising and fall of many*:—This however cannot be all that is meant by Christ's being set for the fall of many. They who remain just as they were, and where they were, cannot be said to fall. Falling implies some change: and they who have fallen must be in a worse state than before they fell. Now this is dismally true. They who, having heard of Christ, have not believed in Him, and do not believe in Him—they who do not believe in Him in the scriptural sense of believing, that is, with the heart and soul, as well as with the understanding—they who have not a living faith in Him, and do not show it by living a life of faith—they who, having heard of Christ, do not believe in Him in this sense, are indeed in a worse state than they would have been in, had Christ never come into the world. They are in a worse state, because they are in a more hopeless state. The last chance of salvation has been tried on them; but in vain. Everything that could be done has been done for them, but in vain. God has poured forth all the riches of His grace and mercy and love on them; but in vain. Their hearts continue as hard as the naked rock, as dry as the sandy desert. Nothing, it has been proved, can soften them; nothing can refresh them; nothing can make them bear fruit. The Comforter has been sent to us. If we refuse His comfort, if we reject His salvation, we must continue uncomforted and unsaved for ever. Yet this is not all. The state of those, who, having heard of Christ, have no living faith in Him, but continue in their sins, is not only worse than if they had never heard of Christ, because it is more hopeless; it is also worse, because it is more sinful. For the sinfulness of any action is to be measured, not by the nature of the action itself, but by the character and condition of the doer. It is in him, not in the action, that the sin lies; and its sinfulness will always vary, in proportion as he knows it to be sinful, and as he has had stronger motives and helps for struggling against it. Moreover we all feel that for a child to behave ill to a kind and loving father is far worse, far more inexcusable, than if its father had been harsh and neglectful. These, then, are the two qualities which deepen the sinfulness of sin. When it is a sin against knowledge, it becomes doubly sinful; and its sinfulness increases in proportion as that knowledge is clear and certain. And when it is also a sin against love, it then becomes tenfold sinful; its sinfulness still growing worse and worse, in proportion to the strength of the motives whereby our love has been

appealed to. These are the rules we are wont to make use of in judging one another. It is our own rule too, in our dealings with each other, as well as the rule of the gospel, that to whom much is given, of him much shall be required. They who, with the knowledge of Christ, live like heathens, we have already seen, are far more sinful than the heathens: and thus to them the coming of Christ has been the occasion of falling. They have fallen, because they have not risen; and because, by remaining where they were, they are so much further below what they ought to be. But the coming of Christ has also given us new duties. We have higher motives, a higher mark set before us. We are bound to strive after more heavenly aims. We are bound to seek after a more heavenly purity. So that the gift of the gospel is accompanied with a twofold danger. If we abide in our former ways, it renders those ways more sinful: and it imposes higher duties upon us, the neglect of which covers us with fresh guilt. For in this way also has the coming of Christ been a dismal occasion of falling to many. Many have hated the light, because their deeds were dark, and have either tried to quench the light, or finding their efforts to do so were vain, have wrapt themselves up in still thicker darkness. Thus was it with the Jews. To them the coming of Christ was an occasion of falling. Through Christ's coming they were no longer the chosen people of God. They forfeited their rank among nations, and became wanderers on the face of the earth, wanderers still more forlorn than when they wandered under Moses in the wilderness. So, too, was the coming of Christ an occasion of falling even to the heathens. For although, having gods many, and lords many, they had been ready to receive any new idol, that the folly or wickedness of man enthroned in the heavens, yet, when the true God, as revealed in the person of His Only-begotten Son, was made known to them, they too tried to quench His light with blood. And even now there are still found those who openly hate and blaspheme God and His Christ, and thus have fallen into deeper sinfulness through Christ's coming. Alas, it is a fearful and ghastly thought, how many millions on millions of souls will have received no benefit by Christ's atonement, how many millions on millions of souls may perhaps be among those for whose fall that blessed Child was set. This must surely have been the worst part of the agony by which Christ's spirit was rent on that awful night in the garden, the thought of the millions of souls to whom He should only be an occasion of falling. It is a thought the sting of which nothing can take away, except when the soul is rapt in adoration of the perfect holiness, and perfect justice, and perfect love of God. (*J. C. Hare.*) *Christ's mission:*—Simeon makes this declaration emphatically in reference to Israel; but he makes it prophetically in reference to the Gentile world, and to the multitudes which to the end of time shall come under the sound of the gospel. I. We propose to ILLUSTRATE THIS REPRESENTATION OF OUR SAVIOUR'S MISSION. Illustrations may be borrowed from almost every circumstance in His work, and from every perfection in His personal ministration. 1. His very appearance in the first instance illustrated forcibly, and in some cases painfully, the truth of this declaration, that, on His entrance into our world, and on His revealing Himself by the ministry of His word, He should have been for the falling and for the rising again of many in Israel. But when Christ came, and His appearance was so contrary to all their expectations had led them to look for, they were prepared, not to receive Him, but positively to reject and dishonour Him. And so the appearance of Christ in the world is a stumbling-block to the present day. On the other hand, in reference to the appearance of Christ, He is set for the rising again of many in Israel. This was true of His temporal appearance among the people of Israel. While the princes and the rulers of that period passed Him by with scorn, and refused to listen to His Divine instruction, it is beautifully said that "the common people heard Him gladly." There was something in the very humility of His circumstances, in the poverty of His life, in the lowliness of His outward walk and conversation, which brought Him near to them, and them near to Him. 2. We receive a second illustration of the truth of this declaration from the mystery of the Redeemer's person. This representation of our Saviour's character was in His own time, has been in every succeeding age, and is in our time, the occasion of the falling and the rising again of many. There were many in His day who made it a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence. There was nothing in the history of the Jewish people which gave them such sore offence, and excited such bitter hatred to the Lord Jesus Christ, as His announcing Himself to be the Son of God, and claiming equality with the Father. It was on this very ground that they persecuted Him through life; and it is very remarkable that on this very ground they at last put Him to death on the cross.

Now, on the other hand, this very representation of our Saviour's person is life from the dead to those who believe in His name. 3. The ministry of Jesus Christ is also another method of illustrating the truth of this declaration: "This child is set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel." Our Lord's ministry on earth was remarkable for the effect it had on those to whom it was directed. What was the falling away of the Jews in this instance was the gathering of the Gentiles. 4. This declaration is still further illustrated if we consider the death which Jesus died. Those who disbelieve, and disbelieve Him as a dying Saviour making atonement for sin, disbelieve the only remedy for sin, and fall fearfully from His presence. But on the contrary, where shall we find any representation of the Redeemer like the representation of the Redeemer crucified and dying, and rising again as the means of renewing our spirits, confirming our confidence, and elevating our hope. He died, but it is for the rising again of many. 5. Then, finally, it may be illustrated in the dispensation and economy of the gospel. But while it is for the rising again of many, it is also for the fall of many. The gospel dispensation has brought everything to an extreme; there is the extreme of mercy, and there is the extreme of judgment; God has discovered to us His grace, as we have never seen it; and God is discovering to us also His righteousness and His justice as was never shown before. "Behold," for it is remarkable, "this Child is set for the fall and the rising again of many in Israel." 1. It is remarkable if we consider the great intention of Christ in coming into our world. Nothing can be more explicit than the intention of our Saviour and of the gospel in their appearance amongst us. 2. It is the more remarkable, in the second place, because the evil arising to us from the testimony of Christ is to be found in ourselves, and not in the Saviour. If it is said that Christ in His appearance shall be for the fall and rising again, for the condemnation as well as the salvation, of many, it is not so much descriptive of the intention of His coming as of the effect of His coming. But "behold"—let it be considered remarkable, fix your attention on it, that this arises from their own perversity, their own unbelief, their own sin. We are exhorted thus to behold and improve it because we have a serious concern in it. (*A. Reed.*) *The exhibition of Christ tries the human heart*:—This subject naturally divides itself into two branches, which require a distinct consideration. I. Let us consider, THAT GOD EXHIBITS CHRIST BEFORE THE MINDS OF MEN, IN ORDER TO TRY THEIR HEARTS. 1. The truth of this observation appears from what the prophets foretold concerning the feelings and conduct of men towards the Messiah, when He should make His appearance in the flesh, and perform His mediatorial work among them. David predicted that He would alarm the fears, and awaken the enmity and opposition of the world against Him. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." 2. It appears from the history of Christ, that He fulfilled the predictions which went before concerning Him, and tried the hearts of all, who either heard Him preach, or saw His miracles, or were any way acquainted with Him. He was a sign universally spoken against. Some heard Him gladly; but others heard Him with disgust and indignation. Some admired His miracles; but others despised and blasphemed them. 3. The exhibition of Christ after His death, through the medium of the gospel, tried the hearts of the whole Jewish nation. 4. Ever since the days of the apostles, the character of Christ, displayed in the gospel, has tried the hearts of the whole Christian world. 5. It appears from the very character of Christ, that He cannot be exhibited to the minds of men without trying their hearts. His character, above all others, is adapted to draw forth the feelings of the human heart. Wherever He is exhibited in all His excellences, offices, and designs, He must necessarily try the hearts of men in some very important respects. And, first, in regard to God. God, therefore, by exhibiting Christ in the gospel, tries the hearts of men in respect to Himself. He certainly made it appear that the Jews were His enemies, by the instrumentality of Christ. In the second place, the exhibition of Christ necessarily discovers the secrets of men's hearts towards themselves, as well as towards God. Christ, in the course of His life, and more especially at His death, laid open the guilt and ill desert of sinners. Besides, thirdly, the exhibition of Christ as a Mediator, discovers men's feelings in regard to the terms of salvation. The next thing proposed is—II. To show that GOD TRIES THE HEARTS OF MEN THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF CHRIST, IN ORDER TO FIX THEIR FUTURE AND FINAL STATE. "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many." God intends to make men happy or miserable for ever, according to the

feelings of their hearts towards the Son of His love. And there appears to be a propriety in God's treating men according to their love, or hatred of Christ, because their feelings towards Christ afford a proper criterion of their true characters. If they love Christ, they love God; but if they hate Christ, they hate God. If they love Christ, they love the good of the universe; but if they hate Christ, they are enemies to all good. The character of Christ is the most infallible test of all human characters. Improvement: I. Since it is God's design in exhibiting Christ before men, to try their hearts and prepare them for their final state, it becomes the ministers of the gospel to make Christ the main subject of their preaching. 2. If God means to try the hearts of men, and prepare them for their final state through the medium of the gospel, then He has an important purpose to answer, by sending it where He knows it will be rejected. 3. If the exhibition of Christ be designed to form men for their future and eternal state, then they are in a very solemn situation while they are hearing the gospel. 4. If the gospel tries the hearts and forms the characters of those who hear it, then sinners may easily and insensibly fit themselves for destruction. 5. We learn from what has been said in this discourse, that all who hear the gospel may know, before they leave the world, what will be their future and final state. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Christianity the test of character*:—We shall briefly consider in what respects Christianity proves itself the grand test of men's dispositions. 1. It puts to the proof whether or not men love truth. 2. The gospel is a test of men's hearts as affected with regard to God. 3. In respect to humility, the gospel tries and ascertains the state of the heart. 4. A fourth respect in which the gospel is a test of your character is whether you are true, or not, to your own interest; whether you have wisdom to choose the right relief for your misery, the proper supply for your wants. 5. Lastly, Christianity is a test of our obedience or disobedience to the will of God. "If God is a Master, where is His fear? If God is a Father, where is His honour?" A few words of improvement may appropriately conclude this important subject. 1. Wherever the gospel is propounded, it is a test of character to each individual who hears it: and whoever does not receive it will hereafter stand confessed to God as having "loved darkness rather than light, because his deeds were evil." 2. The rejection of Christianity is entirely voluntary: it arises from the spirit of pride, the preference of falsehood, the love of sin: but where shall we look for criminality, if not in an evil mind? 3. The trial of character here is only preparatory to the last trial hereafter. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *Christ's knowledge of man*:—"That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." I. Yes, THAT IS THE CLAIM WHICH CHRIST HAS UPON US—THAT HE KNOWS US. As it is said, "He knew what was in man;" and He does not merely know our faces and our forms, but our true selves. You know nothing of any science or thing until you know its hidden inner secret. How different it is to know about a thing and to know what is within a thing. Superficial knowledge is that of the surface, of the skin; and profound knowledge is that which is organic and descends to the foundation. You know every man has within him an amazing secret realm of thought and emotion; I may go a step further and say, it is unknown to himself, and most men never have more than very occasional glimpses into the "within the veil" of their own minds; most men are not at home within themselves; they do not dwell there. Even those men who do suppose that they are well acquainted with their own minds, often deceive themselves. II. MAN HAS A GREAT HIDDEN NATURE, WAITING FOR REVEALMENT AND DEVELOPMENT. But how secret. This it is which makes the relationship of the pastor and the teacher frequently so sacred; it is felt that he can fathom the great deep of the human soul. You may illustrate it from so poor a piece of machinery as a watch; a watchmaker descends into the mystery; he knows it; and if he professes to know and does not, great mischiefs and mistakes result. Or, look at the human body and its diseases. I had a friend who was ill; he had three doctors who attended him; they gave him up; they looked at symptoms and phenomena; they were ignorant of the law; another came, touched the mainspring and restored him to health. Look! and here the image is more pertinent; look at the schoolmaster and educator, the teacher, the boy. I knew a minister in his early childhood; he was a very wild, a strong-willed boy; his parents punished him severely, again and again—they were pious people; at last they tried another method, they took him downstairs, after they had closed the shop at night, and they knelt down on either side of him, and they prayed, they both prayed for him, and they wept. "Oh!" said he to me, "I could not stand that, I tried, and I prayed, and they conquered." He is an eminent minister now. They had touched the mainspring; there is a mainspring in all of us, and

we bless the man who reveals it to us; he who can touch it, rules us—be he general, poet, statesman, or preacher. III. Yes; this is Christ's claim upon us; He knows us; HE IS THE TRUE REVEALER OF THE HIDDEN NATURE OF MAN. "He therefore taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." And hence the word of the prophecy of Simeon, which I have read as a text, is to be taken by the side of His precious word. Christ is "a light"—"a light," says Simeon, "to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Thy people Israel." "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." What do we mean by light, but that which makes manifest the interior chambers of our nature? Yes! to know man is the great indispensable of all teaching. Rare knowledge and wonderful! IV. Yes, AND KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN NATURE IS ESSENTIAL TO ALL TEACHING. You see the painter! he will tell you that knowledge of anatomy is essential to success; he needs the knowledge of muscular action, to give life to his picture—a knowledge of internal action to external development. Thus you see in Christ knowledge of humanity. His whole teaching reveals adaptation, fitness to complete imperfect man! Hence, because of Christ's transcendental knowledge, Christianity cannot be realized on earth. It is always over and beyond man. But a terrible thing it is to be with one who entirely knows us, and reads us through and through like a book—by observation, like Foster—by intuition, like Shakespeare; but to many it is only moral anatomy or surgery. The greatest knowledge of man is by sympathy. And Christ knew the World of the Human Heart by sympathy. Have you not noticed that scarcely any mind can cross the broad disc of our Lord's even temporary association, without revealing, as it passes, its state? It seems as if any mind coming into the neighbourhood of His Divine character is compelled to yield itself up, not only to His perfect knowledge—but, in the memorable events of His life, is illustrated how that which is done in secret is proclaimed on the house-tops. Amazing would seem the attraction of our Lord's character, by which He drew to Him most opposite beings. He held them by their affection to Him. He held them by their hostility to Him. He revealed their love, their hatred, and their fear. Christ's character was like that ancient mirror which, if held up before the face, did not reveal the face, but the thought. V. THE TEACHING OF OUR LORD HAD THE SAME INFLUENCE AS HIS PERSONAL CHARACTER; it revealed the thoughts of the heart. All His parables removed the abstract ideas of the human soul into the region of home life. Thus Christ shows how He knows our inner nature, and speaks to the inner world of motive and imagination. VI. 1. He knew. Mark, His knowledge was and is absolute. We speak of many, and say, "They know human nature by observation or by intuition." Properly, Christ's knowledge is neither the one nor the other; the first says, I know human nature because I look at it; the second says, I know human nature because I look at myself, and find myself related to it. Christ knew it because He made it. 2. Hence His authority over man. Man felt His knowledge. 3. He revealed our thoughts in His sympathy. He knew what was in man; hence His sympathy with men. Yes, His sympathy *with* man! VII. Christ not only revealed the thoughts of many hearts by eliciting their peculiar moral character, but HE SPOKE TO THE UNIVERSAL HEART OF MAN IN ALL AGES, BOTH BY HIS DEEDS AND BY HIS WORDS; He transformed the great instincts of men in all ages into absolute revelations. Christianity has revealed and authenticated to men what had been for ages suspected, or hoped, or feared. VIII. 1. He saw human nature was dark. He came to enlighten it. "I am the light of the world." 2. He saw the hardness as well as the darkness of man. He came to soften the world's heart. "He knew what was in man." 3. He consecrated humanity. He revealed the holy destiny of man, for "He knew what was in man." 4. "That the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed." He came to sublime and to crown human nature, to reveal to man His brightest, boldest thought—Eternal life—Immortality. (*E. P. Hood.*) *The detector of the heart*:—It may be profitable for us, then, to inquire: I. IN WHAT MANNER DOES THE GOSPEL BECOME A DETECTOR OF THE HEART? There are two ways in which this detection and unveiling are most apparent and most important. 1. By its authoritative conveyance of truths and facts, it detects and prostrates the pride of human reasoning. 2. By the requirement of an uncompromising decision of character. Let us now inquire—II. WHAT ARE THE INSTRUCTIVE AND PRACTICAL INFERENCES WHICH WE SHOULD DEDUCE FROM THESE VIEWS OF THE GOSPEL. 1. That the ministry of the gospel ought to be so conducted as to secure, as much as possible, this important object of discrimination and detection. 2. Every hearer of the gospel should feel constrained to bring home to his own heart the great test of

character. 3. How greatly to be loved and prized is that gospel, which can give hope to the sinner even on the detection of his guilt and danger. (*H. F. Burder, D.D.*) *The first prediction of the Cross* :—I. 1. This is the first announcement that the way of the Holy Child must be the way of sorrows. The angel had spoken of the throne of David; the shepherds had brought a message of peace; Simeon foretells the Cross. Yet this prophecy is called a blessing! "He blessed them!" Blessedness is not the same as external prosperity. Blessedness is obedience to the will of the Father. 2. Mary has to learn that she, too, must suffer with her Child. "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul." This is her blessing! Is it not true that the coming of the Eternal Word in human flesh has brought a blessing upon human sufferings, which are henceforth linked with His? 3. Simeon foresees that the Christ must suffer because His life would be violently opposed to the principles by which men were guiding their lives. He is among men as the Incarnate Word, reading their inmost thoughts, and revealing to them their true selves. Therefore must He be for the salvation of some and for the condemnation of others; therefore must He be a Sign that is spoken against. 4. Human suffering arises from the breach of the Divine order which was made when man chose his own will rather than God's. The Divinely-ordered human life is lived by the Word-made-flesh. Inasmuch as the Divinely-ordered life is in direct opposition to the self-centred lives of fallen men, it must come into collision with them and must suffer. At the same time, by its very perfection, and by its hold on the true Centre—the Divine Will—it must condemn all that falls short of it or opposes it. II. 1. Contemplate in the Child here presented to the Father, the One Perfect Human Life, unfolding itself amidst the evil antagonisms of selfish human nature. 2. Learn that it follows that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution (2 Tim. iii. 12). (*Canon Vernon Hutton, M.A.*) *Fall and rise* :—Christ is set for the fall of some and the rising of others. 1. It is not otherwise. 2. It cannot be otherwise. 3. It ought not to be otherwise. 4. It will not be otherwise. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *Struggle and triumph* :—The sign spoken against. 1. In its continual struggle. 2. In its certain triumph. (*Ibid.*) *Dual aspect of Christ's Advent* :—Simeon added this probably as an explanation of an expression he had just used in his burst of inspired song. "The glory of Israel" was a phrase already consecrated in religious language. It commonly meant the Sacred Presence or Shekinah between the cherubim over the ark of the covenant. Israel, as St. Paul in later years pointed out, had indeed many a prerogative among the nations. Israel was God's adopted family; Israel inherited the covenants—those early understandings between earth and heaven, of which the great patriarchs had been the favoured recipients; to Israel God had revived in its completeness the moral law; Israel offered to God a worship, the nature and details of which had been Divinely ordered; Israel, so rich in the past, was also the people of the future; the promises were its endowment for the coming ages, and in the fathers or patriarchs Israel had not merely a store of precious memories, but a lasting possession. The patriarchs were the property of their descendents to the end of time; but the true glory of Israel was this, that of its stock and blood "as concerning the flesh, Christ"—whose Incarnation the Sacred Presence over the ark prefigured—"Christ came, who is all over all, God blessed for ever." All else that Israel was or had—its sacred books, its typical ritual, its ideal of righteousness in the moral law, its great saints and heroes—all else pointed on and up to this its supreme prerogative. . . . But what would it mean in fact, in history? Would all Israelites hasten to recognize their true title as a race to greatness? Would all hearts join in one outburst of thankful praise when the glory of Israel presented Himself to His countrymen? Simeon feels it his duty to check unwarranted expectations which his earlier words might have seemed to raise. 1. Christ's coming into the world was not to have a uniform effect upon human souls. It would act on one soul in one way, and on another in another: it would act differently on the same soul at different periods of its history. It is Christ's wish to bless every one with whom He comes in contact; but His goodwill is limited by the free action of men, who are left at liberty to accept or reject Him as they choose. The spiritual world is not ruled mechanically. The truth and grace of God only act upon men with good results so far as they are willing that they should so act. That Christ's Advent should have great results was inevitable. It acted as a moral shock upon the existing fabric of thought and life, dispelling illusions, and making men think and choose. None could regard Christ with indifference. He stirred the emotions of all. 2. Of the two effects of

Christ's Advent, Simeon mentions first the fall of many in Israel. Bold paradox—to associate His blessed name, who came to be the health and Saviour of men, with spiritual failure. Yet this was what prophecy had led men to expect. And it is what actually happened. When Christ appeared as a public teacher, He was "despised and rejected" by the great majority of the Jewish people. Even such as heard Him gladly at first, joined the priests and rulers at last in the cry, "Crucify Him." Only a few clung firmly to Him through it all. 3. When our Lord had His own way with souls, it was to raise them to newness of life. To come into contact with Him—sympathetic contact—was to touch a life so intrinsically buoyant and vigorous that it transfused itself forthwith into the attracted soul, and bore it onwards and upwards. The "rising again" of which Simeon speaks is not the future resurrection of the body, but the present moral and spiritual resurrection of believers' souls. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Use and abuse of God's gifts:*—Everything that comes from God is naturally fitted and originally intended for good. But His gifts are often perverted, and become, though not the cause, yet the occasion, of evil. I. IT IS SO WITH COMMON TEMPORAL BLESSINGS. They are all good things in themselves, but they prove advantages or disadvantages according to our use of them. 1. Riches. When properly received and used to the glory of God and good of men, riches are a great blessing; but when coveted, or rested in as the chief good, or abused in extravagance and profligacy, they become the root of all evil, and drown men in destruction. 2. Greatness. In God's hand it is to make great, to give power and honour to men; and those great men who conduct themselves in a manner becoming their exalted station, are honourable and happy indeed; but the more pre-eminent in station men are, the more sinful and ruinous is their misconduct. 3. Learning is justly accounted honourable and valuable; and it actually not only promotes a man's worldly distinction, but proves a blessing in the highest sense of the word, when consecrated to God, and possessed in humility and virtue; but there are few greater curses than learning misapplied, usurping the place of the wisdom which is from above, or co-existing with habits of immorality. 4. Health is a blessing, without which all other earthly blessings are of little avail; and when spent in piety and usefulness, it enables men to rise to a high degree of credit and success, and even moral excellence; but when its stability is presumed on to encourage men to proceed in a career of dissipation, and its vigour wasted on crimes, or on trifles, it becomes the occasion of multiplied evils and of deep degradation. 5. Affliction is kindly sent for the benefit of transgressors; and when its voice is listened to, it recalls them from their wanderings; but when it is unimproved, it only hardens men more and more, and sinks them deeper and deeper in misery. 6. Nor is it otherwise with life itself. "Skin upon skin," one piece of valuable property after another—nay, "all that man hath, will he give for his life." Every man is bound to praise the Almighty Author and Preserver of his life; and the life that now is, when rightly improved, is the means of rising to the happiness of the endless life which is to come; but life spent and closed in nature's guilt and depravity, is to all who so spend it and so close it, the forerunner of the second death, so that it would have been better for them never to have lived at all. II. THE SAME PRINCIPLE APPLIES WITH RESPECT TO CHRIST'S COMING INTO THE WORLD. He came to bless all mankind; but His coming may only increase our condemnation. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *Treatment of Christ and the gospel:*—1. Remember that the gospel must prove the means either of your rise or of your fall. It is, then, a matter of infinite moment, involving all that is important in your endless character and destiny. 2. Speak not against Christ, but for Him. Beware of speaking lightly of Him, or His ordinances, doctrines, people. On the contrary, espouse His cause, and embrace every opportunity of remembering Him to others. 3. Let all the sufferings and indignities of the Redeemer be matter of grief to you. Your sins made them necessary. 4. Suffer the gospel to have its proper heart-searching effect on you. That "the thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed," is a result not to be deprecated, but desired; in order that what is right and pleasant may be cherished, and what is wrong corrected. God sees all now, and one day He will reveal all. It will then be too late to think of amendment. The present is the time for any salutary discovery. (*Ibid.*) *Christ—the fall and rise of many:*—Wherever Christ Jesus comes, with whomsoever He may come in contact, He is never without influence, never inoperative, but in every case a weighty result is produced. There is about the holy Child Jesus a power which is always in operation. He is not set to be an unobserved, inactive, slumbering personage in the midst of Israel;

but He is set for the falling or for the rise of the many to whom He is known Never does a man hear the gospel, but he either rises or falls under that hearing. Observe, then, the two sides of the truth—Jesus always working upon men with marked effect; and, on the other hand, man treating the Lord Jesus with warmth either of affection or opposition; an action and a reaction being evermore produced. Why is this? 1. Because of the energy which dwells in the Lord's Christ, and in the gospel which now represents Him among men. The gospel is all life and energy; like leaven it heaves and ferments with inward energy, it cannot rest till it leavens all around it. It may be compared to salt which must permeate, penetrate, and season that which is subject to its influence. It is no more possible for you to restrain the working of the gospel than to forbid the action of fire. Stand before the fire, it shall warm and comfort you; thrust your hand into it, it shall burn you. It must work, because it is fire. And so with yonder sun. Though clouds may hide it from our sight at this moment, yet for ever does it pour forth, as from a furnace mouth, its heat and light. Nor could it cease to burn and shine, unless it ceased to be a sun. As long as it is a sun, it must permeate surrounding space with its influence and splendour. Do you wonder that the Sun of Righteousness is of yet Diviner energy? 2. Jesus Christ and His gospel are matters of such prime necessity to mankind, that from this cause also there must always be an effect produced by Christ. He is as necessary to our souls as the air is to our bodies. If we receive Him, we live; if we will not receive Him, we must die. It is unavoidable that it should be so. You cannot reject the Saviour, and be a little damaged thereby; there is no alternative but that you utterly perish. 3. The position in which Jesus Christ meets men makes it inevitable that He must have an effect upon them. He stands right in men's way. They must decide about Him one way or the other. 4. He was appointed for this very thing. "Set." It was for this very end He came. See the husbandman take the fan. You observe the heap of mingled wheat and chaff lying on the floor. He begins to move the fan to and fro till he has created a breeze of wind. What happens? The chaff flies to the further end of the threshing floor, and there it lies by itself; the wheat, more weighty, remains purified and cleansed, a golden heap of grain. Such is the preaching of the gospel. Such is Christ: he is the separater of those who will perish from those who shall be saved. The fan discerns and discovers, it reveals the worthless and manifests the precious. Thus hath Christ the fan in his hand! Or, take another metaphor, which we find in the prophets, "Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." You see the refiner's fire. Notice how it burns and blazes. Now, it turns to a white heat; you cannot bear to look on it. What has happened? Why, the dross is divided from the silver and the alloy from the gold. The refiner's fire separates the precious from the vile. And so the gospel reveals the elect of God, and leaves to hardness of heart the finally impenitent. Where it is preached, the men who accept it are precious ones of God, His elect, His chosen; the men who reject it are the reprobate silver. So shall men call them, for God hath rejected them. Mark too, the fuller's soap. The fuller takes his soap, and exercising his craft upon yonder piece of linen marked with many stains and colours, you see how these foul things fly before the soap, and the fair fabric alone remains. Both spots and linen feel the power of the soap. So doth the gospel take the polluted fabric of humanity and cleanse it: the filth departs and flies before it, and the fair linen remains. Such are the saints of God; when the gospel comes to them they are purified thereby, while the wicked, as foul spots, are driven away in their wickedness. Having thus set forth the great truth of the text, I purpose now to answer briefly one or two questions. I. WHO ARE THOSE THAT FALL BY CHRIST. In Christ's day the question was not difficult to answer. Those that fell by Christ were—1. The holders of tradition, who gave men's sayings higher authority than God's commands. 2. The externalists. 3. The self-righteous. 4. The wiseacres. 5. The sceptical. Very much the same sort of people as fell by Christ then fall by Christ now. II. TO WHOM WILL THE LORD JESUS BE A RISING AGAIN? He will be a rising again to those who have fallen. Dost thou confess, "I have fallen"? Dost thou acknowledge, "I possess a fallen nature"? Dost thou lament thou hast fallen into sin? O my brother, He will be thy rising. He cannot uplift those who are not brought low. Note, again, those that rise in Him are those who are now willing to rise in Him. Jesus is set to raise you up. III. There are SOME WHO SHALL BOTH FALL AND RISE AGAIN IN CHRIST; to whom Christ shall give such a fall as they never had

before, and such a rise as shall be to their eternal resurrection. But what a fall was there when I learned that if salvation was of works, it could not be of grace, and if it was of grace it could not be of works; the two could not be mixed together. Then I said I would hope in the performance of the duties which the gospel inculcates; I thought I had power to do this; I would repent, and believe, and so win heaven. But what a fall I had, and how each bone seemed broken when He declared to me, "without Me, ye can do nothing." Ah, this is how Christ saves souls. He gives them a fall first, and afterwards He makes them rise. You cannot fill the vessel till it is empty. There must be room made for mercy by the pouring out of human merit. You cannot clothe the man who is clothed already, or feed him who has no hunger. But this fall which Jesus gives us is a blessed fall. He never did throw a man down without lifting him up afterwards. "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal," these are attributes of Jehovah Jesus. IV. We shall conclude with a few words upon the last part of the text. The text tells us that the Lord Jesus is "A SIGN THAT SHALL BE SPOKEN AGAINST." 1. Christ was a sign of Divine love. In Him God reaches the climax of benevolence, and man exhibits the climax of deadly hate. The greatest gift provokes the greatest hostility, and the loftiest sign brings forth the most virulent opposition. 2. Christ was a sign of Divine justice. A bleeding Saviour, the Son of God deserted by His Father, the thunderbolts of vengeance finding a target in the Person of the Well-beloved, herein is justice revealed most fully. I hear not that other signs of vengeance have been spoken against. Men have trembled, but have not railed. Sodom and Gomorrah with bowed head confessed the justice of their doom. Egypt engulphed in the Red Sea saith nothing of it; none of her records contain a single blasphemy against Jehovah for having swept away the nation's chivalry. The judgments of God, as a rule, strikes men dumb with awe! But this, which was the greatest display of Divine hatred of sin, where the Son of God was made to descend into the lowest depths as our substitute, this provokes to-day man's uttermost wrath. Know you not how many are continually railing at the Cross? The Crucified is still abhorred. How matchless is the perversity of human nature, that when God displays His justice most, but blends it sweetly with His love, the sign is everywhere spoken against! 3. Christ was the sign of man's communion with God, and of God's fellowship with man. A ladder reaching from earth to heaven; a connecting bridge between creature and Creator. But alas! man does not want to be near his Maker, and hence he rails at the means provided for communion. 4. Christ is the sign of the elect seed, the representative of the holy, the newborn, the spiritual; and hence, as soon as the carnal mind, that knoweth not God nor loveth Him, perceives Christ and His gospel, it at once stirs up the depth of its malevolence to put down Christ if it be possible. But they shall never put Him down. They may speak against the gospel, but here is our joy, that Christ will raise up His people, and will certainly give the fall to His enemies. The ark of the Lord can never fall before Dagon; but Dagon must fall down before the Lord's ark. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ reveals hearts*:—Eastern fable tells of a magic mirror that remained clear and unsullied when the pure-hearted looked into it, but became troubled and obscure when the glance of the guilty fell upon it. So the owner of that mirror could always tell the character of those who looked into it. Such a test we have in Jesus. We can tell a man's nature by knowing what he thinks of Christ, and thus "the thoughts of many hearts" are "revealed." (*Sunday School Times.*) *Christ spoken against*:—There are four reasons why they speak against Him; that is, as the true Christ of God. I. Ignorance, men not knowing their need of Him; many of the relations he bears therefore appear to the natural man to be superfluous; he does not know his need, and therefore speaks against it in ignorance. II. The native enmity of the mind. "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" men will naturally speak against that that they have an antipathy to. III. Because they are too much taken up with the world, and they do not like to be interrupted. Now we must pursue the world, must enjoy the world; to become one of these religious mopes would be to spoil all our pleasures. Thus they have an idea that there is something very gloomy about religion, and so they speak against it, especially the truth. IV. The natural man has a vague idea that the threatenings of God are mere words; that "whoever the Lord may send to hell," says the natural man, "I can't believe He will send me there." (*J. Wells.*) *This Child*:—These are the words of Simeon. A beautiful picture—age and childhood meeting together, a gentle shoot and the full ripe corn in the ear, a sapling and a full-grown oak ready for transplantation into that realm where the saints of

God flourish with an immortal life and glory. I. A CHILD. A wonderful thing. A seed containing a world of unknown possibilities. It makes parents glad. It should do so. A gift of God, a pledge and proof of the gracious tenderness which rules the world. But a child should also make parents thoughtful. Children are not mere play-things—ornaments, but undeveloped powers—slumbering volcanoes, which may burst out with desolating eruptions; or shrouded lights, that shall emerge in fuller and brighter radiance from year to year, shedding gladness and blessing all around. II. "BEHOLD THIS CHILD." Have we not sometimes wished that some Simeon could have taken a child of ours in his arms and become prophetic with respect to his destiny? But it is not permitted—graciously so. We know, however, that the future of children is not a thing of chance, nor is it determined only by what the child is in itself. Otherwise the parental relationship would be largely nullified. A child has its own native powers and tendencies, but they are capable of regulation or perversion. The doctrine of Scripture is that the child will be much what the parent makes him. III. THE HISTORY OF THIS CHILD WAS TO BE ONE OF A CHEQUERED NATURE, AND THE MOTHER WAS TO ENDURE SAD WOE. "A sword shall pierce," &c. This not uncommon for mothers. Simeon, however, blessed the parents in spite of the sorrow that would be mingled with the lot of Jesus and their own. Blessedness not the same as continuous happiness or pleasure. A pathway of uninterrupted joy may not be a blessing. "Blessed are they that mourn," &c. Christ's life was blessed when He was tempted, had not where to lay His head, was alone upon the mountain, was robed in mock royalty, beaten, spit upon, agonized in the garden, died upon the cross. No one could call Him happy, but He was blessed. IV. THIS CHILD WAS SET FOR THE FALL AND RISING AGAIN OF MANY IN ISRAEL. The effect different in different persons. Not, however, intended to be different. The purpose of God is good and gracious. All His gifts are intended for benefit—health, prosperity, afflictions. How differently are we affected by the same things! Children in the same house, under the same training, &c. 1. Falling—(1) In aggravated degradation; (2) augmented guilt; (3) humiliation and repentance. 2. Rising again. (1) Faith. (2) Forgiveness. (3) Holiness. (4) Heaven. The words of Simeon are for this day, for this nation, for you. This Child which was set forth then is still set forth, until in the counsels of heaven the last day shall break upon the world, and the throne of judgment shall be erected where now stands the throne of grace. This Child is still the turning-point upon which are centred the destinies of the world. This Child is not for a race, but for the world; not for an age, but for all time. This Child you have heard of from your infancy. You have not heard so much of any child as this. This child runs as a golden thread through the history of the world. You may neglect Him, but you cannot escape Him. You may despise Him, but you cannot escape Him. You may hate Him, but you cannot escape Him. It cannot be with you as it is with a heathen who has never heard of His name, and upon whom the glory of His brightness has never risen. (*E. Mellor, D.D.*) *Christ is set for the ruin of many*:—I. HOW TRUE IS THIS PROPHECY. Undoubtedly the Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save. In boundless love He has sacrificed Himself for the world, and opened heaven by His cruel death. Nevertheless, he is set to the ruin of many. 1. Many are destitute of holy faith, which is the gate of life and the ground of eternal salvation. 2. Many are destitute of Divine charity, which we must possess in addition to faith, if we would be saved. II. HOW TERRIBLE IS THIS PROPHECY. Dreadful are the consequences to those for the ruin of whom Christ is set. 1. They forfeit the price of their redemption. 2. They lose the eternal happiness destined for them. (*Joseph Schuen.*) *What Christ was to be to different people*:—I. What this Child was to be to His enemies—an object of opposition and an occasion of ruin. II. What He was to be to His mother—a cause of acute suffering (by sympathy). III. What He was to be to His people—the Author of their recovery or restoration. IV. What He was to be to all mankind—a test or touchstone of their moral and spiritual state. (*G. Brooks.*) *The prophecy of Simeon*:—While Joseph and the mother were still marvelling at the words spoken by the old man concerning Jesus, he turned to them, and with a solemn blessing first pronounced upon those who were privileged to have so near a place on earth to the Saviour of mankind, spoke these words to His mother only, "Behold this Child," &c. He is placed, or laid, as a firmly-planted rock, with a twofold result and purpose—the fall of some, the rising of others. Two passages of the prophet Isaiah, the one from the eighth and the other from the twenty-eighth chapter, seem to be here brought together; as also in the ninth chapter of

the Epistle to the Romans, and in the second chapter of the First Epistle of St. Peter. God places this Child in Zion as a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. Whosoever will may build upon Him the house of his habitation, and rise into a holy temple, safe from the storms of time and the devastations of judgment. He is set for the rising of many. But if men will not thus use Him, as the foundation-stone of a safe and sure dwelling, then (according to the other passage) they will find Him a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. He will be like an obstructing rock in their path—even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient. God will not move Christ out of the way because men are perverse enough to stumble over Him. This Child is set, by a hand not of man, to be either for the rising (if they will have it so), or else for the fall (if they will have it so) of many in Israel. A solemn responsibility! We must either rise by Christ or fall—which we will. "And for a sign spoken against." A sign, in the Scripture use, denotes something or some one pointing to God, to God's being, to God's working. Christ is a sign. He came upon earth to point to God. But this sign, like every other, may be, and commonly is, gainsaid, or spoken against. For one who accepts it, for one who, because of Christ, sees and believes in and lives for God—many cavil, many reject, and many neglect the gospel. This in all times. But most of all when He was Himself amongst men. Then indeed gainsaying ran on into open violence. Such is the warning uttered in the ears of His mother, over the little Infant lying still and helpless in the arms of the aged saint. "Yea," he adds, "a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." She who is now rejoicing in the blessedness of being her Lord's mother, must learn that no one comes so near Christ without partaking in His sufferings. For us the prophecy of Simeon is recorded. Let us try and judge ourselves by it, that we be not judged of the Lord. To which purpose, in our case, is this child set? To which of two purposes? for our fall, or for our rising? 1. For our fall, if we let the word come to us unheeded, to be snatched away by the tempter; if we receive the word for a moment with joy, but take no heed to its watering by the Spirit's grace, to its growth by the sunshine of God's presence, by the dew of God's blessing; if we allow the word to become choked in us by cares and riches and pleasures of this life, so that it brings no fruit to perfection; if we continue in sin that grace may abound. This Child is set for the fall of many. And, oh, my friends, perhaps we have scarcely yet said of how many. It is not only the utterly hardened, not only the avowed unbeliever, not only the scoffer, the dishonest, or the impure, who stumble at the great stumbling-stone; it is quite as often the mere neglecter, the mere procrastinator, the merely undecided, the almost Christian, who shows what he is by his treatment of the Saviour and the great salvation. Not to be with Christ is, He says it Himself, to be (in His judgment) against Him. 2. Let us listen, in this day of opportunity and of blessing, to the alternative here set before us. This Child is set for the rising of many. What is this "rising"? and in whom is it verified? It is a rising out of darkness, out of the low, misty valley of sense and worldliness, into the clear light and pure knowledge of Him whom truly to know is eternal life. It is a rising out of misery and sin. "Set for the rising of many," the text says. Who, then, are these? They are those who feel their need of Christ. And which of us has not cause to do so? (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Man saved or destroyed by the truth:—Every man who has heard the word of salvation has some kind of connection with Christ. Christ is offered to each of us, in good faith on God's part, as a means of salvation, a foundation on which we may build. A man is free to accept or reject that offer. If he reject it, he has not thereby cut himself off from all contact and connection with that rejected Saviour, but he still sustains a relation to Him; and the message that he has refused to believe is exercising an influence upon his character and his destiny. The smallest particle of light falling on the sensitive plate produces a chemical change that can never be undone again, and the light of Christ's love once brought to the knowledge and presented for the acceptance of a soul, stamps on it an ineffaceable sign of its having been there. The gospel once heard is always the gospel which has been heard. Nothing can alter that. Once heard, it is henceforward a perpetual element in the whole condition, character, and destiny of the hearer. Christ does something to every one of us. His gospel will tell upon you. It is telling upon you. If you disbelieve it, it is not the same as if you had never heard it. Never is the box of ointment opened without some savour from it abiding in every nostril to which its odour has been wafted. Only the alternative, the awful "either, or," is open for each—the

"savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The dual aspect of Christ's advent*:—St Paul experienced, in his own person, the double effect of the advent of Christ into the world set forth in Simeon's language—first, the repulsion which made him so bitter a persecutor, and next the attraction which made him so glorious an apostle. And of this double experience Augustine was a second great example. There are many in our modern world who are thinking and speaking and living in opposition to the eternal Christ. It may be, as in the case of Paul, in the case of Augustine, in their earlier days they have, from whatever cause, taken a fright at religion; they have been repelled by some caricature of it, or some inconsistency on the part of its professors, or by taking only one aspect of its doctrines and claims into consideration, or by a sense of their present inability to comply with its demand upon the conscience and upon the heart; but it is a happiness to think that Christ is still there in the firmament of the heavens, in the midst of the Church, among the golden candlesticks, set not merely for the fall, but for the rising again of many a soul in Israel. It is to be hoped that brighter days await those wanderers, many of whom are most assuredly children of the kingdom who have lost their way, but will not lose it for ever. A nearer sight, a constraining sense of the Divine Redeemer's claims, will come when men see that He can, and does, give by His Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, to those who ask Him. When they take into account the works which He did of old, the words which He spake, the impression which He made when He was upon the earth; when they see the society which He founded, the creed which radiates from and centres in His person, and which is more widely accepted now, eighteen centuries after His death, than ever before, they may reconsider their prejudices; they may say less than they mean when they admit that there is something to be said for Christianity after all; they may rise from the tomb into which they had fallen—the tomb of doubt, the tomb of care, the tomb of evil living—into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Christ set for our fall and upraising*:—How is He set for our fall? That seems very strange. It is not God's purpose that the revelation of good produces fall. We must seek any explanation rather than one which shakes the central pillar of the universe, and turns God into a Master of evil. No, the real explanation lies in ourselves, in what we know and see men do of their own will. Good and evil lie before men, and they choose evil. There is a state of heart which naturally turns away from or hates the life of Christ and the spirit of its work. There is no kinship between Him and it. When His goodness is flashed upon such men, it sends them into violent hatred of it. He is set for their fall. But it is their own deeds that have brought them to that condition—not God's will. This is the condemnation, that men loved darkness rather than light. Why? Because their deeds were evil. Plainly, then, if we wish to rise into a new life and a higher one when the revelation of goodness is made to us, if we wish Christ to be set for our rising, the first thing to do is to love light; and in order to love it, to make our deeds good. Never mind having high ideals, until you have got your daily actions and thoughts right. It is a simple promise, but it is eternally true and sure: "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." We must be akin to Christ before we can receive Christ. To such, when He comes home to the heart, when we feel Him rushing on us, He comes in resurrection-power, set for our rising. And we rise, shaking off our sins, our dark thoughts, the burden of our sorrow, the besetting of self, the curse of indifference, impatience, and sloth into a new life. It is like the unbinding of the earth in spring. Thus is Christ set for our rise and fall. It is a solemn thing to watch a man when that testing comes to him. The hour strikes when he is called on to choose between two ways of acting, and he knows God is in one and the devil in the other. What is this? It is Christ set before him for his rise or fall; Christ come to reveal his inward thoughts, his inward strength or weakness. It is a judgment-hour; and years of evil fall, or of righteous growth rest upon the hour. And still more grave is it when Christ is set before a nation for its fall or rising again. All great ideas are set for the rise and falling of men, for life and for death. Of this law the strongest instance in history is that which accompanied the coming of Christ. His ideas made the world into two camps. Nor has the power of Christ's spiritual thoughts ceased to do this kind of work. Through the solitary contest in each man's soul, and his own choice of good or evil; through the contest in every community, in every nation, in the whole world, men and nations rise and fall, and the silent separation ever going on accumulates the materials for the last great judgment when this dispensation of time is over and another shall begin. That

day is not what has been pictured in poetry. It will be the magnificent indications of God's ways to men; the clear, unmistakable revelation of the holiness and justice and truth of God. Men shall see then. The time of doubt and casuistry and shadow will be over; all thoughts shall be revealed, and we shall know ourselves and know God. Once more Christ will be openly set for the rise and fall of men. By the revelation of His holiness alone the good shall be irresistibly attracted; the evil, till they find out their evil, irresistibly repelled. There will be no caprice. In accordance with inevitable law, in accordance with the voice in men's own hearts, will the judgment-sentence of the Son of Man be given. (*Stopford A. Brooke.*) *By their treatment of Christ Himself men will show what they are*:—The veil will be stripped off from them—such is the figure—by their own language, and their own conduct towards Christ. By their estimate of His character, by their appreciation or disparagement of His holy life, and mighty works and Divine doctrine—by their acceptance or rejection of Him whose appeal was ever to the conscience of man, as in the sight of a heart-searching God—men will disclose their true disposition; will show whether they love the world, whether they echo its lying voice, whether they desire darkness lest their deeds should be reproved, or whether, on the other hand, they are brave to see, and bold to confess the truth, whether they have an ear to hear the voice of God, and a will to follow Him whithersoever He goeth. But, most of all, as the end draws nigh, and the life of holiness is closing in the death of martyrdom. Then, even more than in earlier days, were the feelings of men tested, the thoughts of hearts revealed, by their dealing with the Suffering and the Crucified. The high priests plot and blaspheme, Pilate vacillates and gives way, the soldiers part among them the garments, the people stand beholding, Judas despairs, Peter repents, Joseph of Arimathæa becomes courageous, Nicodemus comes by day, the centurion confesses, one thief blasphemes, the other prays, men faint and flee, women out of weakness are made strong, a sword pierces the heart of the mother, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Even thus has it been in all time. For all time the words were uttered; it is by their treatment of Jesus, in Himself and in His people, in His word, in His church, in His sacraments, in His Spirit, that men show decisively before God, before one another, before themselves (if they will behold it) what manner of spirit they are of. (*Dean Vaughan.*) Before these words were spoken Mary was full of happiness. She had come into the Temple trembling with the deep pleasure of young motherhood, her soul filled full of natural piety, her heart leaping with joy. And when, moved still more by the old religious rite, she heard the hymn of Simeon over her boy, all her joy rose to spring-tide in her. Her face glowed. Joy and triumph filled her soul. Simeon saw this lightning on her face, saw her mien transfigured, and with the wisdom which has outlived weakness but not sympathy, turned and touched her joy with the warning of his prophecy. "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul." It was cruel, we think; it was pitiful to dash her young delight with cold. That is our first thought, and it might be a true one, had the sorrow she was to suffer been ordinary sorrow. But it was so dreadful a pain that she needed to prepare herself, needed the warning. Her joy was too great at this moment to be destroyed by the words; it was only chastened by a shade of impending sorrow, so that when the pain came it was not so great a shock. Nor did the shade make the joy really less. Joy was only lodged deeper in the heart, made more intense—a secret, silent possession: nay, the very dread of its loss made her handling of it tenderer, and her love of it greater. By both, by joy and by the shadow of sorrow, she was exalted, raised from the girl to the thoughtful woman who kept things in her heart and pondered them. Soon Simeon's prophecy was fulfilled. She saw her Son go forth from the quiet of the village with high hopes, and at His first return to His home the people tried to kill Him. For a time things seemed bright, but as she followed His ministry with the passionate love which motherhood has for a son who claims also by his character deep reverence, she saw Him despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, hated and driven to death. Day by day the sword pierced her soul; day by day its sharp edge was whetted by love and fruitless indignation. Can we imagine how that must have worn life away? And then the end, the hour by the cross when she knelt apart, silent to the last, seeing Him die so cruelly—the mother's heart pierced in twain. No wonder she died early. No wonder Christendom has sung to her, painted and graven her, as the Mother of Sorrows. We, looking at her life and her Son's, know of a truth that out of suffering nobly borne for love of man, good comes to all. Involved in our pain, we know nothing but that we suffer. Yet the history of Mary's sorrow is the history of all

sorrow. Good flows from it to the whole, and when we see that good we shall rejoice that we have suffered. No sword pierces the human heart, but the blood that streams from it heals the nations. (*Stopford A. Brooke.*) *On the advantages of affliction:*—To the prophecies which Simeon addresses to Mary concerning her Divine Son, he adds one relative to herself. The very moment after filling her heart with joy by announcing the future glory of Jesus, he announces also the many sufferings she must endure. Such is the ordinary conduct of Providence, towards the just and elect. He chequers prosperity with reverses, so that they may be induced to transfer still more and more their affections to things above, and to elevate their hearts to those mansions where alone true joy is to be found. I. THERE IS NO REAL CAUSE WHY BELIEVERS SHOULD FAINT UNDER THE CHASTISEMENTS OF THEIR HEAVENLY FATHER. 1. God's corrections are tokens of His love, and the means which He often uses for bringing His children into glory. Amos iii. 2; Heb. xii. 5–7. Prosperity is not the field where virtue flourishes; the soil is too rich; a luxuriance of baleful weeds chokes the good plants and makes them unfruitful. Adam's fall was in paradise. Noah's abundance proved a snare and temptation to him. David, in the midst of happiness, became an adulterer and a murderer. Solomon, in the midst of His opulence, apostatised from his God. Such has been the opinion of some of the wisest men concerning an uninterrupted course of prosperity, that they have even shunned the company, and broken off all connection with those who enjoyed it. It is written of St. Ambrose, that being upon a journey, and coming to an inn, he heard the landlord boast, that through his whole life he had never known what it was to be under trouble or affliction; upon which, that father would not so much as lodge for a night in his house, but foretold a sudden destruction to him and his, which soon after came to pass. Thus the children of God, instead of repining, or sinking under pressure of affliction, ought to thank their heavenly Father for it, and esteem it one of the most precious blessings He bestows on them. 2. The ways of God are frequently dark and obscure; and we may not for a long time perceive the cause of our affliction. 3. It is common for us to place our affections on trifles, whilst we despise things of the greatest value. So long as things go well with us in this world, we look no further. Then God, in order to wean us from these snares, embitters them to us; and in proportion as our love of this earth diminishes, our desire of heaven will increase. II. ADVICE TO THOSE WHO ARE UNDER THE CHASTENING AND CORRECTING HAND OF GOD. 1. Use every possible means to acquire just notions, worthy and becoming sentiments, of the Omnipotent Creator and supreme Governor of the world. Consider Him as merciful as well as just; of infinite goodness, as well as incomprehensible wisdom and power; as One who hates nothing that He has made, and whose kindness to His children is unlimited. 2. Make as speedy and strict an inquiry as possible into your present condition, and try to find out what are the causes and motives of the Lord's thus dealing with you; and at the same time consider what improvements you ought to make of His dispensations. Were you to meet with no trials, where would be your fortitude? If no temptations, where would be your virtue? If no afflictions, where your resignation? If no disappointments in your worldly pleasures, what would become of your attention to heavenly realities? (*B. Murphy.*)

Vers. 36–38. **And there was one Anna, a prophetess.**—*First female testimony to Christ:*—1. Excited by long expectations. 2. Based on personal sight. 3. Given with full candour. 4. Sealed by holy walk. 5. Crowned by a happy old age. (*Van Doren.*) *Anna an example to the aged:*—Let me recommend to all persons advanced in life her spirit of holy abstraction—an abstraction, not from duty, but from the sins, and cares, and vanities of the world. It is difficult to conceive a more unbecoming, or more pitiable object, than a person, whether male or female, far advanced in years, but still engrossed with the trifles of time. It will not be supposed that it is meant to say that aged believers should not be truly happy and cheerful; but very different is the joy of God from the gaiety of the world; very different is the rational and devout placidity from the unreflecting and ill-timed mirth. The vain attempt to go on as formerly, in defiance of the ravages of time, and the failing of nature; the affectation of the dress, manners, and enjoyments of youth, in the midst of the infirmities of age; the haunt of giddy amusement resorted to with feeble and tottering steps; the wreathy garland on the withered brow; the world still predominant at threescore and ten, or fourscore; the heart barricaded against the admission of serious thoughts, and full of the things of sense, when a very short space of time must shut the scene, and dispel every dream, and fix the destiny for ever;—alas!

nias! let who will admire this and call it pleasant, every wise man must feel disposed to exclaim, How incongruous, how absurd, how melancholy, how sinful! But an aged Christian, justly estimating the circumstances in which he is placed, contented, thankful, grave, pious, and consistent—how becoming, how engaging, and how venerable! A very little reflection, too, must suffice to show the impropriety of the aged spending the small remainder of their time in unprofitable amusements, and also the impropriety of others encouraging them to do so. If it be so that some who are far advanced into the vale of tears, spend some hours of almost every lawful day in any such manner as merely kills the time, it is truly to be much lamented. If indeed their mind be in such a state of dotage as to unfit them for anything useful, there may be some excuse for the habit; but it must be criminal and very hurtful, as long as they are in possession of ability to distinguish right from wrong, and to make any preparation for the unseen world on which they are verging. Far other employments ought to engage them. It was not thus that aged Anna sought her amusement and solace. Let the aged get interested, deeply interested, about the things of God, and they will not then stand in need of any expedients which are, to say the least, of doubtful propriety. Let them, like Anna, as far as strength permits, regularly and devoutly frequent the temple of God. Let them be much in religious exercises at home. Let them speak to others on the subject of religion. Let their lips, which must soon be closed, speak for Christ while they can. Advices from persons of their experience may be well taken, when those from persons of less standing may be despised. Let them study in all things to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, that their hoary heads may be crowns of glory, being found in the way of righteousness. Thus, that God who hath taught, guided, and blessed them from their youth, will not forsake them when they are old; they shall safely and happily come to their grave in their full age, like a shock of corn in its season. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *Piety in the aged*:—I. PIETY IN THE AGED CONFIRMS AND ILLUSTRATES THE PROMISE WHICH GOD HAS MADE OF LONG LIFE TO THOSE WHO FEAR HIS NAME. II. PIETY IN THE AGED CROWNS THOSE WHO POSSESS IT WITH ESPECIAL HONOUR. III. PIETY IN THE AGED COMMENDS RELIGION TO OTHERS. IV. PIETY IN THE AGED FURNISHES A BEAUTIFUL ILLUSTRATION OF THE MATURITY AND RIPENESS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. Concluding inferences: 1. We should imitate the pious aged. 2. How thankful should the children of pious and aged parents be. 3. The departure of aged Christians from our midst reminds us who remain that the ranks before us are thinning out, and that we are pressing up to the forefront of the line. We should see to it, then, that we have their piety, and can honour their place. (*Preachers' Treasury.*) *The prophetess Anna*:—A very beautiful completion of a very beautiful picture. Simeon standing there alone as the representative of humanity is isolated; is there nowhere a companion who may share the riches of this new joy? The other side of human nature must be represented, and that deficiency is made up by the presence of the venerable prophetess. There they stand as father and mother of the whole race, giving hospitality and welcome to Him who came to save the world. They stood, as it were, at the front door of the world's house, and spake to the young King in the name of the captives He came to deliver. There are some womanly characteristics in this passage which should be noted. 1. Anna departed not from the Temple—persistent, faithful, constant, and thus a woman pre-eminently. 2. She served God with fastings and prayers night and day—self-denial, profound devotion, continual watching. 3. Where Simeon prayed, Anna gave thanks. It would seem as if there was just the faintest touch of self-consideration in the prayer of Simeon, as he wished to be gone from scenes that wearied him; but the prophetess, eighty and four years old, constant through all changes, hopeful through all fears, was willing to linger longer, for she spoke nothing of her own release, but thanked God for His mercy, and comforted many that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Blessed are they who can sing in their old age, and turn all their own experience into comfort for those who mourn. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The story of a lonely woman's work*:—Our text presents us with the picture of a lonely woman, old, and a widow. Could a less attractive subject be chosen? There is something interesting in a young widow; but who cares to look at an old one, whose charms have long since faded, whose eyes are dim, whose hair is white, whose face is wrinkled, and whose hands are tremulous? But there is a beauty that does not depend upon youth, a loveliness that wears well, and cannot be washed out even by tears, a charm that comes in answer to the prayer, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." Of this beauty Anna, the prophetess, had a full share; and the story of her

life, briefly as it is told, is not devoid of interest. Anna, "the gracious," as her name signifies, was the daughter of Phanuel, evidently a man who lived as one who saw the face of God. While still very young the maiden was wedded, and for seven happy years youth and love filled her heart with gladness. But at the end of that time the shadow of death passed over the Jewish home and hid the light, and stilled the song, and filled the house with mourning. What was she to do, that young widow with her life before her? She had surely some excuse for joining that innumerable company of disappointed women who talk of blighted lives, and are themselves a blight upon everything that comes near them. But she let "the useful trouble" of her life soften and sanctify her. She put her trust in the God of Israel, and received with meekness the chastening of His hand. She took herself and her sorrow to the Temple. And there a new longing and a new love took possession of her; for were they not all looking for the Messiah, and might not the time of His coming be near? She would consecrate herself to God and to His service in the Temple. Other women could not do it; the sweet clamour of the children, and the wishes of their husbands kept them at home; but she would have her pleasures too, and the joy of the Lord should be her strength. And so the young widow took her place, and day by day, and year by year, returned to it. The sun touched Olivet with golden beams and left it again in shadow more times than she could count. The fig trees blossomed and shed their fruit, the valleys drank up the early and the latter rain, the tender grapes became ripe and were gathered, the corn showed first the green blade, and then the full ears; the feasts came round with their joyous assemblings; and, year after year, Anna was in the Temple, neither wretched nor useless. God gave to her the gift of prophecy. She saw what some eyes could not see, and she had power to utter the Divine revelations which were made to her. Complacently and tranquilly she saw the years pass away until eighty-four had seamed her face, and bent her form. But He whom she had served with such fidelity and devotion had a wonderful joy in reserve for her yet. Coming into the Temple one day, as usual, she heard an unusual sound. Simeon, with tremulous voice, was singing that new song, which has been continued by the Church ever since. In his arms he held the Child Jesus; and, seeing Him, what could Anna do but take up the strain of thanksgiving, and pour out her soul in praise? And then she found that, after all, her work was not over. She had known what it was to wait long, and others were waiting still. She could not keep the good news to herself. She became the first evangelist of His advent in the city of her King, and "spake of Him to all them," &c. We are taught at least three things by the brief biography which Luke has written of Anna. 1. What is the best cure for loneliness?—Something to do, and the determination to do it. 2. What is woman's work in the Church, and who are the women to do it? More and more every year it is coming to be understood that there are departments which women can excellently fill. There are thousands of devoted women scattered about in different parts of our country who, in quiet places, and by womanly methods, are doing an immense amount of good. More Annas to spend their days in God's Temple, and speak a kindly word to those who are in darkness: women who have a ready hand to take up any duty which would not otherwise be done—these are the women that are needed. But it is lonely women especially who are called to Christ's work. 3. God will most richly reward the services of the faithful. No one knows exactly what the reward will be, for He delights to give us surprises of joy. (*Marianne Farningham.*) *Occupation of Anna:*—Anna was of the tribe of Asher, and therefore a Galilean. She was eighty-four years of age, and had thus lived through the long sad period of war, conquest, and oppression which had intensified, in every Jewish heart, the yearning for national deliverance by the promised Messiah. Her long life had been spent in pious acts and services. She had never married again a fact, mentioned by St. Luke, in accordance with the feeling of the day, to her honour, but had been, in the words of St. Paul, "a widow indeed," trusting in God, and continuing in supplications and prayers night and day. She might in truth be said to have lived in the Temple; having very likely come from Galilee to be near the holy place, and thus able to give herself up to religious exercises, on the spot, where, in the eyes of a Jew, they were most sacred. Such a woman must have been well known in a place like Jerusalem. Catching the burden of Simeon's words as she passed, she too, like him, forthwith thanks God that the promise of the Messiah is now, at last, fulfilled. There could have been few, however, to whom the glad tidings of such a Saviour were welcome, for, though the heart of the nation was burning with Messianic hopes of a political kind, we are

told that Anna was able to tell them to all in Jerusalem who looked for a redemption of a higher type. (*Dr. Geikie.*) *Beautiful old age*:—Sometimes the sun seems to hang for a half-hour in the horizon, only just to show how glorious it can be. The day is done; the fervour of the shining is over, and the sun hangs golden—nay, redder than gold—in the west, making everything look unspeakably beautiful, with the rich effulgence which it sheds on every side. So God seems to let some people, when their duty in this world is done, hang in the west, that men may look on them, and see how beautiful they are. There are some hanging in the west now. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Ver. 37. **Which departed not from the Temple.**—*Neglectors of public worship*:—I know that there are not a few who say that they can edify as well or better at home. Hence these eat their morsel alone. But, so far as I have ever known them, they are neither to be envied nor imitated. They have always been feeble, sickly, useless, spiritual dyspeptics; while as certainly all observation has shown me, and all experience has proved to me, that they who neglect the house of prayer, or come to it reluctantly and rarely, are invariably dull in their spiritual conceptions, cold in their affections, wavering in their convictions, and useless in Christian work, while they are easily led away by the force of temptation. (*J. Aldis.*) *Blessedness of public worship*:—On the other hand, quite as certainly all who through long years have been early and constant in their attendance on the means of grace, who have planned carefully and toiled hard that they might be so, who have brought to the exercises of religion an attentive mind and a living heart, have, so far as my observation has extended, been distinguished for the cheerful trustfulness of Christian hope, for the consistent devotedness of Christian life, for diligence and success in Christian work; while they have been to all their brotherhood an example, an inspiration, and a joy. (*Ibid.*) *Delight in being in God's house*:—A minister had noted among the most regular attendants at his church an aged woman. On all occasions she was in her place—always in time—always attentive. He sought her out and visited her, and great was his astonishment to find this poor woman so deaf as to be unable to hear a single word. By means of a slate he entered into conversation with her, and his first inquiry was, "Why, being too deaf to hear one word of the service, are you so regular in your attendance at the house of God?" "Oh, sir," she replied, with warm tears swelling up from her eyes, "it is my Father's house, and I love to be there. He meets me in His own sanctuary, and I can, in spirit, join in the prayer and praise, though the words of others may not reach me; and as Jesus speaks to my soul, I hear the whispers of His love, though my outer ears are dead to all the sounds of earth. I love to be in the assembly of God's people, because they are the people of God, the children of my Father, and and it is very pleasant to be in such good company, though I can no longer converse with them. There is now very little left that I can do for the cause and the kingdom of my Redeemer, besides trying to set a right example. My day for active effort is past, and all I can now do is to seek to influence others by the power of a humble and earnest life. Even this will soon be over, and while the opportunity remains I would improve it for my Master's glory. He did not in His last hour of deepest agony forget us poor sinners; and shall we weary of our lightest yoke, and throw it off before our last hour has come?" What a powerful reproof was this aged woman's example to those who, with faculties still unimpaired, and strength unabated by the infirmities of age, yet wilfully absent themselves from God's house! **Served God with fastings and prayers.** *Fastings and prayers*:—It has been said that her form of piety was Jewish rather than Christian; but must not St. Paul have had her in his eye when he speaks of the true type of the Christian widow as "trusting in God and continuing in supplications and prayers night and day"? (1 Tim. v. 5.) Her piety was certainly not of that stamp which finds most favour amongst us now—active, bustling, energetic, and so assumed to be the most useful; but have we not gone much too far in despising the contemplative, ascetic, prayerful life? Who knows what may not have been the use of Anna's fastings and prayers, in preparing hearts to receive the Lord? God, we doubt not, answered her many supplications in ways which could not be traced out, but which will assuredly be known at the last. Her life of fasting and devotion was evidently her calling of God, known and approved by Him. And may not, in this very day, the life of religion amongst ourselves be owing not only to sermons, and visitings, and meetings, but to the prayers of the few scattered handfuls of worshippers who here and there are constant at daily service? It has been rightly said, that "the abuses which have attended often on the

practice of a monastic life, should not render us insensible to the duty of spending large portions of our time in meditation, and prayer, and fasting." (*M. F. Sadler.*)

Vers. 39-52. **Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.**—*The life of Jesus:*—I. JESUS CHRIST IN HOME LIFE. "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." 1. We see Him settling down to the relationships of home. But Jesus Christ was perfectly content in the home circle. He did not complain of its narrowness and confinement. For He did not judge life by its magnitude, but by the principle which animates it; He did not judge life by its conspicuousness; but by the spirit which inspires it. The tiny speck on the lady-bird's wing is as round a circle as that of the world. The sphere which a tear makes is as mathematically perfect as that of yonder sun. It makes not the slightest difference in the real merit of a book whether it is printed in large or small type; in either case the meaning is precisely the same. Some people seriously object to the privacy of home—the type is too small to please their fancy; they must act their part on the public stage, in the corners of the streets, and in the synagogues—they dearly love a large type. But the Saviour spent thirty years in the privacy of home, and never once complained of its narrowness and obscurity. 2. We are further taught that He faithfully discharged the duties of home—the duties which devolved on Him as a son in the family. Each member of the family has its respective services to perform, and harmony always depends upon the right adjustment, the proper balancing, of distinct interests. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." He might have been wiser than they; but superior knowledge does not justify insubordination. 3. And the context shows that in all this He was doing His Father's work. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's work?" And if home life were not an integral department of that work, it would have been utterly impossible for Jesus Christ to have submitted to it. But home life is a Divine life, a type, possibly, of the inner life of the Godhead. The Bible represents God as a Father, it describes Him as having a family, it sets Him forth as having a home. Home life is a Divine life, and by serving it we do God's work. II. JESUS CHRIST IN SOCIAL LIFE. 1. Here we see Him settling down to the relationships of society, and that the most corrupt society in the whole world. Nazareth would have ranked among the choicest towns of Palestine; but its inhabitants were notorious far and near for their impiety, recklessness, and heathenism. "Every prospect pleases, and only man is vile." Strange that God should choose depraved Nazareth to be the dwelling-place of His Son for thirty years! We would have imagined that a select and secluded spot would have been chosen where He would have been kept from all contact with sin, and where He would have been partitioned off from other children, and thus secured against the contagion of evil. But that was not God's idea of holiness. Glass-house virtue He did not covet. For the dove to keep her wing pure and unsullied amid the free air of heaven is not so very difficult—indeed the difficulty is to soil it; but to keep it white and clean among the pots is quite another matter, and harder far to accomplish. From early infancy Jesus Christ had to face vice; from the outset He had to grapple with sin. His virtue must be sinewy, manly, tried, and triumphant. Earthly parents may here learn a very precious lesson: not to put too much confidence in glasshouse virtue—it generally withers on its first exposure to the rude winds of the world. Children may be ruined in one of two ways: either by being permitted to visit all kinds of wicked places and witness all manner of obscene spectacles without let or hindrance; or by being kept too strictly aloof from all society and guarded too narrowly against the approach of other children, for when the protection is withdrawn, as withdrawn it surely must be, and they are left to fight for themselves, they will almost necessarily succumb to the first assault of temptation. And conservatory children may be very pleasing to look at so long as they are under shelter; but the first storm will make a sad havoc among their branches. Let children learn from the first how to defend themselves against physical and moral foes alike. 2. We further learn that He discharged with the utmost fidelity the duties of society, the duties that devolved upon Him as a citizen of Nazareth. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth," and there, adds the evangelist very significantly, "He grew in favour with God and men." I confess to a strong liking for the phrase that "He grew in favour with men." He knew what it was to luxuriate in the golden opinions of His neighbours. And let none of you, young people, despise the favour of men; to please society is not sin-

gether an unworthy aim. Favour with God must precede favour with men. "He grew in favour with men." This supposes that He was studious of the little proprieties of every-day life. There are men who cling with indomitable tenacity to the fundamental verities; rather than relax their hold of them, they will go cheerfully to the stake to die. But they are culpably regardless of the little politenesses of social intercourse—they never grow in favour with men. They remind one of a rugged granite rock, firm, solid, and white under the meridian light; but no flower grows in its clefts, no snowdrop or foxglove, no primrose or daisy, softens the untarnished hardness. They are men of strong principles, but of ungracious disposition; they never grow in favour with men. 3. And in leading the life of a citizen the context shows He was doing the work of God. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" If there is a must in it, it is evident He cannot leave it; and that in going down to Nazareth He continued to be about it. The truth is, society is a Divine institution; and in serving it we do God's work. Jesus Christ lived in Nazareth to realize the Divine idea of a citizen, to reduce to actuality, to embody in a life, the thought as it existed in the Divine mind. Men had to see the perfect life acted out before their eyes. He was not of the world—not of it in its way of thinking, not of it in its way of feeling, not of it in its way of living; not of it, yet in it. And as He was, so are we—placed in the midst of society, and yet of a Divine citizenship. The highest ideal of Christian life is city life. "Ye are a city set on a hill." The life of innocent humanity was a garden or rural life. "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and put man there." It was a free, simple, country life. "But ye are come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," and your life henceforth must be city life. III. JESUS CHRIST IN INDUSTRIAL LIFE. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth." 1. By thus entering into industrial life He shows that work may be made sacred. 2. He further shows that work is not incompatible with the highest religious attainments. 3. By following a trade, He further showed that the highest purpose of work is not fortune but discipline. I suppose we cannot all get on in this world of ours, and my text reminds us of another who worked very hard, who followed His trade diligently, but did not get on very well except towards Gethsemane, Calvary, and the grave. He can sympathize with you; He stands by your side, ready to share your burden; He stoops, He bends; may you have the grace to roll it on His shoulders! What is Christianity? God bending beneath and bearing aloft the burden of the world. If work does not better your earthly condition, it will improve your heart; if it does not add to your fortune, it will considerably augment your manhood; if it will not bring you affluence in this life, it will help to qualify you for a more abundant entrance on the rich, profound life on yonder side the grave. IV. JESUS CHRIST IN HIS RELIGIOUS OR TEMPLE LIFE. 1. The context shows us that He was in His Father's house, and that whilst there the blessed and glorious truth of His Sonship dawned upon Him. All rich natures, all deep and fertile natures, feel an attraction towards God's temple. There is so much mystery appealing powerfully to the worshipful faculty, so much solemn grandeur subduing the heart and carrying it captive, such sublimity and loftiness in the service of the temple, though outwardly it be but a barn, that it gives ample scope for the imagination. Hence all rich, poetical natures find their proper food and their appropriate atmosphere in the service of God's house. 2. He was in the Temple, asking and answering questions. His mind thirsted for knowledge. But as Christ was free from sin, His insight was quicker, clearer, deeper than ours. An intellect twelve years old free from sin will astonish intellects fifty years old tainted by the disease. The water-lily, growing in the midst of water, opens its leaves, expands its petals, at the first pattering of the shower, whilst other flowers in the same neighbourhood are quite insensible to the descent of the raindrops. Why? Because reared in water, it has quicker sympathy with rain. And so with the Lily of our Humanity: His soul, planted, as it were, in the midst of the ocean of omniscience, rejoiced in knowledge with a quicker and more refined sympathy than has ever been witnessed before or since in the history of our race. 3. Observe, further, His total absorption in His Father's work. "Wist y enot that I must be about My Father's business?" Literally, "in My Father's business." Not about it, but in it. (*J. C. Jones.*) *The training of Jesus Christ:*—Observe, then, just where the real difficulty lies: it lies not in the fact of growth; it lies in the fact of incarnation, or the Divine birth itself. For the distance between the Babe of Bethlehem and the Man of Nazareth is infinitely less than the distance between man and God. But Christ's growth, be it carefully observed, implies no sort of imperfection. It is no sign of imperfection in a peach-

tree that it does not bear peaches in spring. And this growth does not seem to have been marked by anything striking. Had it been, the presumption is that his biographers would at least have hinted it. The very silence here of the evangelists is thrilling, for it brings the Divine Man within the range of our human sympathies and affections, thoroughly identifying Him with our average humanity. He grew up, as grows His own kingdom, without observation. "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house, about My Father's business?" All these years the heavenly Plant has been unfolding, and now appears the first blossom. 1. There was the school of home. I do not refer here to the lessons consciously taught by parents so much as to the lessons unconsciously taught by the home institution itself. We are trained for the celestial home in the school of the terrestrial, learning the heavenly sonhood in the exercise of an earthly, the universal brotherhood in the sphere of a personal. Home—that is to say, true home—is the best soil for the germination and growth of large, solid, abiding character. Christ's stay of thirty years beneath His mother's roof is an eternal glorification of the home institution. 2. There was the school of subordination. Loyalty is the mother of royalty. 3. There was the school of toil. There is no reason for supposing that Joseph and Mary were especially poor, and therefore that Jesus was brought up in absolute poverty. Ah, how this educates Him for sympathy with what must ever be the preponderating class of humanity, the working-class. 4. There was the school of society. No desert education was His, like that of His forerunner, John the Baptizer. He must feel the quickening, broadening, rounding power of society. 5. There was the school of isolation. What though He was brought up in society? Society comprehended Him not. Even His brothers, sons of His own mother, did not believe on Him. For the foundations of character are laid in moral solitude. Man's grandest victories are, and ever must be, won single-handed. 6. There was the school of the synagogue. Every day in the week, and three times every Saturday or the Jewish Sabbath, Jesus went to the synagogue, where He saw a model of the ark of the covenant, and the scrolls of the sacred books, and joined in the prescribed prayers, and listened to the reading of the two lessons—the one from the law, the other from the prophets. 7. There was the school of providence. Daily providence was His daily teacher. 8. There was the school of nature. 9. There was the school of routine. Doubtless it was the same unbroken, monotonous routine of family and workshop and synagogue, week after week, month after month, year after year. The frequent and tedious drill is the best preparation for the battle pæan. 10. There was the school of delay. During those long thirty years Jesus doubtless often yearned to enter at once upon His glorious mission as the Christ of God and the Saviour of men. Not that enterprise and courage and energy are not praiseworthy. They are most noble traits. But there is such a thing as prematurity, and prematurity is apt to mean failure. This lesson of patience is especially needed in our times and land. It is an age of swift things, morally as well as physically. Young man, patiently abide your time. There is no heroism like the heroism of patience, no majesty like the majesty of self-continence. 11. There was the school of temptation. And temptation is not only essential to character-disclosing, temptation is also essential to character-building. 12. There was the school of experience. For there is no education like the education of personal experience. Nothing can take the place of it: neither wealth, nor genius, nor splendid opportunities, nor indomitable will. And as in nature, so in morals: the slower the crystallization, the more perfect and abiding. And all this was as true for the Christ as it is for you and me. Such is the story of the home-life of the Divine Man. As that Greater than Solomon was rearing that temple nobler than Moriah's, no stroke of hammer, or axe, or any tool of iron was heard.

> "No workman's steel, no ponderous axes rung,
> Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung."

The great lesson, then, of the home-life at Nazareth is this: Every-day life our training-school for heaven. (*G. D. Boardman.*) *First Sunday after Epiphany*:—But let us now direct our attention more particularly to the youthful Saviour's visit to the Temple, as narrated in this day's Gospel. 1. It appears from this record, that his parents were punctual and regular in their attendance upon the appointed services of religion. They were poor. They also lived very far away. By actual experiment, I found it two days and a half hard riding, upon active horses, from

Nazareth to Jerusalem. But they found no excuse in these things for failing to be present in the holy city when the feast of the Passover came round. 2. It appears that, as soon as Jesus had reached His twelfth year, these pious parents took Him with them on their annual visit to the sacred city and Temple. At any rate, they took Him with them, an example which it would be well for all parents to note and follow. 3. It appears that this visit of the young Saviour to the holy city and Temple was the means of an enlarged and astonishing spiritual awakening to Him. Mind left to itself stagnates and fails of proper fruitfulness. The quickening spark needs to be applied to kindle it into living flame and power. New subjects were thrown in upon His human intellect. A new world opened to His soul and seized upon His heart, already in holy and peaceful harmony with the deepest underlying Spirit of all. It was not a conversion, for He needed no converting. It was not the implantation of the new life; for He never was dead to holy things. But it was the opening of His human faculties, the quickening of their activities, to grasp the objects which were to fill and enlist His powers, which marked the commencement of that higher consciousness and ampler realization of the truth, in meek and zealous obedience to which He from that time forward went forth, and which was the active principle of all His subsequent life and deeds as the Redeemer of the world. Brethren, will any one look these facts in the face and say, that there is no use for children to come to the temple of God! I know of a boy, who, at fourteen years of age, walked a series of miles from his home, to a strange place, to see a synodical convention. He started out in the morning, and returned at night, without partaking of a meal during his absence, and repeated the same on the day following. And from what he saw and heard during those two days, there was formed in his heart the purpose to devote himself to the gospel ministry. That purpose he also carried into effect, against the dissuasion of his bishop, the disapprobation of his father, and all the disadvantages of the absence of pecuniary resources. That contact with the assembled ministers of the Church, brought about by no particular object save to gratify a general desire for information, and without having spoken a word to any of them, touched a cord, and awoke a feeling, which gave shape and direction to his whole after life. And that boy is your preacher to-day! Nor can you know what living seeds of transforming power, and fruitfulness in virtue and grace, may be planted by a single visit of a youth to the temple of God! See to it, then, that your children are early brought into connection with all the ministrations of the sanctuary. 4. It also appears from this record, that even the pious Joseph and Mary expected much less from this carrying of the youthful Jesus to the temple, than actually occurred. Ah yes, there is often more going on in the hearts of children than their parents, who know them best, suppose or believe. The purest waters are those that run deepest under ground, before they show themselves; and there may be much more in our children, and in the very line of our most anxious desires, than we would for a moment think of ascribing to them. 5. Finally, it appears from this record, what that was which from earliest youth most powerfully absorbed Christ's feelings and attention, and what in His view is the proper thing supremely to enlist and engage the young. "How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" He had relations in heaven paramount to all relations of kindred and blood on earth. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *The early years of Christ:*—Conceiving of Him then, as in a transition from childhood to manhood, as in a process of training for the highest of works, we ask what lessons are to be gathered from His silent years? I. We shall conclude that GOD QUALIFIED HIS SON, BORN OF A WOMAN, MADE UNDER THE LAW, FOR HIS FUTURE OFFICE, BY THE TRAINING OF THE FAMILY STATE. "And was subject to His parents." The family state, we cannot doubt, was most happily devised, according to the original plan of uncorrupt human nature, not only for the preservation and physical welfare of the child, but also for the development of all the higher qualities of man. It is the beginning and the condition of society. He who passes out of its healthy training into the larger circle of fellow-citizens or fellow-men, has a foundation already laid for all social sympathies, for the conception of human brotherhood, for the exercise of good will in every form. It is also the condition of, and the preparation for, all law. The dependent being, trained up in it to listen to higher authority and wisdom, to give up self-will and practice self-control, becomes fitted for the loyal life of the citizen, and for obedience to God. Thus it was meant, according to the primæval plan, that the infant mind should be disciplined in the family for a life of law and of love—law which should lead the soul up to the great central Lawgiver of the universe, and, love, which should

embrace the brotherhood of souls, and God, the Father of all. His soul was fitted for its work by entering into the great relations of humanity. II. JESUS PASSED THROUGH THE DISCIPLINE OF A LIFE OF HUMBLE INDUSTRY. "Is not this the carpenter?" Here we have two things to notice, the discipline of a life of industry upon the Son of Man, and the influence of the lowly position which He thus assumed among His brethren of mankind. We must conceive, then, that during these years of labour as a carpenter, the Son of Man had time, even amid His work, for noble and holy thoughts. Nor ought we to lay out of account the patience which sedulous manual labour would bring along with it. I may add, that the helpfulness of our Lord in His calling tended to strengthen the principle of helpfulness to mankind, or of unwearied benevolence. But the patient helpfulness of Jesus, as He did His work well in and for the family, inured His holy mind to the hard toils of that glorious life of love, in which we learn, on one occasion, that He had not time so much as to eat bread, and gave Himself up to works of mercy so earnestly that His friends thought Him mad. What other training could have equally encouraged His unwearied devotion to the hard, slow work of doing good? But the obscurity of the sphere in which Jesus moved, aided the graces of His character, such as meekness and lowliness, and also enlarged His power of usefulness. Here we notice only the last particular, leaving the others for future remark. It is often thought to add to a man's power among men, if he is born in a high place, and commands the respect of mankind as well by his ancestry and station, as by what he is. But the power to act upon men, so far as it depends on feeling with them, and being felt with by them, is generally abridged by position above the major part of mankind. Hence it is, that those monarchs who have risen from the people can know them better, and come closer to their admiration and their hearts, than such as have inherited the throne. Hence, too, those reformers are likely to be most successful, who add to other advantages that of a lively interest in and comprehension of the great mass of men, which their birth and early education has encouraged. The son of the miner, at Eisleben, with his homely, earnest peasant-soul, and his manly courage, was fitter to attract and mingle with his countrymen, was better able, when his mind had become enlarged by study, to spread the Protestant Reformation, than if he had been the son of an Emperor of Germany, or one of the princes of the empire. Such a personage, if he could have understood and preached the gospel, would have found that a gulf was fixed between him and his people. III. THE SILENT YEARS AT NAZARETH ENABLED HIM TO MEDITATE LONG AND DEEPLY ON THE SCRIPTURES. A striking characteristic of our Lord, from the first moment of His public ministry onward, is His reverence for and familiarity with the Scriptures. Here, then, in this sequestered village, away from the emptiness of Pharisaical learning, and from Sadducean scepticism, He was reared on the Divine Word in its simplicity, was fortified by it against temptation, studied its promises of a coming Messiah, and became ready to apply it to the varying circumstances of practical life. He trained mankind through the Jews; He made His Son a Jew that He might build up on the old foundation the new truths of a religion for the world; and in order that Jesus Himself might be trained up for this work He chose this simple method of placing Him alone with the ancient Scriptures, away from human teachers and comments, that the pure truth of God might fill His mind. IV. The life of retirement which Jesus led at Nazareth WAS FITTED TO NOURISH SOME OF THOSE MEEK AND UNPRETENDING GRACES OF CHARACTER WHICH SHONE BEYOND COMPARISON IN HIM. I name first patience, or willingness to wait until the right time was come. The same discipline which perfected the patience, perfected also the calmness of Jesus. His obedience grew, through His years of waiting, deeper and heavenlier became His calmness. This discipline of His still years gave strength also to His retiring spirit, or modesty. I only add, that the retirement of Nazareth was fitted to nourish simplicity of feeling and character. It has been made a definition of a wise and pure life to live according to nature. The simplicity and honesty of the man Christ Jesus were, no doubt, nourished and perfected in a simple, godly family, in a simple village, away from much of the gloss and falsehood which abounded in Judea. We might conceive of Divine wisdom taking just the opposite method of calling it forth, that of placing Jesus in close neighbourhood to formal and false Pharisees, so that His education should consist in loathing the characters which He should see around Him. That strength would come from such a discipline we cannot doubt; and yet the other plan, which was in fact chosen, seems the best for a harmonious perfection of the whole character, and especially for the predominance of the gentler virtues. (*T. D. Woolsey, D.D.*)

The personality of Jesus:—The Man in germ, the personality in the making, we

see but once, yet the once is almost enough. The Child has come with His parents to Jerusalem. The city, the solemnities, the Temple, the priests, the sacrifices, the people, have stirred multitudinous new thoughts in the Boy. He becomes for a moment forgetful of His kin, conscious of higher and Diviner relations, and seeks light and sympathy where they were most likely to be found—in the Temple and with the doctors. It is an eminently natural and truthful incident. The Ideal Child, wise in His innocent simplicity, seeks the society of simple but learned age, feels at home in it, wonders only, when sought and found, that it could be in His mother's mind other than it was in His own. The light that streams from the question, "Wist ye not that I must be among My Father's matters," in His house, in search of His truth, mindful of His purposes? illumines the Youth and makes Him foreshadow the Man. For He, who as Boy, was anxious to be absorbed in His Father and His Father's affairs, became as Man the conscious abode of God. Here, indeed, emerges the sublimest and most distinctive feature of His personality. In Him, as in no other, God lived; He lived as no other ever did in God. Their communion was a union which authorized the sayings, "I and the Father are one"; "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." His consciousness was full of God, was consciousness of God. (*Principal Fairbairn, D.D.*) *Glimpses of the Divine Childhood:*—This beautiful and only glimpse of the Boyhood of our Saviour is full of interest. It enables us to behold Jesus on this memorable occasion through the medium of others' feelings. We can often more vividly represent to ourselves a scene, and take in its meaning, when we are told what thoughts and feelings it stirred in the minds of actual spectators. By simple and natural touches the story before us fixes our thought upon Mary and others, but especially upon the mother, and the changing feelings of her heart during these few days. By the side of Mary, then, let us first approach, and study the behaviour of the Divine Child, so perplexing at the time to her, so charged with significance in the reflection of after-days, and now so full of light and holy beauty to all disciples of Jesus and students of His life. 1. The story opens with a powerful stroke of pathos. A child is lost! A mother's heart is thrown into agony. Several details left to be filled up by the imagination. Caravan had set out early in morning. A large group of relatives and friends of Joseph and Mary's house amidst the throng. Taken for granted that Jesus was among them until night began to fall, and it was time for Him to come to His parents' tent to rest. Nightfall made the discovery all the more terrible. Let us picture to ourselves the state of His mother's mind during those three weary days that followed—perhaps not to the Temple that Joseph and Mary first bent their steps. Narrative seems to hint that they were quite at a loss to imagine where the Child was. At length, however, in the course of their search, their steps are directed to the Temple. There were connected with the sacred edifice a number of halls or class-rooms, where the Rabbis met and instructed their scholars. Amongst these Rabbis there arose from time to time true and weighty moral teachers, who directed attention to something more important than the curious mystical speculations and interpretations which form so large a part of the Talmud. Of these the most famous was Hillel, whose memory was quite fresh, and whose influence was still great in the Temple schools. There is little doubt that our Lord recognized a true spirit in this eminent Rabbi; and it has been shown that there are striking points of resemblance between their teachings. To that school Jesus went, and taking His seat among the scholars, proceeded to put His questions, and to listen to the teacher's answers; for this was the customary mode of instruction in the Jewish schools; and a great part of the rabbinical books consists of the answers to such questions. 2. Here, then, a scene opens before us in the Temple school which is impressed upon us as a very remarkable one. We are invited to look upon it through the eyes of the bystanders, who, we are told, were filled with wonder and astonishment. But what was so astonishing? What was it that made this Child the focus of every gaze—that drew upon Him the profound attention of bearded sages, of venerable brows, that awakened the curiosity of young and old? Not, probably, the fact that a Boy of twelve was to be found in such a place and occupation; for at that age He would be regarded by the Jews as "a son of the law." It was the extraordinary intelligence of His remarks and replies, His "understanding," *i.e.*, His mental grasp, His insight into things. 3. Joseph and Mary coming in were likewise "amazed" at the scene. In their case the wonder seems more difficult of explanation; and it is instructive to ponder the fact for a moment. Is it not often so, that parents or relatives are blind to that which is most significant in their children? Joseph and Mary must have been aware of the great destiny

promised to Jesus; they could not possibly have forgotten all the Divine marks that were attached to His birth and infancy. And yet they were astonished when His destiny began to unfold itself before their eyes. Must we not all reproach ourselves with some such fault? Our eye rests so strongly on the outward, the circumstantial side of life that our interest is drawn away from the real and spiritual. 4. The contrast of the calmness of the Child with the astonishment of those around Him deepens our impression of the meaning of the scene. "Why did ye seek Me? Did ye not know that I must be about My Father's business?" or, "in My Father's house?" "Where should you have expected to find Me, but in this chosen and beloved spot?" This sense seems to us natural, suggestive, appropriate. If we take the phrase in the wider sense, a meaning is yielded only less suggestive. But either way a profound devotion to God and to His kingdom is expressed in the language of the Divine Child—an absorption in these high thoughts as all-commanding and supreme over ordinary relations and affections. His words were not understood, we are told, by those nearest to Him in earthly relation. There was in their idea of life no key to unlock the enigma of this mysterious Child. But the words were deeply treasured and pondered over in the mother's heart, till Divine Providence, gradually unclosing this bud of Heavenly growth grafted on an earthly stock, into a flower of immortal beauty, brought the long-hidden meaning of the scene to light. 5. Thus early, then, we behold our Saviour in His Divine and native relations to His Father, and to the kingdom of spirit; thus early we trace the signs of His indelible consecration to the service in which He was to spend His days and to shed His blood, and through which He was to rise to be spiritual and universal Lord. But what a completeness it gives to the picture, and how are we touched on the side of our human affections when we read that "Jesus went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." Supremacy of His relations to His heavenly Father did not mean the forgetting or ignoring of lower relations. 6. Turn a parting glance at the scene, and read it, no longer by the light of other's eyes, but by the light which the Holy Spirit has given us through the word of the gospel. Let us be thankful for the ministry of children. All that is simple and innocent, inquiring and truth-loving in them, should remind us of the Divine Child and of His ministry to our souls. When tempted to lose ourselves in the materialism of the age, or in the busy cares or pleasures of the present world, let us think of Him as, in the Temple, He seems with uplifted finger to be saying, "I was born to other things!" And so may grace be given us to follow Him, that we may be brought in the fellowship of the Spirit into childhood to God, and to dwell in the heavenly Temple of our Father, to go no more out for ever. *E. Johnson, M.A.*) *Nazareth*:—Travellers tell us that the spot where Jesus grew up is one of the most beautiful on the face of the earth. Nazareth is situated in a secluded, cup-like valley amid the mountains of Zebulon, just where they dip down into the plain of Esdraelon, with which it is connected by a steep and rocky path. Its white houses, with vines clinging to their walls, are embowered amidst gardens and groves of olive, fig, orange, and pomegranate trees. The fields are divided by hedges of cactus, and enamelled with innumerable flowers of every hue. Behind the village rises a hill five hundred feet in height, from whose summit there is seen one of the most wonderful views in the world—the mountains of Galilee, with snowy Hermon towering above them to the north; the ridge of Carmel, the coast of Tyre, and the sparkling waters of the Mediterranean to the west; a few miles to the east, the wooded, cone-like bulk of Tabor; and to the south the plain of Esdraelon, with the mountains of Ephraim beyond. The preaching of Jesus shows how deeply He had drunk into the essence of natural beauty and revelled in the changing aspects of the seasons. It was when wandering as a lad in these fields that He gathered the images of beauty which He poured out in His parables and addresses. It was on that hill that He acquired the habit of His after-life of retreating to the mountain-tops to spend the night in solitary prayer. The doctrines of His preaching were not thought out on the spur of the moment. They were poured out in a living stream when the occasion came, but the water had been gathering into the hidden well for many years before. In the fields and on the mountain-side He had thought them out during the years of happy and undisturbed meditation and prayer. (*J. Stalker, M.A.*)

Ver. 40. **And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit.** *Our Lord's early years upon earth*:—Notice a few things which are remarkable in our Lord's Childhood, and which are too often wanting in that of others. 1. His obedience to His earthly

parents. 2. A childhood of privacy and seclusion. He was kept in the background, not paraded by His parents as an instance of precocious excellence or intellect. He drank in the pure breezes of heaven, and was in secret. 3. A genuine thirst for improvement (ver. 46, &c.). How unlike that raging appetite for mere amusement which begins in our days so early, and has turned the very literature of the young into a jest and plaything. What we seek is something to make us laugh, something which may present to us the ludicrous side of everything, and turn away from us the real and the sobering. What Christ sought at the age of twelve years was knowledge, and He sought that knowledge in the courts of His Father's house. 4. A spirit of docility. He sought knowledge even from men little qualified, indeed, to impart it, but who yet occupied the position to which it belonged to teach. 5. Christ's childhood was stamped with a sense of duty, and elevated by a lofty aim. A sense of His relation to God, of the meaning and responsibility of life, of a work to be done on God's earth in which He was Himself to be a fellow-worker with His Father—these motives had already dawned upon Him at that young age, and gave an unwonted seriousness to a childhood in all else so natural. 6. Notice the testimony which Christ's childhood bears to God's patience in working out His purposes; to what we may call the gradual character of God's works. "In due time" is written upon all of them. 7. Our Lord's early life was the consecration, for all time, of what are regarded, by way of distinction, as the more secular and the humbler callings. (*S.P.C.K. Sermons.*) *The holy Child Jesus*:—Christ might have been made full-grown at once. Adam was, and our Lord is called "the last Adam," "the second man"; that is to say, Adam was a type or figure of Christ. One might have expected, therefore, that our Lord would be what Adam had been, a man sent into the world full-grown. Infancy, childhood, boyhood, are very humbling conditions. Why did Christ submit to them? 1. Our Lord's condescension is infinite, and therefore, in coming into the world, He desired to stoop as low as possible, in order to set us the more striking example of lowliness of mind. Therefore He preferred, for His entrance into the world, the condition of an unconscious babe, and of a child dependent upon its parents, to that of a full-grown and independent man. 2. Our Lord, out of His infinite compassion for us, earnestly desired to sympathize with men in all their trials, and in every condition in which they can be placed, in order that He might bless and comfort them by His sympathy. So He came in by the usual gate—infancy. 3. One can quite see this, that for a grown-up person never to have known childhood, a home, or a mother's care, would cut them off from all the most beautiful and tender associations of our nature. It makes a man tender, as no other thought can, to look back on his childhood and early home, on the strong interest which his parents used to take in him, and on the sacrifices which they were at all times ready to make for him. Now our Lord was to be infinitely tender, in order that He might attract the miserable and suffering to Himself; and He was to exhibit all the beauties and graces of which human nature is capable; and therefore it was that He willed to have a home of childhood, and to be dependent upon a mother's care, and to lisp His earliest prayers at a mother's knee, which is the way in which all of us first learn to pray. These experiences contributed to make His human soul tender. Concluding lessons: 1. Take to Him all your little troubles and trials in prayer, and assure yourselves that He is most ready to hear and help you. Why did He become a child, but to assure children of His sympathy with them? 2. Take Him for your example. Observe His love of God's house, His teachableness, His desire for instruction, His submission to His parents (while all the while He was their God), His growth in wisdom and in favour with God and man; and try to copy Him in these points. 3. Trust with all your heart in the goodness which He as a child exhibited, and which was perfect goodness, such as yours can never be. Only for the sake of that goodness of His will God forgive your faults. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *The growth of children*:—"The Child grew." Of course the Child grew. Every child grows. There is not a child in the world who is not older to-day than he was yesterday, and who, if he lives, will not be older to-morrow than he is to-day. And whatever needs to be done for a child while he is young as now ought to be done to-day. He will have outgrown the possibility—if not the need—of such doing for him when to-morrow is here. Childhood is quickly lost. It is not to be regained. Unless it is improved as it passes, it is unimproved for ever. A child grows by night and by day, whether he is cared for or neglected. Oh, how soon the child has outgrown the possibilities of training in the nursery, of a mother's training, of a father's training, of a teacher's training! And when he has outgrown

all these, who but God can reach him? If you would do your work for your child, you must do it now—or never. Have that in mind with your every breath; for with every breath your child is growing away from his plastic and impressible childhood. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *No abasement in growth:*—There is no abasement in the fact that Jesus grew as any other boy grows. The apple of June is perfect as a June apple, though it has not come to its maturity. The acorn is perfect as an acorn, just as the oak is perfect as an oak. Jesus was a perfect Boy, as He was a perfect Man. If Jesus was content to grow slowly, should not we? The mushroom may spring up in a night; it is many a year before the sturdy oak attains its full growth. (*Sunday School Times.*) *The source of Christ's growth:*—When one sees a river flowing deep and strong through a parched country, as the Ganges in India, he becomes desirous of knowing something about its source. He follows it up, and finds that it comes from the cold hills of the north, issuing it may be, in full flood from beneath a glacier. So the source of Jesus' growth in spirit and wisdom is here told—"The grace of God was upon Him." (*Ibid.*) *Youthful piety of Christ:*—There are three parts of our nature mentioned in the Bible—the body, the soul, the spirit. "The body" is what the animals have in common with us; it is the part of us in which we feel hunger, thirst, and weariness—the part which is fed by food and rested by sleep. "The soul" means the feelings and affections; it is the part of us which feels pity for distress, fear of danger, anger at an insult, and so forth. "The spirit" is that higher part of our nature, which makes us reasonable beings; it is by the action of our spirit that we think of God, set Him before us, pray to Him, fear Him, worship Him. It is, then, a great thing to say of any child, and it could only be said of a good and holy child, that he "waxes strong in spirit." It means not that he becomes taller, nimbler, cleverer, but that his conscience becomes more and more formed as he grows up, his will more steady in doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong, his prayers to God more earnest, his sense of God's presence more keen, his dread of sin stronger. Alas! it is the very opposite with children in general. Their conscience, which was once tender, becomes hardened as they get to know more; they soon shake off any dread of sin and the fear of God; their will weakly yields to temptation, until it becomes easy and natural to yield. And it is added, "He was filled with wisdom." The words imply that wisdom kept on flowing, like a running stream, into His human soul; there were, in His case, none of those thoughts of levity and folly, by which childhood is commonly marked. "And the grace of God" (meaning both the favour of God, and the precious influence of His Holy Spirit) "was upon Him." When the sun shines out upon the dewdrops that cover the tender grass of spring in the early morning, how beautiful is each spangled bead of dew, glistening with all the colours of the rainbow! Such was the childhood of the Holy Child! The dews of God's Spirit rested upon Him without measure. And the sunshine of God's favour beamed out upon Him, as "the Child of children," in whom—and in whom alone of all children that had ever been born—God the Father was well pleased. How early can a child love God, yearn towards God, hope in God, trust in God? I cannot say. Probably much earlier than we suppose. Do not the youngest infants stretch their tiny arms, and smile graciously when their mother comes into the room? They are not too young to show that they love and trust their parents; I do not know why it should be impossible for them to love and trust their heavenly Father, especially if He should give His grace to them "without measure," as was the case with our Lord. Perhaps you say, "It is impossible for a child in arms to understand or know anything about God." How can any one be sure of that? It was foretold of John the Baptist, that he should be "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb"; and if this was the case with him, how much more must it have been the case with the Lord Jesus? Have you one single feeling of affection and trust towards your heavenly Father, as He had? Do you even wish to have some such feeling? The wish is something, nay, it is much; let it lead you to pray for the feeling, and in due time the feeling will come. If your earthly parents would deny you nothing that is good for you, which they had it in their power to give, "how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Growth under ordinary events:*—These words, applied by St. Luke first to John the Baptist and then to our Lord, simply express an everyday occurrence—what we habitually take for granted as the natural course of things. This very fact—that they are so simple, so natural, so completely on the level of our common life—gives them the rich meaning that they possess for us.

For they teach us that the Divine method of life is quite different from what we should expect; that each man may find in and about him, in his endowments and in his environments, just what he requires for the accomplishment of his work. We need not go from our proper place in order to discipline ourselves for God's service; we need not strive after gifts which He has not entrusted to us, or forms of action which are foreign to our position, in order to do our part as members of His Church. It is enough that we grow and wax strong under the action of those forces by which He moves us within and without, if we desire to fulfil, according to the measure of our powers, the charge which He has prepared for us. Thus it was that John the Baptist, the stern, bold preacher, grew up in the desert according to the angel's message—a lonely boy, a lonely youth, until the days of his showing unto Israel, communing only with the severest forms of nature and with the most awful thoughts of God. Thus it was that Jesus lived in the calm seclusion of a bright upland valley, in the Jewish fellowship of a holy home, subject to His parents and in favour with God and man, until His hour came. In that silent discipline of thirty years, there was no anxious anticipation of the future, no wistful lingering on the past; the past, used to the utmost, was the foundation of the future. (*Canon Westcott.*) *God's mode of training men:*—We are always inclined to look for some joy or sorrow, as that which shall stir the energies of our souls; for some sharp sickness or bereavement, as that which shall make us trust more faithfully in God; for some blessing or deliverance, as that which shall bring us to love Him with tender devotion. But when these exceptional events happen, they do but reveal to us what we have already become; then, at length, when our eyes are opened, we see ourselves; then we know what we are; then we realize the value of little things, the abiding results of routine; then we marvel, it may be, to know assuredly that we despised Christ when He came to us in strange disguises; or it may be that we welcomed Him in the least of His little ones, or in the most insignificant of His workings. Great occasions do not make heroes or cowards; they simply unveil them to the eyes of men. Silently and imperceptibly, as we wake and sleep, we grow and wax strong, or we grow and wax weak; at last some crisis shows us what we have become. (*Ibid.*) *Great results from secret processes:*—The facts of the material world help us to feel the reality of this still and secret process which is the universal law of life. The ground on which we stand, the solid rocks which lie beneath it, are nothing but the accumulated results of the action of forces which we observe in action still. A few drops of rain gather on the hillside, and find an outlet down its slope; grain by grain a channel is fashioned, fresh rills add their waters to the flowing stream, and at last the runlet which a stone might have diverted from its course has grown into a river which no human force can stem. The sapling is planted on an open ridge, straight and vigorous; season after season the winds blow through its branches; it bends and bends and rises again, but with ever-lessening power; and when years have gone by, and the sapling has become a tree, its strange distorted shape bears witness to the final power of the force which at each moment it seemed able to overcome. And so it is with all of us. From small beginnings flow the currents of our lives, from constant and unnoticed impulses we take our bias; the stream is ever gathering strength; the bend is ever being confirmed or corrected. At any time of this life, our character is represented by the sum of our past lives. There is not one act, not one purpose, which does not leave its trace, though we may be unable to distinguish and measure its value. There is not one drop which does not add something to the flowing river, not one branch which does not in some way shape the rising tree. The appointed duty, heartily or carelessly gone through, makes us weaker for the next effort. The unkind word spoken, or the kind word not spoken, makes us less tender when our love is next needed; the evil thing done, or the evil thought cherished, makes a vantage-ground for the tempter when he next assails us. The prayer neglected, or said with the lips only, makes it harder for us to seek God when we next desire to find Him. The Communion superstitiously slighted, or superstitiously frequented, makes it more and more difficult for us to see life transfigured by the brightness of a Divine presence. In this way it is that we grow and wax weak, happy only if some day of reckoning startles us by the sense of our loss, and if we are constrained to offer to God in the humblest spirit what remains. And, on the other hand, every faithful answer to the least claim upon our service, every manful contest for the right, every painful struggle with self-indulgence, every sore temptation met in the name and strength of Christ, every striving towards God in prayer and praise, is fruitful for the future—fruitful in self-sacrifice, in courage, in

endurance, in the joy of Divine fellowship. (*Ibid.*) *Childhood disparaged by the ancients*:—In those brief sketches of Christ which are called the Gospels, eighteen years of experience are wholly wanting. The best explanation of the omission is, that in that epoch, and in almost all past periods, child life was not a matter of importance. It did not enter largely into literature, nor into the category of the great things of the world. In some nations the death-day rather than the birthday was celebrated, because the latter period was associated with fame or learning or some other form of merit, while the birthday enjoyed no association of worth—it was only the period of all shapes of weakness. In the most of the ancient philosophies the reasonable soul did not come to the body until it was about twenty years old. According to one of the old Rabbis a man was free at twelve, might marry at eighteen or twenty, should acquire property until he was thirty, then intellectual strength should come, and at forty the profoundest wisdom should appear. Amid just what opinions of this nature the youth of Jesus was spent is not known, but at least this is true that He lived in an era when early life seemed to possess but small worth, and no scholar or biographer encumbered with such details his record or oration or poem. Not only do we know little about the early life of Jesus, but the early years of Cæsar, and Virgil, and Cicero, and Tacitus lie equally withdrawn from the public gaze. Old biographies make their first chapter out of the actual beginnings of the public service. (*David Swing.*) *An address to children on the Child Jesus*:—The Child Jesus grew. He did not stand still. Although it was God Himself who was revealed to us in the life of Jesus Christ, yet this did not prevent Him from being made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted. And so in all things He is an example for us to imitate. Each one, whether old or young, must remember that progress, improvement, going on, advance, change into something better and better, wiser and wiser, year by year, is the only way of becoming like Christ, and therefore like God. The world moves, and you and all of us must move with it. God calls us all ever to something higher and higher, and that higher stage we must reach by steadily advancing towards it. There are three things especially which the text puts before us as those in which our Lord's earthly education, in which the advance and improvement of His earthly character, added to His youthful and childlike powers. 1. Strength of character. Christ waxed strong in spirit. What we all want is a stout heart to resist temptation, a strong hardy conscience which fixes itself on matters of real importance and will not trifle or waste its powers on things of no concern. We must earnestly seek this strength. It comes to those who strive after it. 2. Wisdom. To gain this—to have your mind opened, to take in all that your teachers can pour into it—you are sent to school. You need not be old before your time, but you must even now be making the best use of your time. These are the golden days which never come back to you, which if once lost can never be entirely made up. Seek, therefore, for wisdom, pray for it, determine to have it, and God who gives to those who ask for it, will give it to you. Try to gain it, as our Lord gained it when He was a child, by hearing and by asking questions, *i.e.*, (*a*) by being teachable, humble, modest, and fixing your attention on what you have to learn; (*b*) by trying to know the meaning of what you learn, by cross-questioning yourselves, by inquiring right and left to fill up the blanks in your mind. 3. The grace or favour of God, or, as it says in ver. 52, the favour of God and man. Our Lord possessed God's favour always, but even in Him it increased more and more. It increased as He grew older, as He saw more and more of the work which was given Him to do; He felt more and more that God was His Father, and that men were His brothers, and that grace and loving-kindness was the best and dearest gift from God to man, and from man to man, and from man to God. He was subject to His parents. He did what they told Him; and so He became dear to them. He was kind, and gentle, and courteous to those about Him, so that they always liked to see Him when He came in and out amongst them. So may it be with you. Look upon God as your dear Father in heaven, who loves you, and who wishes nothing but your happiness. Look upon your schoolfellows and companions as brothers, to whom you must show whatever kindness and forbearance you can. Just as this beautiful building in which we are assembled is made up of a number of small stones beautifully carved, every one of which helps to make up the grace and beauty of the whole, so is all the state of the world made up of the graces and goodnesses not only of full-grown men and women, but of little children who will be, if they live, full-grown one day. (*Dean Stanley.*) *The Child Jesus, a pattern for children*:—1. The Child Jesus was a diligent scholar. He did not "hate" to go to school. He did not neglect His

tasks, or slur them over anyhow, or think, as perhaps some of you think, that getting out of school was the best part of the whole business. We might be quite sure that He diligently attended to the wise Rabbis who asked and answered questions, who uttered so many wise and witty proverbs, and told so many pretty stories, if only because He Himself was, in after years, so wise in asking and answering questions, and spoke so many proverbs and parables which the world will never let die. But we can do more and better than merely infer what a good scholar He was. We can see Him while He was yet a lad, going to school of His own accord, and staying in it when He might have been climbing the hills or running through the fields with His friends (vers. 41–46). 2. This good scholar was also a good son. The Hebrew boys of our Lord's time were very well bred. They were taught good manners as well as good morals. They were enjoined, both by their parents and their masters, to salute every one they met in the street, to say to him "Peace be with thee." To break this rule of courtesy, they were told, was as wrong as to steal. And the Boy Jesus was well brought up, and was full of courtesy, kindness, goodwill; for not only did He grow in favour with men in general, but He had a large circle of kinsfolk and friends who loved Him and were glad to have Him with them (ver. 44). We know, too, that He had never grieved His parents before, in His eagerness to learn, He let them go on their way home without Him. For when they had found Him in the Temple, they were so astonished that He should have given them the pain of seeking Him sorrowfully, that they cannot blame Him as for a fault, but can only ask Him why He had treated them thus. He must indeed have been a good son to whom His mother could speak as Mary spoke to Jesus. 3. He was also a good child of God. Always "about His Father's business"—feeling that He *must* be about it, wherever He went, whatever He did. The one great thing He had to do, the one thing which above all others He tried to do, was to serve God His Father; not simply to become wise, and still less to please Himself, but to please God by growing wise in the knowledge and obedience of His commandments. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Superstitious reverence of Christ's person guarded against:*—After informing us that Jesus was filled with wisdom, the evangelist adds, that the grace of God was upon Him. Now as the grace of God is not said to have been *in* but *upon* Him, it seems intended to express something not internal, but obvious to the senses. Hence it has been supposed that here the grace of God denotes a Divine gracefulness. In confirmation of this opinion it has been said, that in several passages there are allusions to something highly graceful, dignified, and impressive in His manner. Thus, the officers of the chief priest declared that never man spake like this man; and even the inhabitants of Nazareth were delighted at first with the words full of grace which He uttered. It is particularly to be remarked, however, that neither in the four Gospels, nor in any of the other books of the New Testament, has any description been given of the personal appearance of our Saviour. There is not, indeed, to be found the slightest allusion to the subject. Yet, of the founder of every other religion, whether true or false, some description, however concise, has been preserved. Thus, we are told that Moses, when a child, was extremely beautiful. The followers of Mahomet have described their pretended prophet in a minute manner; and the persons of most of the eminent sages of antiquity have been delineated by their disciples. But of the external appearance of Jesus no record is left. Why this singular omission? Were not the apostles of Jesus attached to their Master? Yes: their attachment was stronger and more disinterested than the world ever witnessed, for they suffered everything and sacrificed everything for His sake. But the omissions of inspired writers are never to be ascribed to oversight, but to the design of an over-ruling Providence. Nothing, therefore, was to be inserted in the Sacred Records concerning Jesus which might lead to a superstitious veneration of His person, and thus draw away the attention of His followers from His sublime doctrines and precepts, and the perfection of His character. (*James Thomson, D.D.*) *The development of Christ through the influences of outward nature:*—The Ebionites thought the natural humanity of our Saviour's early life unworthy of a Divine person, and denied His essential divinity. To them, Christ was, till His baptism, a common man. It was at His baptism that He received from God, as an external gift, the consciousness of His Divine mission and special powers for it. We, however, do not hold the necessary unworthiness of human nature as a habitation of the Divine. We hold, with the old writer, that man is "the image of God." Hence instead of looking upon Christ's youth and childhood and His common life as derogatory to His glory, we see in them the glorification of all human thought and

action in every stage of life. The whole of humanity is penetrated by the Divine. This is the foundation-stone of the gospel of Christ. On it rest all the great doctrines of Christianity, on it reposes all the noble practise of Christian men, and we call it the Incarnation. But this re-uniting of the divinity and humanity took place in time, and under the limitations which are now imposed upon humanity. The Divine Word was self-limited on its entrance our into nature, in some such sense as our spirit and thought are limited by union with body. Consequently, we should argue that there was a gradual development of the person of Christ; and this conclusion, which we come to *à priori*, is supported by the narrative in the Gospels. We are told that Jesus "increased in wisdom," that He "waxed strong in spirit," that He "learned obedience," that He was "made perfect through suffering." This is our subject—the development of Christ. And, first, we are met with a difficulty. The idea of development seeme to imply imperfections passing into perfection—seems to exclude the idea of original perfection. But there are two conceivable ideas of development; one, development through antagonism, through error, from stage to stage of less and less deficiency. This is our development; but it is such because evil has gained a lodgment in our nature, and we can only attain perfection through contest with it. But there is another kind of development conceivable, the development of a perfect nature limited by time. The plant is perfect as the green shoot above the earth—it is all it can be then; it is more perfect as the creature adorned with leaves and branches, and it is all it can be then; it reaches its full perfection when the blossom breaks into flower. Such was the development of Christ. He was the perfect child, the perfect boy, the perfect youth, the perfect flower of manhood. A second illustration may make the matter clearer. The work of an inferior artist arrives at a certain amount of perfection through a series of failures, which teach him where he is wrong. Such is our development. The work of a man of genius is very different. He has seen, before he touches pencil, the finished picture. His first sketch contains the germ of all. His work is perfect in its several stages. Such was Christ's development—an orderly, faultless, unbroken development, in which humanity, freed from its unnatural companion, evil, went forward according to its real nature. It was the restoration of humanity to its original integrity, to itself, as it existed in the idea of God. Think, then, of His development through the influence of outward nature. From the summit of the hill in whose bosom Nazareth lay, there sweeps one of the widest and most varied landscapes to be seen in Palestine. It is impossible to over-estimate the influence which this changing scene of beauty had upon the mind of the Saviour as a child. The Hebrew feeling for nature was deep and extended. By care, then, alone, the Child Jesus was prepared to feel the most delicate shades of change in the aspect of outward nature. But as He was not only Hebrew but the type of pure humanity, we may, without attributing to Him anything unnatural to childhood, impute to Him the nobler feelings which are stirred in the Western and Northern races by the modes of natural beauty. (*Stopford A. Brooke, MA.*) *The early development of Jesus*:—I. "The Child grew." Two pregnant facts. He was a child, and a child that grew in heart, in intellect, in size, in grace, in favour with God. Not a man in child's years. No hotbed precocity marked the holiest of infancies. The Son of Man grew up in the quiet valley of existence—in shadow, not in sunshine, not forced. II. This growth took place in three particulars—1. In spiritual strength. I instance one single evidence of strength in the early years of Jesus: I find it in that calm, long waiting of thirty years before He began His work. 2. In wisdom. Distinguish wisdom from (1) information, (2) talent. Love is required for wisdom—the love which opens the heart and makes it generous. Speaking humanly, the steps by which the wisdom of Jesus was acquired were two—(*a*) The habit of inquiry. (*b*) The collision of mind with mind. Both these we find in this anecdote: His parents found Him with the doctors in the Temple, both hearing and asking them questions. 3. In grace. And this in three points—(1) The exchange of an earthly for a heavenly home. "My Father's business," "My Father's house." (2) Of an earthly for a heavenly parent. (3) The reconciliation of domestic duties (ver. 51). (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Apocryphal stories of the Infancy*:—The Holy Spirit of God must have touched Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John with the spirit of "selection," which saved them from such miracle-mongering. For Christ—the Christ that I adore—rises above these pitiful tales. (*George Dawson.*) *A bishop's dream of our Lord's childhood*:—There was once—as Luther tells us—a pious, godly bishop who had often earnestly prayed that God would show him what Jesus was like in His youth.

Now once the bishop had a dream, and in his dream he saw a poor carpenter working at his trade, and beside him a little boy gathering up chips. Then came in a maiden clothed in green, who called them both to come to the meal, and set bread and milk before them. All this the bishop seemed to see in his dream, standing behind the door that he might not be seen. Then the little boy began and said, "Why does that man stand there? Will he not come in also, and eat with us?" And this so frightened the bishop that he woke. But he need not have been frightened, for does not Jesus say, "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me." And whether the dream be true or not, we know that Jesus in His childhood and youth looked and acted like other children, "in fashion like a man," "yet without sin." (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *St. Edmund's vision of the Child Jesus*:—There was once a boy whose name was Edmund Rich, and who is called St. Edmund of Canterbury; and his brother tells us that once, when, at the age of twelve, he had gone into the fields from the boisterous play of his companions, he thought that the Child Jesus appeared unto him, and said, "Hail, beloved one!" And he, wondering at the beautiful child, said, "Who art Thou, for certainly thou art unknown to me?" And the Child Jesus said, "How comes it that I am unknown to thee, seeing that I sit by thy side at school, and wherever thou art, there do I go with thee? Look on My forehead, and see what is there written." And Edmund looked, and saw the name "Jesus." "This is my name," said the child; "write it on thy heart and it shall protect thee from evil." Then He disappeared, on whom the angels desire to look, leaving the little boy Edmund with passing sweetness in his heart. (*Ibid.*) *Jerome's love for the Child Jesus*:—There lived, fifteen hundred years ago, a saint whose name was Jerome, and he loved so much the thought of the Child Christ, that he left Rome, and went and lived for thirty long years in a cave at Bethlehem, close by the cavern-stable in which Christ was born. And when men wished to invite him by earthly honours to work elsewhere, he said, "Take me not away from the cradle where my Lord was laid. Nowhere can I be happier than there. There do I often talk with the Child Jesus, and say to Him, 'Ah, Lord! how can I repay Thee?' And the Child answers, 'I need nothing. Only sing thou "Glory to God, and peace on earth."' And when I say, 'Nay! but I must yield Thee something'; the Holy Child replies, 'Thy silver and thy gold I need not. Give them to the poor. Give Me only thy sins to be forgiven.' And then do I begin to weep and say, 'Oh, Thou blessed Child Jesus, take what is mine, and give me what is Thine!'" Now in this way, by the eye of faith, you may all see the Child Jesus, and unseen, yet ever near, you may feel His presence, and He may sit by your side at school, and be with you all day to keep you from harm, and to drive away bad thoughts and naughty tempers, and send His angels to watch over you when you sleep. (*Ibid.*) *Jesus the Friend of children*:—Once there was carried into a great hospital a poor little ragged miserable boy, who had been run over in the streets and dreadfully hurt. And all night he kept crying and groaning in his great pain? and at last a good youth, who lay in the bed next to him, said, "My poor little fellow, won't you pray to Jesus to ease your pain?" But the little wretched sufferer had never heard anything at all about Jesus, and asked who Jesus was. And the youth gently told him that Jesus was Lord of all, and that He had come down to die for us. And the boy answered, "Oh, I can't pray to Him, He's so great and grand, and He would never hear a poor street-boy like me; and I don't know how to speak to Him." "Then," said the youth, "won't you just lift your hand to Him out of bed, and when He passes by He will see it, and will know that you want Him to be kind to you, and to ease your pain?" And the poor, crushed, suffering boy lifted out of the bed his little brown hand, and soon afterwards he ceased to groan; and when they came to him in the morning the hand and the poor thin arm were still uplifted, but they were stiff and cold; for Jesus had indeed seen it, and heard that mute prayer of the agony of that strayed lamb of His fold, and He had grasped the little, soiled, trembling hand of the sufferer, and had taken him away to that better, happier home, where He will love also to make room for you and me, if we seek Him with all our hearts, and try to do His will. (*Ibid.*) *Religion in childhood*:—"I can never," said the late Rev. George Burder, "forget my birthday, June 5, 1762. It was on a Sabbath; and after tea, and before family worship, my father was accustomed to catechize me, and examine what I remembered of the sermons of the day. That evening he talked to me very affectionately, and reminded me that it was high time I began to seek the Lord, and to become truly religious. He particularly insisted upon the necessity of an interest

in Christ Jesus, and showed me that, as a sinner, I must perish without it, and recommended me to begin that night to pray for it. After family worship, when my father and mother used to retire to their closets for private devotion, I also went to my chamber, the same room in which I was born, and then, I trust, sincerely and earnestly, and, as far as I can recollect, for the first time poured out my soul to God, beseeching Him to give me an interest in Christ, and desiring, above all things, to be found in Him. I am now an old man, but reflecting on that evening, I have often been ready to conclude, that surely I was then, though a little child, brought to believe in Christ." *Christ our example in youth.* In what respects, then, is the youth of CHRIST AN EXAMPLE TO US? 1. First, it is an example to us of personal piety, and that from our earliest years. "The grace of God was upon Him," is the evangelist's expression in our text; whilst, a few verses lower down, we have him saying, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." 2. Again, in the youth of Christ we have an example of diligence in the use of means for our mental progress and improvement. "He was filled with wisdom," says our text. And after His visit to the Temple, it is said again, "He increased in wisdom." The youth of Christ, then, we consider, may fairly be cited as furnishing us with an example of the dignity, and value, and importance of intellectual culture. 3. We note next that Christ in His youth was an example of reverent submission to parental authority. "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." 4. Further, Christ in His youth is an example to us of the duty of a heartfelt and entire consecration of ourselves to the Divine service. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" was the question of the Holy One to His parents, when they found Him in the Temple. 5. Once more, Christ in His youth is an example to us of patient and contented acquiescence in our providential lot,—however adverse, however obscure, however disappointing to the expectations which our friends may have formed for us, or which we, in our foolish pride, may be tempted to form for ourselves. (*D. Moore, M.A.*)

Vers. 41, 42. **And when He was twelve years old.** *Making a Jewish boy a son of the Law:*—The following description refers to ceremonies now practised:—"A few days ago I attended a very interesting service in a Jewish synagogue. A boy just twelve years old was brought by his father to be admitted as a member of the synagogue; there were present the parents of the boy, his brothers and sisters, his friends, and some few strangers. After several ceremonies had been performed, the priests read a portion of the law in Hebrew; the boy then stepped forward to the desk or platform, near the centre of the building, and read from a roll of parchment, in a clear distinct voice, a short psalm. A pause ensued, and then the old man addressed the boy in a few brief sentences, telling him that he had attained to years of discretion, and knew the difference between right and wrong, great responsibility rested on him; that it was his duty to follow the good and shun the evil; that it became him to show that the instruction he had received had not been given in vain; that he must diligently practise that which he knew to be right; be obedient to his parents, kind and affectionate to his brothers and sisters, charitable to those who needed his help, and faithful to the religion he had been instructed in. Then, placing his hand on the boy's head, he prayed earnestly that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, would bless the lad, would preserve him from danger and from sin, and make him a wise and good man, if he should be spared to enjoy length of days; or, if his life should be short, that he might be admitted to the presence of God in heaven." (*Biblical Things not Generally Known.*) *The Holy Family on pilgrimage:*—Every year they went up to Jerusalem. Very pleasant must their journey have been. Very different was it from the journeys we make in this Western isle. No wide road led from Nazareth to Jerusalem. The eighty miles of ground that stretched between the village and the city was only crossed by narrow paths. The journey had to be made on foot. Here and there would be a mule carrying some one too feeble to walk the whole distance. Each village on the route would furnish its little cluster of pilgrims, and as the new-comers mingled with those who were already in the pilgrim band, pleasant would be the greetings passing from one to another. We can picture them to ourselves as they wind through the valleys and at times cross the brow of a projecting hill. We can hear their voices raised in song, raised so that the hills resound, and the awakened echoes bid you think that the mountains are clapping their hands for joy. You perhaps have noticed in the Psalms as they are given in the Bible, here and there, the heading, "Song of

Degrees." They are the psalms which the pilgrims sang at they stepped along—processional hymns we might call them. Turn to two of them (psalms cxxi. and cxxii.) and see how wonderfully fitting are their words for that exulting singing which the pilgrims would encourage one another to give utterance to. We can well imagine Psalm cxxii. being sung by the pilgrims when first the walls and palaces of the Holy City appeared in sight. The Gospel tells that when Jesus was twelve years old He was for the first time taken by His parents on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. You may be sure that He would take a boy's delight in the journey. It was one which would enable Him to open His eyes upon His Father's beautiful world, and to see beyond the blue mountains which always seemed so mysterious in the distance as He looked upon them from the vale of Nazareth. We may be sure that He would be on the look-out with all a boy's eagerness, for the first view of the distant towers of the Holy City. He would enjoy, too, the companionship of the other pilgrim-boys. There were, as the story itself tells us, many of His kinsfolk among the pilgrim band, and He would pass from one group to another, and be welcomed by all whom He approached. When the solemn days at Jerusalem were ended, the company of pilgrims started back for their homes. The Child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem. You all know how Joseph and Mary sought Him. I will not now ask you to contemplate the scene in the Temple-portico, where He was at length discovered. It is a scene of great beauty, and one on which the thoughts of Christian teachers and Christian artists have reverently pondered ever since it has been described on the Gospel page. But the story of our Lord's pilgrimage is one on which our thoughts may well rest, one which we may well take to our homes and ponder over. We have in it an example set which we should never lose sight of. When twelve years old, children were considered old enough to go with their parents to the great worship of the whole year at Jerusalem. The way of the pilgrimage was made glad with songs such as would stir the young heart. In our Christian services, too, we ought to think of children just as did the dwellers in the Holy Land, in their Jewish services. Again, all life long we should be conscious that we are but sojourners and pilgrims upon earth. "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (*H. N. Grimley, M.A.*) *Important things wrought silently and secretly*:—You have, perhaps, seen a beautiful rose, soon after it has unfolded its blossom. You looked at it yesterday, as you passed it in the garden, or watered it in the window, and it was only a rosebud, a little knot of fragrant petals, wrapped up together and clinging to one another. You visit it to-day, and you find that during the night a change has taken place. The knot has untied itself, the petals have separated from one another, and now form, not a knot, but a little cup, in which are some drops of the morning dew, a cup more delicately tinted than the finest porcelain, and breathing forth delicious odours. The rose has just opened its breast to the sun. But how long a time has it taken to bring about this result! First, there was the planting the root, which lay under the soil all the winter, and showed no sign of life. But though it showed no sign of life, it was not dead. Nursed for a time by the warmth and moisture of the earth, it was bursting underground; and in the spring it pushed up a little green sprout, which very gradually became a stem, and the stem grew taller every day, and at length a bud formed as the crown of it. And the bud swelled and swelled day by day, and at length one morning you found it with its breast open as I have described. And all this was done quite secretly, without any noise to call attention to it. Now, in the Song of Solomon, our Lord, speaking of Himself by the mouth of the prophet, calls Himself "the Rose of Sharon." And in Isaiah it is foretold of Christ, "He shall grow up before Him" (*i.e.*, before God) "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." And this opening of the rose is something like the opening of our Lord's human soul, when He reached the age of twelve. Up to that period the Gospel history is quite silent as to anything thought, or said, or done by Him. No doubt much was going on in His human mind; no doubt He had many thoughts and feelings, all of them holy, pure, and beautiful, the exact model of what a child's thoughts and feelings ought to be; but God has screened them from us, and not been pleased to tell us what they were. At twelve years old, however, the bud unfolds itself; our blessed Lord becomes fully conscious who He is; and we hear Him speaking and calling God His Father, and are allowed a glimpse into His mind and thoughts. And what beautiful fragrant thoughts they are! Do not estimate the importance of events, then, by the noise they make in the world. The events which startle us most are not always those of greatest consequence. Men often stare and gaze at that which is the least worthy of attention.

What is it, think you, which interests the holy angels most? a great battle? a great triumph? the fall of a great city or a great empire? Rather it is the growth and progress of God's kingdom in the hearts of single persons—the battle against sin which this man is fighting in Christ's strength, the triumph over sin which that man is winning by Christ's grace; in a word, the inner life of men, the life of the immortal spirit—not that life which is acted in history, and related by historians. And the better and holier we become, the more shall we be interested in what interests God and holy angels. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *On the way to Jerusalem:*—The herdsmen of Nazareth were ignorant and poor; still they complied with the law, and at least once every year went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. In the procession on one such occasion there was a family, the head of which was a plain, serious-looking middle-aged man, with whom the world has since become acquainted as Joseph. His wife, Mary, was then about twenty-seven years of age, gentle, modest, sweet-spoken, of fair complexion, with eyes of violet-blue, and hair half brown, half gold. She rode a donkey. James, Joses, Simon, and Jude, full-grown sons of Joseph, walked with their father. A child of Mary, twelve years old, walked near her. It is not at all likely that the group attracted special attention from their fellow-travellers. "The peace of the Lord be with you!" they would say in salute, and have return in kind. More than eighteen hundred years have passed since that obscure family made that pious pilgrimage. Could they come back and make it now, the singing, shouting, and worship that would go with them would be without end; not Solomon, in all his glory, nor Cæsar, nor any, or all of the modern kings, would have such attendance. Let us single out the Boy, that we may try to see Him as He was—afoot like His brethren, small, growing, and therefore slender. His attire was simple: on His head a white handkerchief, held in place by a cord, one corner turned under at the forehead, the other corners loose. A tunic, also white, covered Him from neck to knees, girt at the waist. His arms and legs were bare; on his feet were sandals of the most primitive kind, being soles of ox-hide attached to the ankles by leathern straps. He carried a stick that was much taller than Himself. The old painters, called upon to render this childish figure on canvas, would have insisted upon distinguishing it with a nimbus at least; some of them would have filled the air over its head with cherubs; some would have had the tunic plunged into a pot of madder: the very courtierly amongst them would have blocked the way of both mother and son with monks and cardinals. The Boy's face comes to me very clearly. I imagine Him by the roadside on a rock which He has climbed, the better to see the procession winding picturesquely through the broken country. His head is raised in an effort at far sight. The light of an intensely brilliant sun is upon His countenance, which in general cast is oval and delicate. Under the folds of the handkerchief I see the forehead, covered by a mass of projecting sun-burned blond hair, which the wind has taken liberties with and tossed into tufts. The eyes are in shade, leaving a doubt whether they are in brown, or violet like His mother's; yet they are large and healthfully clear, and still retain the parallelism of arch between brow and upper lid, usually the characteristic of children and beautiful women. The nose is of regular inward curve, joined prettily to a short upper lip by nostrils just full enough to give definition to transparent shadows in the corners. The mouth is small, and open slightly, so that through the scarlet freshness of its lines I catch a glimpse of two white teeth. The cheeks are ruddy and round, and only a certain squareness of chin tells of years this side the day the Magi laid their treasures at His feet. Putting face and figure together, and mindful of the attitude of interest in what is passing before Him, the Lad as I see Him on the rock is handsome and attractive. When the journey shall have ended, and His mother made Him ready for the court of the Temple, He may justify a more worshipful description; we may then see in Him the promise of the Saviour of men in the comeliness of budding youth, His sad destiny yet far in the future. (*Author of "Ben Hur."*) *The silence of Scripture instructive:*—There is inspiration in the silence of Scripture. The Holy Spirit records only this one incident in the life of Jesus from His infancy to the beginning of His ministry. He thus teaches that quietness and modesty are the best ornaments of youth. And by the special character of this one incident which He has chosen to record, He teaches that the first duty of children is to resort to God, in His House, and in His appointed means of religious instruction and grace; and the second, to be subject to parents and others who are over them in the Lord. (*Bishop Chris. Wordsworth.*) *Religious training:*—As soon as the Child Jesus was old enough to join in public worship, His parents took Him with

them to the Temple. It was not enough to set Him a good example. They proposed to *train* Him in the right way. Whatever a child ought to do, his parents ought to see that he does do. If he likes to do it, so much the better. If he does not like to do it, so much the more need is there that his parents should make him do it. Prayer and praise and reverence and devotion, and obedience and right being and right doing in all things at home, and worship and attentive hearing in the House of God, are duties which parents ought to see that their children attend to. If the children fail in these things, the parents cannot count themselves free of responsibility of blame. (*H. C. Trumbull.*)

Ver. 43. **When they had fulfilled the days.**—*The gospel of the Childhood:*—We notice in the Child Jesus—1. A holy disposition. It was this which led His mother to bring Him with her to the Temple, and which led Him to tarry there after His mother had gone away. A holy disposition is the source and fountain of all goodness: the soft wax out of which is moulded the image of love, purity, obedience (James iii. 17). 2. A love for God's house. He loved the Temple far better than the forum or market-place. He willingly remained in the house of His heavenly Father—the attribute of a good Son. 3. A desire for holy conversation. He was found not playing with other boys; not engaged in idle sports: but conversing with the old men in the Temple; listening to words of soberness, truth, and wisdom. 4. A deep sense of spiritual relationship. Loving and obedient as He was to His earthly parents, yet He placed His spiritual Father before them. As says Augustine, He loved the Creator before the generator. 5. A loving reverence towards His parents. He was subject to them. Who? To whom? God to man. Humility seen in its highest power. CONCLUSION: The child is ever the father of the man. Let us take care to form and fashion the child-minds committed to our keeping after this glorious and pure model. (*William of Auvergne.*) *Filial obedience:*—Our Lord furnishes us with a striking example of filial obedience. He was true God, the Creator and Lord of all; yet He submits Himself to His mother after the flesh, and to His foster-father also, for our imitation. From His holy example let children learn, in relation to their parents—1. To love them honestly, sincerely, devotedly; to repay them somewhat for the great love which their parents have expended upon themselves. 2. To answer them respectfully. 3. To render them honest obedience. (Eph. vi. 1, 2; Col. iii. 20.) The disobedient child makes the sinful man. 4. To succour them in need. It is dreadful ingratitude to do nothing for those who have done so much for us. Our blessed Lord had a care for His mother even on the cross. A noble Roman lady ministered of her breast to her mother in prison. Remember, finally, that filial love ever commands a blessing. (*J. Clichtove.*) *Revelation of perfect child-life:*—The life of the child is threefold. It is lived not in the world; it is the life of home, and church, and school. Think of Jesus in His child-life as a pattern for Christian children. I. HOME LIFE. 1. Obedience to parents. This is a prime principle in home life—the germ of all other obedience, social and national. A habit of life which is needful, in order that we may be led to obedience to Christ. 2. Subjection to home authority. Too much self-will now-a-days in children; they are impatient of restraint, want to be their own masters, to strike out walks of life when very young. Our Lord probably wrought at His reputed father's trade. Anyhow, He was subject to His parents, *i.e.* (1) Never gainsaid their authority. (2) Never crossed their wishes. (3) Never questioned their right to His time. (4) Never murmured or rebelled against them in word or deed. II. CHURCH LIFE. 1. Religion is for children as well as for those grown up. Children are members of Christ's Church, and should be trained as such. 2. Like the Jews, let us early teach children Holy Scripture. We are more favoured than they, in having the gospel to impart to our little ones. 3. Child-life is passed, as it were, between the font and the holy table. With confirmation child-life, strictly speaking, ends. 4. Let the child ever be taught to look forward with longing and hope to the time when he may go up to the great Christian feast, Holy Communion. 5. Let religious duties be made a custom, so that, as with Jesus, they may be instinctively kept up in later years of manhood. III. SCHOOL LIFE. Education a question of the day. Religious education the only legitimate form for a Christian child. But the child's part is in accepting and seeking knowledge. 1. Children must be content to learn. Teaching is necessary. Even Jesus received instruction. 2. Children should be encouraged to inquire into things. (*Thos. H. Barnett.*) *Ungrudging service:*—"When they had fulfilled the days"—St. Joseph and the blessed Virgin.

did not only attend the Passover, which was celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month at even, but stayed in Jerusalem also all the days of the feast of unleavened bread; and thus did not leave the city to return home till the afternoon of the eighth day after their arrival. They were not in duty bound to stay so long; they might have gone back sooner without doing anything wrong, provided that, for all the days of the feast which followed the Passover they had been careful not to eat any leavened bread at their own home. But devout people, as they were, do not consider how little of their time they can give to God without doing wrong, but give Him as much as ever they can, and delight in worshipping Him. Think of this, when you are tempted to shorten your prayers, or to drop for the day your reading of Holy Scripture, or to feel the hours of Sunday a restraint and a weariness, and to long that they would fly faster. Prayer and Scripture and Sunday are only dull because your heart is not in them, because you do not try to throw your mind into them, and so to create for yourself an interest in them. If your heart were in them, be sure you would find them the purest of all pleasures, and wish you had a longer time to give to them, not a shorter. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Passover duties and employments:—It will be interesting to know how St. Joseph and St. Mary spent the days which they are here said to have "fulfilled," especially when we remember that they had the Holy Child with them, whose human mind, we may be sure, would drink in eagerly everything which He saw in the Temple worship. Where, then, in the first place, did they live during these days? Some of the country people who came up to keep the Passover were accommodated in private houses. This was the case with our Lord and His disciples, who ate together His last Passover in a private house, to which He directed them by the token of a man carrying a pitcher of water, who should enter into it. It was usual in these cases for the guests to leave behind them, as a kind of payment for their accommodation, the skin of the lamb, and the utensils employed in cooking it. But very often such accommodation was not to be found; every inn and private house in Jerusalem was quite full, and in this case people from the country were obliged to lodge without the walls in a tent which they brought with them. Perhaps St. Joseph and St. Mary may have been all the more ready to do this, because, having the Holy Child with them, whose life had already been sought by those in power, they may have thought it prudent not to be seen in the city more than was absolutely necessary. St. Joseph would have to go to the Temple on the afternoon of the fourteenth of Abib to kill his Passover lamb, and probably he would take our Lord with him. The Holy Child watched the slaughter of the lamb, as the blood gushed forth from the wound into the golden cup held by one of the priests to receive it, and was then splashed out in one jet at the foot of the altar of burnt-offering. Then they returned to their tent, carrying the carcase of the lamb with them, and prepared the supper, of which, probably, as their household must have been too small for the lamb, and as ten people at least were required to make a Passover company, some of St. Joseph's family or neighbours partook with them. The first thing would be to roast the lamb, which was usually done by running two skewers of pomegranate wood, one lengthwise through the body of the creature, and another crossing it through the breast and forelegs, so that the lamb had the appearance of being crucified, and then placing it carefully in the midst of an oven, the bricks of which were made red-hot, but not allowing it to touch the sides. Then they would spread the table, and place on the sideboard, ready at hand, a plate of unleavened bread (large thin biscuits), another of bitter herbs, such as endive, or wild lettuce, and a vessel containing a thick sauce, made of the consistency of clay, to remind them of the brickmaking in Egypt, into which sauce everything eaten at the supper was to be dipped. Last would come the partaking of the supper. St. Joseph, as head of the family, would take a cup of red wine in his hand, and, after saying a grace, taste it and pass it round. Then the herbs were placed on the table and partaken of; then the unleavened bread; and, that being done, the roasted lamb was brought in and placed before the head of the family. But before it was eaten, a second cup of wine was filled; and then it was customary for some child (perhaps, in this case, it may have been our Lord Himself) to ask the head of the house, "What meaneth this service?" In reply, the reason of keeping the Passover was recited, &c., after which Psalms cxiii. and cxiv. were sung. Then the lamb was carved and eaten; a third and a fourth cup of wine succeeded; and then all was concluded by singing Psalms cxv. to cxviii. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 44, 45. **And they sought Him among their kinsfolk.**—*Out of company with*

Jesus:—It seems scarcely credible that that fond mother—that model of what a mother ought to be—could have gone a whole day's journey without Jesus; but she did. And one can understand too how she fell into this error. She had a great many things to think about. She had been meeting a good many friends at the feast. Those were stirring times. People had been coming up from all parts of Judæa and Galilee with tidings of an upheaving in the minds of the people and a general expectation was pervading the whole population; a hope of approaching liberty; a desire to break the tyrant thrall of Rome. So, doubtless, there was a good deal to talk about, and no doubt the Virgin Mary was deeply interested in what she heard. Joseph, too, would have a good deal to communicate to those with whom he came in contact. So they were very busy, and very interested; and in their business and in their thronging interest they forgot the absence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they went for a whole day's journey concluding that He was with them when He was not. Let us ask ourselves, "How is it that Christians lose the sense of the fellowship of Jesus?" What are the dangers we have most to guard against in this respect? I. The danger arising from INTERCOURSE WITH OUR FELLOW-MEN. II. The danger arising from GOSSIPING CONVERSATION. I do not for a moment mean to charge this against the blessed mother of our Lord. At the same time, the circumstances of the case suggest such a possibility, and the possibility suggests a lesson to ourselves. III. The danger of losing the consciousness of the presence of Christ IN RELIGIOUS INTERCOURSE, is a danger, I believe, that specially belongs to this day. IV. The danger OF LOSING CHRIST IN HIS SERVICE. Work for Christ has its own peculiar dangers. (*W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*) *Religious supposition*:—"Supposing Him to have been of the company"—what a pity they did not make sure! Have we got beyond a slow uncertain, "I hope," "I suppose Jesus is with me"? If you must suppose, suppose He is not with you. Suppose there is no home and no welcome for you at the journey's end? Of whatever else you may be uncertain, be sure about this. Where did they lose Him? Not in Nazareth, but in the city. It is sadly easy to lose Christ in a great city with all its pleasures and blandishments. This city is the sepulchre of many a young man's piety, the end of many a parent's hopes. Jesus is lost since you came to the city, and you are likely to be lost too, unless you find Him again. They lost Him at a feast. Where the company of Jesus is put in peril stop from the feast. They lost Him in a crowd. How many miss Jesus in the noise and bustle! Be resolute to have your quiet hours. Seek first the kingdom of heaven. But they turned back and sought Him. Jesus is lost and Jesus must be found. Have you sought Him? Like Joseph and Mary, your way lies in another direction. Break away from everything. Go after Jesus until you find Him. (*J. Jackson Wray.*) "*Supposing Him to have been in the company*":—I. THIS WAS A MOST NATURAL SUPPOSITION. 1. Christ's parents did not expect to find Him wandering alone. He loved society. Jesus was not one whose company would be shunned because of His ill-manners; rather would it be courted because of the sweetness of His disposition. He would not make Himself disagreeable, and then crown that disagreeableness by stealing away from those whom He had vexed. They knew the sweetness of their dear child's character and the sociableness of His disposition, and, therefore, they supposed Him to have been in the company. 2. They never suspected that He would be found in any wrong place. We never look for Jesus where a question of morals might be raised, for He is undefiled. Let His example be followed by all in this. II. THIS SUPPOSITION BROUGHT THEM GREAT SORROW. From this I gather that, with regard to the Lord Jesus, we ought to leave nothing as a matter of supposition. Do not suppose anything about Jesus at all. Do not suppose anything about His character, His doctrine, or His work; go in for certainty on such points. 1. Do not suppose Him to be in your hearts. Outward ceremonies convey no grace to graceless persons. 2. Do not ever suppose that Christ is in our assemblies because we meet in this house. Christ is not present where He is not honoured. All your architecture, music, learning, eloquence, are of small account; Jesus may be absent when all these things are present in profusion, and then your public worship will only be the magnificent funeral of religion, but the life of God will be far away. Our question every Sunday morning ought to be, "What think ye; will He come to the feast?" for if He does not come to the feast it will be the mockery of a festival, but no bread will be on the table for hungry souls. 3. Let us not take it for granted that the Lord Jesus is necessarily with us in our Christian labours. Do we not too often go out to do good without special prayer, imagining that Jesus must surely be with us as a matter of course? Perhaps we thus conclude because

He has been with us so long, or because we feel ourselves fully equipped for the occasion, or because we do not even think whether He is with us or not. This is perilous. If Jesus is not with us, we toil all the night and take nothing; but if Jesus is with us, He teaches us how to cast the net, and a great multitude of fishes are taken. III. THE SUPPOSITION made by these two good people MAY INSTRUCT US. This is for the children. Jesus is here an example to them, for He was at this time a child. Suppose He had been in the company returning to Nazareth? How would He have behaved Himself? 1. I am sure when the whole company sang a psalm, He would have been among the sweetest singers. No inattention or weariness in Him when God was to be praised. 2. I feel persuaded that Jesus would have been found in that company listening to those who talked of holy things. Especially would He have been eager to hear explanations of what He had seen in the Temple. He would have been anxious to share with the grown-up people all the solemn thoughts of the day. 3. I feel sure also that if He had been in the company going home, He would have been the most obliging, helpful, pleasing child in all the company; if anybody had needed to have a burden carried, He would have been the first to offer; if any kindly deed could be done, He would be first in doing it. IV. SUPPOSING HIM TO BE IN OUR COMPANY IN ALL HIS GRACIOUS INFLUENCE, what then? 1. How happy will such company be! 2. How united His people will all become! 3. How holy they will all grow! How teachable; how lively! how earnest; how confident. V. JESUS HAS BEEN IN THE COMPANY, WHETHER WE HAVE SEEN HIM OR NOT. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The disappearance of Jesus:*—Every child is a treasure to the heart of an affectionate parent; but the Holy Child Jesus must have been so sacred and precious a treasure to His mother and her husband that one wonders how they could ever have lost sight of Him. Perhaps it may have happened in this way: when they were about to return, they would doubtless give Him notice that they were going home, and would expect Him to follow. But, in the hurry of packing and starting, they would necessarily take their eyes off from Him for some time, and then He would find His opportunity to withdraw to the Temple. It must be remembered that hundreds of other pilgrims would be on the move homeward at the same moment. All those who lived north of Jerusalem, forming an immense caravan, would start with Joseph and Mary, and go by the same road. This would create great confusion; and, amidst a general lading of mules and asses and a general preparation for the day's journey, a single child might be easily missed. Moreover, we are told by some writers that it was the custom in these pilgrimages for all the men to travel in one company by themselves, and all the women in another, the boys travelling, as it might happen, either with their father or their mother. If this was the case, it is easy to understand how neither our Lord's mother nor her husband were made uneasy by missing Him. St. Joseph would say, "He is with His mother, no doubt"; and the blessed Virgin would say, "Doubtless Joseph is taking care of Him." (*Dean Goulburn.*) *A lost Christ:*—Some years ago an institution for the blind was erected in one of our large towns. The committee put their wise heads together, and decided that as the building was for the blind, for those who could not see—there was only waste of money and no reason in going to the expense of windows. Scientific ventilation and heating was provided, but no windows, because—as the committee very logically put it—it was no use in the world providing light for those who cannot see it. Accordingly, the new Blind Asylum was inaugurated and opened, and the poor sightless patients settled into the house. Things did not go well with them, however. They began to sicken, one after another; a great languor fell on them, they felt always distressed and restless, craving for something, they hardly knew what; and after one or two had died, and all were ill, the committee sat on the matter, and resolved to open windows. Then the sun poured in, and the white faces recovered colour, and the flagging vital energies revived, the depressed spirits recovered, and health and rest returned. I think this is not unlike the condition of a vast number of people. Christ Jesus is the Sun of the soul, the Light of the world. It is He who gives health and rest to the heart, and fills the soul with that peace which passes man's understanding. But there are a good number who, in their wisdom, think they can do without Him; they are the wise committee men sitting on their own case, and building up walls to shut themselves in and shut Him out. They cannot see Jesus, the light of the world; therefore, they can live without Him. Have you ever noticed what an expression of peace there is on the faces of those whose walk is with God, as contrasted with the unrest that characterizes the faces of those living without God in the world—not

necessarily bad people, but living chiefly for the world, in a windowless asylum of their own construction. I. A great number who do not realize their unrest. So engrossed in daily work, so full of hopes and schemes, they can think of nothing else. Fond of the bustle and excitement of active life. Do not know they are travelling along the road of life without Christ; do not as yet feel their loss and need of Him. II. They become uneasy. Becoming aware that all is not quite right, they look for what they want in the wrong place. They seek distraction, when it is rest they need, and pleasure instead of peace. Then they give themselves up to tittle-tattle with kinsfolk and acquaintance, and try to find happiness in society. But it will not do. Jesus Christ is not there, and it is He they need. III. The last stage is not taken by all; it is well for those who do take it. Christ is found in the Temple. Enthroned on His altar, made known in the breaking of the bread, He waits to enter into, refresh, strengthen, and give perfect peace to the hungry soul, weary with the unsatisfying food of the world. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *Seeking the lost Christ*:—I. WHERE CHRIST WAS LOST. 1. In the city. 2. At a feast. 3. In a crowd. II. HOW AND WHERE HE WAS SOUGHT. 1. Immediately the loss was realized. 2. Sorrowfully. 3. In the Temple. 4. With perseverance and continuity. III. HOW THIS SEARCH WAS REWARDED. 1. Christ was found. 2. Christ spoke Divine words to His parents. 3. Christ went back with them to Nazareth, and was more precious to them than ever. (*E. D. Solomon.*) *Easy to lose Christ*:—Perhaps our Lord's parents had been a little to blame in ever taking their eyes off Him. Perhaps they had been too eager and careful about their homeward journey, and not mindful enough of the Holy Child. If so, they were punished by the dreadful anxiety which they must have felt in looking for Him, and by the still more painful void which His absence would make in their family circle. When people are not careful to keep the Lord with them, He easily escapes. A little heedlessness, a little want of watchfulness, a little more eagerness and hurry about worldly things than there is any necessity for—and the Divine Presence slips away. We may have really spoken to Him in our prayers, or in church, and have been comforted by the thought that we have done so. And then we may dismiss altogether the thought of His presence, and make no effort to call it back. We may forget that His eye is upon us, and do and say things in a fit of temper and excitement which we could not do and say if we felt He was looking on. And then we shall be punished by having to search for Him with labour and dryness of spirit. We must try to live in His presence, to be always conscious of it, even when not directly thinking of Him. This is the great secret of perfection (Gen. xvii. 1). Great peace and quietness of heart is to be found in always having our eye upon Christ. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Ver. 46. **After three days they found Him in the Temple.**—*The finding of Jesus in the Temple*:—I. A lesson to boys and young men—THE MANLINESS OF OBEDIENCE AND SUBJECTION TO A MOTHER. II. Teachers may learn THE BEST METHOD OF ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE, by asking and answering questions. III. Mothers are by this incident reminded that THEIR CHILDREN HAVE OTHER INTERESTS THAN THOSE OF THIS WORLD. IV. A lesson for all: JESUS, LOST IN THE BUSTLE AND EXCITEMENT OF THE CROWD, IS ALWAYS TO BE FOUND AGAIN IN THE TEMPLE. (*D. Longwill.*) *The Saviour lost and found*:—Jesus Christ is only lost by sin; when lost, He must be found by repentance and grace. I. WE MUST KNOW OF OUR LOSS. We often lose Him, at first, without knowing it, just as His parents did; we, like them, sooner or later find out our loss. 1. We must know of our loss if we would seek to regain it; we should not seek Jesus Christ if we did not know that we had lost Him. The beginning of salvation is the knowledge of sin. He who does not know that he sins, is not willing to suffer correction. 2. We must know of our loss, or we can never render God fitting honour and glory for our recovery from it. II. OUR WAY MUST BE RETRODDEN. We must look back, by examination of conscience, over that past life during which we have lived without Jesus Christ. 1. Sweep all sin away by our detestation of it (Luke xv. 8). 2. Cover all our defilements in the robe of grace, that we may be meet for Jesus Christ (Cant. iii. 2). III. THE LOSS MUST BE MOURNED FOR. Contrition follows examination. 1. Undo, as far as possible, the dishonour done to God. 2. Punish sin in ourselves. The heart being the fount of sin, we afflict it with sorrow and remorse. IV. WE RETAIN OUR RECOVERED TREASURE. 1. No gain to have found Jesus Christ with sorrow and hurt, if He be lost again. 2. A second time we may not be able to find Him. (*M. Faber.*)

Jesus at home in the Temple:—It is easy to understand that the Temple must have had a wonderful attraction for Him, so that He found it very difficult to tear Himself away from it. Our Lord, having now ceased to be an infant, and become a child, was fully conscious who He was. He was now able to look back to His former state of existence, when He lay in His Father's bosom from all eternity, and was worshipped as a Person in the blessed Trinity by the holy angels. As His faculties opened, it would dawn upon His memory what He had been. Now, therefore, mark the effect upon Him, when He sees for the first time the services of the Temple. The Temple was a little figure or model of heaven; the Temple music of the praises of God continually sung in heaven; the Temple services of the pure and holy worship which the angels continually offer in heaven (Heb. viii. 5). When He saw the Temple services for the first time, they struck a chord in His memory, which vibrated sweetly and solemnly. The priests and Levites, offering their sacrifices and their incense, and singing their psalms, reminded Him of the blessed angels paying their homage to God and chanting His praises in heaven. He had never been the like upon earth before; and it is quite probable that, in a world of sin and sorrow, the blessed Jesus (even as a child) felt out of place, and away from His true home. Can you not imagine a person who had passed his early childhood in a southern clime, where there were birds of rich plumage, lovely stars at night, being suddenly banished to the North Pole, where his eye rests upon nothing but ice and snow, and all the beauties of nature seem to be locked up by a perpetual winter? Suddenly a bunch of bright flowers, or a bird of beautiful plumage, is brought to him as a gift from the south. It reminds him of his native country, and brings back in a moment the flowers, birds, and landscapes of that happy land. Something of this sort may have been our blessed Lord's memories, on seeing in early childhood the services of the Temple. He would feel that the Temple gave a true idea of His Father's house in heaven—*was* His Father's house on earth. Now a Father house is a home; and what dutiful child is there who does not love home; who is not drawn towards home, when away from it; who does not feel it to be a place of shelter, security, happiness, and peace, and cling to it accordingly? (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Christ engaged in Bible study*:—Jesus was not satisfied with worship alone, nor yet with passive hearing of Bible expositions. He wanted a share in Bible study. He had questions to ask of the teachers, and He was willing to be questioned. Although He was the Son of God, He felt the need of Bible study; and, feeling that need, He went into the Bible school, where the need could be met. If there is a man nowadays who thinks that he doesn't need Bible study, or that it is beneath his dignity to be in the Bible school, he either seems to suppose that he knows more than Jesus knew, or he seems to count it hardly safe to be on the same plane with the Son of God. Yet there are men and women who put a high value on worship, and none at all—for themselves—on social Bible study. They are regularly at the preaching services, but never in the Sunday School. Poor, needy, conceited creatures! (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *The power of simplicity*:—One striking feature in the life of Christ upon the earth is the unexpected places where we find Him. His advent was a surprise in its humbleness. Reason would never have deigned to stoop to a manger for a Messiah. Philosophy would scarcely have dreamed of pointing out the Christ of God with plane and hammer at the carpenter's bench. Faith itself was surprised to discover Him as a lad among the bearded doctors of Israel. But there He is. The great-browed scholars of the Temple do not in the least suspect the character of the wonderful Child standing in their midst. They debate with Him and are puzzled at His arguments. Their ritualism will not hold together before that young and radiant face. How little the Masters realize that from those tender lips, pronouncing such sublimely simple things, shall fall words of fire which shall utterly consume all their traditions! That gentle youth, astray from His mother, by His quiet life, and innocent language, shall ere long expose and overthrow the last vestige of pretentions and priestly religion, and establish a living religion, vital with an energy which shall conquer death and the grave. The Rabbins have handled the parchment so long and mumbled the letter so much, that they cannot understand the gospel of the Child. How often does Christ stand among the learned systems and schemes of this world, unknown and unsuspected, because so simple and unobtrusive! (*Alexander Clark.*) *Christ in the Temple school*:—It was not in the more sacred parts of the Temple, nor in the Holy Place, nor even in the Court of the Altar of Burnt-offering, that our Lord was found. There were chambers in the precincts of the the Temple, which were used sometimes for the meetings of the Sanhedrim, some-

times as schools where the doctors might teach. This last was a very proper arrangement: for the training of young persons in God's law is a work of piety most acceptable to God, and may be fitly carried on in the house of prayer. Perhaps our Lord, during the eight days of His parents' stay at Jerusalem, may have been attracted by the schools in the Temple, and have liked to linger there and to hear what was going on. And so His parents may have thought of seeking Him in these schools, feeling that, if in Jerusalem at all, He was sure to be there. Let us observe that what drew Him to the Temple was not only the beautiful and solemn worship which went on in it, but the teaching which was given there. He loved not only prayer and praise, but learning also. Oh, that there were more children like Him! while there are some who like the Church service well enough, if it is conducted with stateliness and music, how very few are there who show a desire for religious instruction, who take great pleasure in their preparation for confirmation, and listen to sermons eagerly, trying to get what good they can out of them. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *The spirit and method in which to learn*:—The young should be eager to learn, as Christ was in His boyhood. 1. He showed a thirst for the knowledge of God's law, when but twelve years old; and how are we to judge of what is wrong in us, but by taking Him as our model, and asking what there is in us, which does not watch with His example? As a ruler applied to a line which we have drawn with our hand, shows that it is not straight, so our Lord's example, applied to any particular piece of human conduct, shows at once how far it is from being what it ought to be. 2. Our Lord submitted to learn of the appointed teachers of His nation. It is not surely very much that He should require of us submission to all in authority over us. 3. We see also that quite the best way of learning is for the pupil to ask questions of the teacher. Only let them be thoughtful questions. Nothing will more open the mind of the taught than the explanation of a difficulty which has been raised in the mind by something the teacher has said. Very often the question will be useful to the teacher as well, leading him into some new and interesting train of thought upon an old and well-worn subject. Questions force people to think. (*Ibid.*) *Answers*:—I. Christ gives a clear answer about the spiritual world. II. Another cry of the soul is answered by Jesus when He tells us, that God is the heavenly Father of mankind. III. The Lord Jesus answered another question of humanity by showing that our heavenly Father knows the secret inner life of every man. IV. Jesus answers the cry of the soul by telling us, that our Father's business is the highest work of humanity. (*W. Birch.*)

Ver. 48. **Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us?**—*Perplexity in presence of mystery*:—This question of the mother of Jesus reveals an experience of the human heart which is very common, which is most common in the best hearts and those who feel their responsibility the most. The Virgin Mary is the perpetual type of people who, entrusted with any great and sacred interest, identify their own lives with that interest and care for it conscientiously; but who, by and by, when the interest begins to manifest its own vitality, and to shape its own methods, are filled with perplexity. They cannot keep the causes for which they labour under their own care. As His mother asked of Jesus, so they are always asking of the objects for which they live, "Why hast thou thus dealt with us?" Such people are people who have realized responsibility more than they have realized God. Just as Mary felt at the moment when she asked this question, that Jesus was her Son more than that He was God's Son, so there is a constant tendency among the most earnest and conscientious people to feel that the causes for which they live and work are their causes more than that they are God's causes, and so to experience something which is almost like jealousy when they see those causes pass beyond their power and fulfil themselves in larger ways than theirs. For such people, often the most devoted and faithful souls among us, there must be some help and light in this story of Jesus and His mother. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *A parent's wonder*:—The first and simplest case of this experience is that which comes nearest to the circumstances of our story. It comes in every childhood. It comes whenever a boy grows up to the time at which he passes beyond the merely parental government which belonged to his earliest years. It comes with all assertion of individual character and purpose in a boy's life. A boy has had his career all identified with his home where he was cradled. What he was and did he was and did as a member of that household. But by and by there comes some sudden outbreak of a personal energy. He shows some disposition, and attempts some task, distinctively his own. It is a

puzzling moment alike for the child and the parent. The child is perplexed with pleasure, which is almost pain, to find himself for the first time doing an act which is genuinely his own. The parent is filled with a pain which yet has pride and pleasure in it, to see his boy doing something original, something which he never bade him do, something which perhaps he could not do himself. The real understanding of that moment, both to child and parent, depends on one thing—upon whether they can see in it the larger truth that this child is not merely the son of his father, but is also the son of God. If they both understand that, then the child, as he undertakes his personal life, passes not into a looser, but into a stronger, responsibility. And the parent is satisfied to see his first authority over his son grow less, because he cannot be jealous of God. It is a noble progress and expansion of life when the first independent venture of a young man on a career of his own, is not the wilful claim of the prodigal, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me," but the reverent appeal of Jesus, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (*Ibid.*) *Divine as well as human education*:—Who is there of us that is not aware that his soul has had two educations? Sometimes the two have been in opposition; sometimes they have overlapped; sometimes they have wholly coincided; but always the two have been two. Our own government of ourselves is most evident, is the one which we are most aware of, so that sometimes for a few moments we forget that there is any other; but very soon our plans for ourselves are so turned and altered and hindered that we cannot ignore the other greater, deeper force. We meant to do that, and look! we have been led on to this. We meant to be this, and lo! we are that. We never meant to believe this, and lo! we hold it with all our hearts. What does it mean? It is the everlasting discovery, the discovery which each thoughtful man makes for himself with almost as much surprise as if no other man had ever made it for himself before, that this soul, for which he is responsible, is not his soul only, but it is God's soul too. The revelation which came of old to the Virgin Mother about her Child—not your Child only, but God's Child, too; yours, genuinely, really yours, but, behind yours and over yours, God's. That is the great revelation about life. When it comes, everything about one's self-culture is altered. Every anticipation and thought of living changes its colour. It comes sometimes early and sometimes late in life. Sometimes it is the flush and glow which fills childhood with dewy hope and beauty. Sometimes it is the peace which gathers about old age and makes it happy. Whenever it comes it makes life new. See what the changes are which it must bring. First, it makes anything like a bewildering surprise impossible. When I have once taken it into my account that God has His plans for my soul's culture, that these plans of His outgo and supersede any plans for it which I can make, then any new turn that comes is explicable to me, and, though I may not have anticipated it all, I am not overwhelmed, nor disturbed, nor dismayed by it. I find a new conviction growing in my soul, another view of life, another kind of faith. It is not what I had intended. I had determined that as long as I lived I would believe something very different from this which I now feel rising and taking possession of me. It seems at first as if my soul had been disloyal to me, and had turned its back faithlessly upon my teaching. I appeal to it, and say, "Soul, why hast thou thus dealt with me?" And it answers back to me, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Did you not know that I was God's soul as well as your soul? This is something which He has taught me." Then again, the true man will have one great purpose in living, and only one. He will try to come to harmony with God, to perfect understanding of what God wants and is trying to do. Let me not be trying to make one thing out of this soul of mine while He is trying to make entirely another! As Mary went back with her Son, realizing, out of His own mouth, that He was not only her Son, but God's; as she settled down with Him to their Nazareth life again, must not one single strong question have been upon her heart, "What does God want this Son of His to be? O let me find that out, that I may work with Him." And as you go into the house where you are to train your soul, realizing, through some revelation that has come to it, that it is God's soul as well as yours, one strong and single question must be pressing on you too—"What does God want this soul of mine to be? O, let me find that out, that I may work with Him." And how can you find that out? Only by finding Him out. Only by understanding what He is, can you understand what He wants you to do. And understanding comes by love. And love to God comes by faith in Jesus Christ. (*Ibid.*) *Christ's strange dealings with His people*:—The words may usefully remind us that the dealings of the Lord Jesus with those who sincerely love and serve

Him are often very strange. Not only does He try them by ordinary troubles, such as loss of health and loss of friends, but sometimes He takes away from them all spiritual comfort, and leaves their souls dark and disconsolate. Once they had joy and peace in believing, but they have it no longer now. Perhaps it is that they have grown lukewarm and self-sufficient, and He withdraws Himself from them for a time, to make them seek Him with greater earnestness. Where this is the case, people must go on seeking till they find. The dryness and hardness of our minds in prayer may be a sore distress to us, but we must not give over praying: we must be content to seek Him sorrowing. Where we cannot pray as we would, we must pray as we can. We must not "faint," but determine to make ourselves heard at heaven's gate. And then it shall be "but a little," and we shall find Him whom our soul loveth. And when we have found Him, we must be careful to hold Him, and "not let Him go." One who knows the Saviour's love, and lives in habits of holy intercourse with Him, must, as it were, keep His eye upon Him constantly by Christian watchfulness and an effort to realize His presence everywhere. Let such an one lose Him by wilful disobedience, or careless self-indulgence, or by relaxing in prayer and in the effort to believe, and there will be nothing but "sorrowing" till He is found again. Most merciful is it of God, when we are living without Christ, to hedge up our way with thorns, to make conscience uneasy, worldly pleasures unsatisfactory, and even religious exercises disappointing and irksome. Anything is wholesome, however bitter, which drives us to His side, and keeps us there. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *The manliness of Christ*:—There is something at first sight wilful indeed, possibly courageous, but not manly, in a boy of twelve staying behind his parents in a strange city without their knowledge or consent; something thoughtless, almost ungracious, in the words of reply to Mary's question. The clue to this apparent divergence from the perfect manly life is given with rare insight and beauty in Mr. Holman Hunt's great picture—at any rate, the face and attitude of the boy there seemed for the first time to make clear to me the meaning of the recorded incident, and to cast a flood of light upon those eighteen years of preparation which yet remained before He should be ready for His great work. The first sight of Jerusalem and of the Temple has stirred new and strange thoughts within Him. The replies of the doctors to His eager questionings have lighted up the consciousness which must have been dimly working in Him already, that He was not altogether like those around Him—the children with whom He used to play, the parents at whose knees He had been brought up. To the young spirit before whose inward eye such a vision is opening, all human ties would sink back, and be for the moment forgotten; and, when recalled suddenly by the words of His mother, the half-conscious dreamy answer, "How is it that ye sought Me?" &c., loses all its apparent wilfulness and abruptness. And so, full of this new question and great wonder, He went home to the village in Galilee with His parents, and was subject unto them; and the curtain falls for us on His boyhood and youth and early manhood. But, as nothing but what is most important and necessary for understanding all of His life which we need for our own growth into His likeness is told us in these simple narratives, it would seem that this vivid light is thrown on that first visit to Jerusalem because it was the crisis in our Lord's earthly life which bears most directly on His work for our race. If so, we must, I think, allow that the question, once fairly presented to the boy's mind, would never again leave it. Day by day it would come back with increasing insistency, gathering power and weight. (*Thomas Hughes.*) *The Mother and Son*:—There has descended into Mary's humble home a treasure too great for heaven itself to contain. What wonder if she fails to understand the value of this Divine Son; if she wholly mistakes the meaning of His absence? What wonder if she applies to His case the common-place rebuke, "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing"? Nay, but we may be told it was inexcusable in one who remembered the marvels of His birth, and all that then occurred, to chide Him for resorting to the Temple, and to be astonished that He sat with doctors and heard and questioned them. Twelve years of meek obedience in common household tasks and duties had passed since His birth. Miracles, which are meant to witness to doctrines, were not, we may be sure, performed to startle the carpenter's humble family, and she had forgotten in some measure the significant tokens of the past, and the dutiful boy was to her the future carpenter, the support of her age, the inmate of her home, or of some frugal home like hers, to the end, and the air of authority sat easy upon her, for her right had not been disputed. But other rights asserted themselves now. The light within Him breaks forth now from behind the veil of flesh. "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not," &c. Other claims

and ties supersede, or soon shall do so, the calm family life. He shall dwell with that Father who, in His baptism, His transfiguration, His death, will attest that this One is the Son of God. He shall seek for brethren and for children in all whom the ties of a common faith in His Father unite to Him. His work shall not be with the axe and hammer in Joseph's workshop, but it shall lie in turning souls from darkness to light, from death to life, from the power of Satan unto God. What wonder if the mother after the flesh cannot at once train her ear to the full compass of this new revelation. She will acquiesce, but not till she has painfully learned the plan of God in the life of battle with all forms of evil, which He shall lead, in the face of Satan and his host, where she is not; where she shall be met, if she venture into its sphere, by words of strangeness, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John ii. 4). Some have entertained angels unawares; but the King whom angels serve is a sojourner under her roof; she has to unlearn the speech of a mother, and learn that of a worshipper of the adorable Son of God and her Redeemer. She must cease to command and to admonish, and kneel with the rest of us before the Cross that was raised for all our guilty race alike. (*Archbishop Thomson.*)

Sorrow for grieving a mother:—When Garibaldi saw any one looking at his mother's picture the tears started into his eyes. He felt remorse at having, by his adventurous life, been a source to her of cruel anxiety. He believed in the power of her prayers to preserve him from the effects of his own temerity, and on the field of battle, or in the storm at sea, he never lost courage, because he thought he saw her kneeling before God and imploring for him the Divine protection.

A mother's solicitude:—The parents of Robert Moffat were both pious, and his mother's heart was set upon his "knowing from a child the Holy Scriptures." When about to leave Inverkeithing, in Fifeshire, where he was in service in the Earl of Moray's gardens, for a situation in Cheshire, she earnestly besought him to promise, before going, that he would read the Bible every day, morning and evening. Sensible of his own weakness, and of, perhaps, his boyish disinclination, he parried the question. But at the last moment she pressed his hand. "Robert," she said, imploringly, "you *will* promise me to read the Bible, more particularly the New Testament, and most especially the Gospels—those are the words of Christ Himself; and then you cannot possibly go astray." There was no refusing then; it was the melting hour. "Yes, mother," he answered, "I make you the promise." He knew, as he remarked in relating the circumstances, "that the promise, once made, must be kept. And oh," he added, "I am happy that I did make it!" (*Hand and Heart.*)

Ver. 49. **Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business.**—*The Epiphany of work*:—1. The Epiphany before us is, in the first place, that of the two lives, the seen and the unseen, the relative and the personal, the human relationship to the Divine. Let us try to place ourselves in imagination in those Temple precincts, and picture the entrance of the distressed and bewildered mother after two days and nights of weary and watchful searching. Regardless of His mother's anxiety, He has been sitting in the Temple courts. "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us?" was a natural question; and it fell not on a deaf ear, but on an unupbraiding conscience. "How is it that ye sought Me?" The rebuke is turned back upon herself. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Original: "In the things of My Father." I prefer here the Authorized Version to the Revised.) It was a hard stern lesson for the heart of the mother. She lives only in Him; but He has now another life, and another being. Such is her first lesson in the mystery of the two lives, the twofold relationship. This lesson we have all to learn for ourselves, and to learn also for one another. What a unity does this give to the human being, to have a life above this life, a business, a home, a Father, away from the desultoriness, the dissipation, which are so wearying and deteriorating to all that is the man in us. "My Father,"—a word of concentration, a word significant of the gathering into one of all the interests and affections which before were scattered abroad. This the one purpose of all education with the name, to make real to the young life this spiritual sonship; and this the one principle of all true human dealing, so to recognize in one another the secret of the Divine relationship, that we neither seek to engross for ourselves hearts which belong to another, nor run any risk of seducing from their rightful allegiance those whom God has appropriated to His own possession. Yet, secondly, of Him who has just spoken of this as a matter of course, that He shall be absorbed in His Father's business, it is written in the other half of the text that, "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto

them." We are brought here into the very heart of the great mystery—God manifest in the flesh. And this is all that is told us of the boyhood of the Saviour—this and one brief hint besides, as to the occupation of His time in manual labour. This, then, as to its outward shape and form, was His Father's business; the inner life went on unknown and unnoticed. He was growing all this time in wisdom; but the one feature of the thirty years is the SUBJECTION. All else is taken for granted—the industry and the piety and the beautiful example—and this only is dwelt upon. "He was subject unto them." "He humbled Himself," St. Paul writes, as the characteristic of the whole of His earthly life—"He humbled Himself, and became obedient." From this beginning it was but a natural process to the long self-repression of the village-home and the drudging workshop; thence to the baptism in Jordan, and the temptation in the desert; thence into the homeless unrests of the ministry, the scorn and rejection of men, the dulness and coldness even of His own, and at last the agony of Calvary, and the shameful death of the cross. Though He was a Son, yet He "learned obedience by the things which He suffered." After Him let us struggle, living the life of faith which realizes the Father in heaven, feeling it His business as our business which makes the knowledge of Him our one submission, and suffers no other allegiance to interfere or compete with this; yet, on the other hand, counts no human subordination, and no personal sacrifice misplaced or undignified, may it but reproduce in faintest reflection the great Epiphany when "He went down with them," &c. "Let your light so shine before men," &c. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *A grand purpose:*—A measureless weight of conviction is in that Boy's word, "I must." A Divine necessity, recognized with blended awe and joy, has Him in its grip. "I must" do My Father's work. A grand purpose fills His being, and His whole nature is bent on its accomplishment, a purpose exalting duty above all human ties and all human pleasures, and embracing within itself the highest ideal of being and doing. Difference of purpose marks man from man. Men take rank in the scale of manhood according to the elevation and purity of their aims. It is a sign of unique capability that the Boy Jesus should soar to the Divine, and embrace it with His whole soul. "I must be about My Father's house and work." (*J. Clifford, D.D.*) *A plea for a rejected translation:*—The necessity of our Lord's being in His Father's house could hardly have been intended by Him as absolutely regulating all His movements, and determining where He should be found, seeing that He had scarcely uttered the words in question before He withdrew Himself with His parents from that house, and spent the next eighteen years substantially away from it. On the other hand, the claim to be engaged in His Father's concerns had doubtless frequently been alleged both explicitly and implicitly in respect of the occupations of His previous home life, and continued to be so during the subsequent periods of His eighteen years' subjection to the parental rule; His acknowledgment of that claim being in no wise intermitted by His withdrawal with His parents from His Father's house. Intimations of a more general kind seem to the writer easily capable of being read between the lines of the inspired narrative, which increase the probability that the Authorized translation, rather than the rendering of the Revisers, expresses the meaning of the evangelist. (*R. E. Wallis, Ph.D.*) *The spiritual development of Christ:*—I. THE FIRST DAWNING CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS MESSIAHSHIP. II. THE FIRST DAWNING CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS PECULIAR RELATION TO HIS FATHER. III. THE RESULTS OF THESE THOUGHTS UPON HIS LIFE. Eighteen years of silence, and then—the regeneration of the world accomplished, His Father's business done. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *The first recorded words of Jesus:*—We are grateful that the Spirit of God has given us this first word of our Lord Jesus, and we love it none the less because it is a deep word. We are not surprised that even as a child the Son of God should give forth mysterious sayings. Stier, to whom I am much indebted for thoughts upon this subject, calls this text "the solitary floweret out of the enclosed garden of thirty years." What fragrance it exhales! It is a bud, but how lovely! It is not the utterance of His ripe manhood, but the question of His youth; yet this half-opened bud discovers delicious sweets and delightful colours worthy of our admiring meditation. We might call these questions of Jesus the prophecy of His character, and the programme of His life. In this our text He set before His mother all that He came into the world to do; revealing His high and lofty nature, and disclosing His glorious errand. This verse is one of those which Luther would call his little Bibles, with the whole gospel compressed into it. I. Here we see THE HOLY CHILD'S PERCEPTION. 1. He evidently perceived most clearly His high relationship. 2. He perceived the constraints of this relationship. Here we have the first appearing of

an imperious "must" which swayed the Saviour all along. We find it written of Him that "He must need go through Samaria," and He Himself said, "I must preach the kingdom of God"; and again to Zaccheus, "I must abide in thy house"; and again, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me." "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders." "The Son of Man must be lifted up." "It behoved Christ to suffer." As a Son He must learn obedience by the things which He suffered. This First-born among many brethren must feel all the drawings of His sonship—the sacred instincts of the holy nature, therefore He must be about His Father's business. Now I put this to you again, for I want to be practical all along: Do you and I feel this Divine "must" as we ought? Is necessity laid upon us, yea, woe laid upon us unless we serve our Divine Father? Do we ever feel a hungering and a thirsting after Him, so that we must draw nigh to Him, and must come to His house, and approach His feet, and must speak with Him, and must hear His voice, and must behold Him face to face? We are not truly subdued to the son-spirit unless it be so; but when our sonship shall have become our master idea, then shall this Divine necessity be felt by us also, impelling us to seek our Father's face. As the sparks fly upward to the central fire, so must we draw nigh unto God, our Father and our all. 3. He perceived the forgetfulness of Mary and Joseph, and He wondered. 4. He perceived that He Himself personally had a work to do. II. THE HOLY CHILD'S HOME. Where should Jesus be but in His Father's dwelling-place? 1. His Father was worshipped there. 2. There His Father's work went on. 3. There His Father's name was taught. III. THE HOLY CHILD'S OCCUPATION. 1. He spent His time in learning and inquiring. "How I pant to be doing good," says some young man. You are right, but you must not be impatient. Go you among the teachers, and learn a bit. You cannot teach yet, for you do not know: go and learn before you think of teaching. Hot spirits think that they are not serving God when they are learning; but in this they err. Beloved, Mary at Jesus' feet was commended rather than Martha, cumbered with much service. "But," says one, "we ought not to be always hearing sermons." No, I do not know that any of you are. "We ought to get to work at once," cries another. Certainly you ought, after you have first learned what the work is: but if everybody that is converted begins to teach we shall soon have a mass of heresies, and many raw and undigested dogmas taught which will rather do damage than good. Run, messenger, run! The King's business requireth haste. Nay, rather stop a little. Have you any tidings to tell? 1. Learn your message, and then run as fast as you please. 2. This Holy Child is about His Father's business, for He is engrossed in it. His whole heart is in the hearing and asking questions. There is a force, to my mind, in the Greek, which is lost in the translation, which drags in the word "about." There is nothing parallel to that word in the Greek, which is, "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's?" The way to worship God is to get heartily into it. 3. The Holy Child declares that He was under a necessity to be in it. "I *must* be." He could not help Himself. Other things did not interest the Holy Child, but this thing absorbed Him. You know the story of Alexander, that when the Persian ambassadors came to his father's court, little Alexander asked them many questions, but they were not at all such as boys generally think of. He did not ask them to describe to him the throne of ivory, nor the hanging gardens of Babylon, nor anything as to the gorgeous apparel of the king; but he asked what weapons the Persians used in battle, in what form they marched, and how far it was to their country; for the boy Alexander felt the man Alexander within him, and he had presentiments that he was the man who would conquer Persia, and show them another way of fighting that would make them turn their backs before him. It is a singular parallel to the case of the Child Jesus, who is taken up with nothing but what is His Father's; because it was for Him to do His Father's work, and to live for His Father's glory, and to execute His Father's purpose even to the last. IV. Let us, lastly, learn THIS HOLY CHILD'S SPECIAL LESSON TO THOSE OF US WHO ARE SEEKERS. 1. Do I address any children of God who have lost sight of Christ? Mark, dearly beloved ones, if you and I want to find our Lord we know where He is. Do we not? He is at His Father's. Let us go unto His Father's: let us go to our Father and His Father, and let us speak with God, and ask Him where Jesus is if we have lost His company. 2. One more word, and that is to sinners who are seeking Christ. It will all come right if you will just think of this—(1) that Jesus Christ is not far away; He is in His Father's house, and that is everywhere; (2) that He is always about His Father's business, and that is, saving sinners. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The motto of Christ's life*:—We have heard of a custom, kept up by

some good men, of choosing, each New Year's morning, a word or a sentence which should be their motto for the twelvemonth they had commenced. But Jesus of Nazareth seems to have made this choice once for all early in His career. He has recorded it; and we now ought to give it a full recognition as the prevailing and controlling principle of His wonderful life; "Wist ye not . . . ?" I. THIS CONCERNS OURSELVES ONLY SO FAR AS WE ADMIT HIM TO BE THE MASTER AND MODEL OF OUR EXISTENCE. If it be true, as we so often assert, that the Christian life is merely Christ's life imitated and reproduced, then His motto is ours also. We write it up over our doorway; we make it the seal of our correspondence; we emblazon it upon our carriage panels; we engrave in on our plate; we stamp it upon our coin; even the ring on our finger, and the buckle on our shoe's latchet, bears the same inscription and device. Each devout and true Christian, that is, gives himself and signs himself over unto God. II. Hence, here is a TEST OF THE GENUINENESS OF OUR RELIGION. III. There is an EMPLOYMENT FOR SUCH A MOTTO in the interpreting of one's occupation in life. Many a man works in his vocation, without looking on it as a "calling" at all. Remember, your business is not yours only, but your "Father's" too. IV. This motto likewise will serve admirably to exhibit what is THE EARLIEST NEED OF A SOUL disturbed with the discovery of its sins and exposure. Write across any merely moral and correct life this saying of Jesus. It will make you think of the line in red ink merchants sometimes print on their cards when they have changed their address; it is *on* the card, not *in* it. A worldly life requires not regulation only, but regeneration. The change must be radical. It is not the *twist* of the threads, but the *threads* which make the fabric of the character wrong. V. This motto will settle what are one's SAFE RELATIONS TO THE WORLD AROUND. The line must be drawn at the point where the world yields wholly to the "Father's business." VI. Right here comes the decision, also, concerning the PROPRIETY OF QUOTING CHURCH MEMBERS FOR PATTERNS. The imperfections of others are no excuse for oneself. Being a Christian does not consist in proving other people to be hypocrites. The motto of Jesus says nothing about church members' business, but the "Father's." VII. This motto will show, in like manner, THE REASON FOR SUCH SORE DISAPPOINTMENTS AS WE SOMETIMES EXPERIENCE, when those who promise well for a while fall away suddenly into sin. They have only been living a surface life of dependence on self. Their purpose has gone no higher than mere conduct. Whereas the end of Christian life in all its outgoings is Jesus Christ Himself. Wealth is gained that the owner may use it for Christ. Learning is acquired in order to teach our fellow-men about Christ. Out from the plane of human history springs one mysterious life, the model of all worthy existence. There it stands in the Scriptures out against the clear sky, visible to a hundred generations. The pattern of our life is found in the characteristics of that: the motive of our life is to be found in the love we bear for that: the corrective of our life is to be found in laying it alongside of that: and the stability of our Christian life is to be found in the unfailing help it receives from that. We are held up from falling, not by our hold upon Jesus' hand, but by His hold upon ours; we love Him because He first loved us; united to Him we can be sure He will sustain us in temptation. VIII. This saying will AID US IN ESTABLISHING OPEN ISSUES wherever we are. Compromises are an invention of the devil. Keep up the boundaries between good and evil. On the one side is right, on the other is wrong; on the one peril, on the other safety; on the one truth, on the other falsehood; on the one those who are of the world, worldly, on the other those who are about the "Father's business." (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Christ about His Father's business:—I. NOTE THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. It was a spirit of undivided consecration to the will of God His Father. It was a spirit urged onward by an absolute necessity to serve God. "Wist yet not that I *must*?" There is a something in Me which prevents Me from doing other work. I feel an all-controlling, overwhelming influence which constrains Me at all times and in every place to be about My Father's business; the spirit of high, holy, entire, sincere, determined consecration in heart to God. 1. What was the impelling power which made Christ say this? (1) The spirit of obedience which thoroughly possessed itself of His bosom. (2) A sacred will to the work which He had undertaken. (3) He had a vow upon Him—the vow to do the work from all eternity. 2. What was His Father's business? (1) To send into the world a perfect example for our imitation. (2) The establishment of a new dispensation. (3) The great work of expiation. II. IMITATE THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST. Be about your Father's business with all earnestness, because that is the way of usefulness. You cannot do your own business and God's too. You cannot serve God and self any more than

you can serve God and mammon. If you make your own business God's business, you will do your business well, and you will be useful in your day and generation. Again, would you be happy? Be about your Father's business. Oh, it is a sweet employment to serve your Father. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Epiphany of Christ's Childhood:*—Christ is thoroughly a child, thoroughly a youth, thoroughly a man. In every stage of His life He is a representative of human life at that stage. He is not an unnatural child or boy; but He shows His Divine nature in the natural ways and forms of childhood. His humanity is perfect; not marvellously or strangely precocious. We may draw all the usual features of human child-life out of this story. I. Take first the ACTIVE DELIGHT IN A NEW EXPERIENCE, which so belongs to all children. Manhood loses it. Disappointment takes off the edge. It is Christ's first visit to Jerusalem, and He is sensitively and zestfully full of it. He is alive to all the surroundings of His country's capital and centre. Thus He is the champion of childhood, insisting that its natural features (such as inquisitiveness), must be met and gratified; showing that through them God was manifested in His life, that they are not wrong in themselves, that they may be channels of the Holy Spirit's action. Delight and liberty are the simple creed of childhood. It would save many a young life from future excess; it would keep in the family many a prodigal and wanderer, and early emigrant, if this feature of a true, full child were at once recognized; if parents would not only look for a child's trust and obedience, but also for his activity. II. IMPULSIVE TRUTHFULNESS TO SELF. Childhood never argues sophistically, contrary to the impulses of its nature, as a man delights to do often. "How is it . . . ?" "How could I help going into My Father's temple and talking of Him and speaking for Him? It is the great impulse, and duty, and mission of My life. And I but obeyed it. Did you not know I would be here? How could you expect anything else?" Here was a perfect, holy nature, saying in its childhood "I must," and there was nothing more to be said in answer. III. FILIALNESS: sense of Fatherhood, and of a family. Remember every child has a heavenly as well as an earthly father and home. Besides the second commandment in our Lord's code there is the first. Religion is but a higher application of the principles of morality, the doing for God what you do for man; being filled with the sense of God's Fatherhood as with that of earthly parentage; carrying dutifulness from the home of one to the higher home of the other. I remember going through a cave of stalactite, hung with glistening pendants, and capable of wonderful reflections, but shut away from all sunlight and gleam of heaven's power. A simple torch won marvellous effects from those waiting walls. But it was a great longing all the while in one's mind. Oh for one stream of daylight through all this sleeping glory! If earth, made light, will so lighten it, what would the light of heaven do? So one looks with regret on much of the sweetness of life: upon a filial son; upon a life whose earthly affection lights it up with gleams of bright beauty, but with none of heaven's light streaming through its filial devotion, to give it the supreme glory of a life of a son of God, delighting in being about the Father's business; flinging over it the life which you see in Christ, in this Epiphany of His childhood. (*Frederick Brooks.*) *Childhood to be dedicated to God:*—Life must be wholly a manifestation of God. Every age is of value. Each section of life brings its own contribution to the perfected Christian character. Childhood has its own forces, its own kinds of strength and power, which other parts of life do not furnish; and they must be used in developing the man of God. You lose something if you put off religion to your later years. Your religious character never feels the benefit and power of these child forces, which do not belong to later life. You know the value of an overture in music; how its simplicity helps all the remainder of the more elaborate variations and movements. You could not start at once into the midst of the symphony or oratorio, and intelligently enjoy and use it. So youth brings its own peculiar contribution to the harmony of godly, Christly living. That is the teaching of the Boyhood of Christ. As the day without its dewy morning and all its influences; as the day beginning with hot noon; so is a life which begins for God at late years. We disjoint our religious lives, not seeing that 'the child is the father of the man,' and that all our days must be bound each to each by natural piety. Christ puts them altogether again, shows God in and through all of them, even in and through boyhood, and says, "It is not merely that you may be God's at the end; it is that all from the beginning may be His; and that at the end you may have a product towards which every stage of living has assisted." Oh, may Christ, the truest human child that has ever lived, win all the freshness and young strength there is yet in us for His

Father. (*Ibid.*) *The constraining motive* :—What could compel the God who was equal to the Father? Was it not the constraint of His own loving and obedient heart? He must be about His Father's business, because He could not help it. To obey the Father was to obey the impulse of His own heart. He had undertaken to do His Father's will, and in doing it He did what was emphatically His own will. They were so completely one, that Christ was compelled to be about His Father's business. This word *must* is no strange word to us women. We know well enough what it means. We, too, have rendered the obedience of love, which is the only kind of obedience worth the name. Is there any sweetness in all the world that can equal that which comes from obedience to our soul's beloved? The *must* is not a yoke which other hands have laid upon us; it is the outcome of our own hearts. It never thinks of possible reward or possible punishment, There is no need of a set of rules, or of verbal commands, much less of urging words. We obey because we must; because otherwise the hunger of our love could never be satisfied; because if there were a *must not* instead of a *must*, all the joy and gladness would go out of our life. We should not know what to do with our lips, and hands, and hearts, if we might not employ them for our dearest. But think what this *must* means in the text. "I *must* be about My Father's business." Is the Divine love within us less strong than the human? Are we Christ-like in this respect? Can we say, "I delight to do Thy will, O God"? Would it not change our lives a little if we felt this *must* as Jesus felt it? Would it not make of us better women, because better Christians? We feel that we must be about the business of our husbands, our children, or our friends; but we too often regard our Father's business as something for our leisure moments only, to be taken up or left according to convenience. There is too often no *must* in this case. And this is the reason of much of the sorrow which is in our lives. We know so little of Christian joy, because we know so little of perfect obedience. We are Marthas, who are cumbered about much serving, rather than Marys, whose whole souls go out in love to the Master. Let us start afresh, and begin at the beginning. Let us abide with our Father, until, knowing Him better, we love Him more; and then say to all the hindering influences that are round about us, "Wist ye not that I *must* be about my Father's business?" (*Marianne Farningham.*) *The earthly and the heavenly parentage* :—It was a hard, stern lesson for the heart of the mother; she lives only in Him, but He has now another life and another being. Such is her first lessons in the mystery of the two lives, the twofold relationship. For a considerable portion of the life of all men, the two relationships are at one. The parent represents God to the child, and the child sees God through the parent. It is a sweet and lovely time for the mother, which nature perhaps would bid her protract. She feels that only good can come of it, so pure and so heavenward are her own aspirations for her child. Cannot the son continue to seek heaven only through her? Is there any moral blank, is there any spiritual necessity to forbid her saying as a thing for all time and for all life, "So be it, it is good for us to be thus"? Yes, she must learn the great lesson, "All souls are Mine; as the soul of the parent, so also the soul of the son is Mine"; and God is the speaker. She must bend her neck to this discipline, or it will be the worse for her and for her child. The child has a Father in heaven, and at the first dawn of reason he must be about his Father's business. There are parents who have sought to perpetuate the spiritual infancy, to stand between God and the boy, to be still the conscience-keeper and the mediator even when the open consciousness of the relationships direct and immediate should have warned them off as from holy ground. They have done so, and the Nemesis has been sharp and swift, the devotion diverted from God has found its object in Belial or Mammon. The mother may divert, but she cannot retain it. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *God's business the only work for man* :—Here is the true thought for us, not only that all true work which we do is God's work, but that work which is not of God is not work, does not properly exist in the universe at all. "There *is no* work but Thine." When we first take up our place and labour, we mistake the meaning of our life. We think we are born to do our own will, and we act upon our thought. Straightway all our work becomes selfish: we toil and struggle for ourselves, we are an end unto ourselves; and the result is that we find our work becoming mean; our view of life contemptuous; ourselves ignoble. But when the root idea of life is changed, when we know that we are here to do God's will, and that His will is love to us and all, the impulse and end of our work are altered. We accept the duties laid upon us, and are not anxious to make them into advantages to self. We think, "God has placed me here and told me to

do this. He is Right, and knowledge and good must flow to all if I am faithful. I am His instrument; through me He is making a phase of Himself known to man; through me He is doing a portion of His mighty labour." The thought transfigures our view of the universe; immediately work becomes unselfish and sanctified, life is ennobled, the commonest drudgery is rendered beautiful, suffering is gladly borne. Men call us aside to the pursuit of pleasure, to the passion of excitement, to the fame and honour we may win, to seek our own will and gain it. "Hush," we say, "we live now in deeper joy than you can know, we have loftier excitements. Fame, honour, they are in His hand and not in ours. My own will! I have my will when I do His will." How magnificent a thing might life become could we but turn away from all temptations to do our own will, and say to the tempters, were they even father or mother—say in the strength of Christ—"I cannot; wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *About His Father's business*:—At His mother's tender reproach He turns, and lifts His dreamy eyes towards her—eyes that have been only intent on the sacred scroll before Him, and raised only to the grave faces of the official teachers around Him. For the first time He is aware of His own absorption. It seems incredible to Him that those nearest and dearest should be out of sympathy with Him at such a moment—unconscious of the spiritual influences which to Him were all in all—of the fascination of the law—of the solemnities of the Temple, from which He had not been able to tear Himself. He stands still, rooted to the spot; He has one more question to ask, not of the priest, but of His parents: "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" It sounded like a simple home appeal—had He not always been zealous about the carpentering business in the workshop of His reputed father at Nazareth—should He be less zealous about the work the heavenly Father was carrying on in Him at Jerusalem? A call so distinct—an opportunity so unique—a combination so complete—in the Temple—sitting in the midst of doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions; there was indeed *business*—more profitable beyond compare than anything to be found at Nazareth; there was at last edification beyond all human handicraft. He could not choose but be there—until called back. I *must*, He said—such moments of spiritual constraint fashion our lives. I *must* speak out, I *must* give it up, I *must* strike the blow, make the sacrifice, sound the matter to its depths, be alone in prayer, search out one who can teach or guide me, if only for a single brief hour, or for one fugitive day at a certain crisis—under the constraint of guiding events, a spiritual voice, a Divine leading. I *must* sit in the Temple, hear, inquire. I feel this leap into the future, this sudden growth in wisdom. I can make no mistake—the revelation is too cogent, too inward, too harmonious. I am being dealt with. I cannot choose, but hear and be as I am. I *must* be about My Father's business. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Earnestness exemplified*:—The Rev. N. Haycroft, in urging earnestness as an essential qualification in a Sunday-school teacher, says:—The narrative of a colporteur in Spain, on one occasion, will best illustrate this point. He was travelling on foot through the provinces, selling Bibles. At the close of a long and weary day's journey, he approached, hungry and footsore, the outskirts of a village, where he met a Roman Catholic priest, who asked him what he had in his pack. The colporteur replied, "Bibles and Testaments; and I shall be happy to sell you one." "Can you sell me a real Bible?" "Yes; a real Bible for real money." He unshouldered his pack, and the priest purchased a Testament. Just as he was about to depart he said to the colporteur, "You seem to have travelled far to-day!" "Yes, I have," was the answer; "but it is about my Master's business." "You are footsore and wayworn." Yes; but it is all about my Master's business." "Your Master must have a very faithful servant in you," said the priest. The colporteur, not liking to expatiate on his own merits, was inclined to cut the conversation short, and prepared to pursue his journey. The priest interposed, and pressed him to remain and lodge with him all night. "No," said the colporteur; "I cannot accept your hospitality, for I must be about my Master's business." "But you must lodge somewhere, so that you may as well come with me." After some persuasion he went. Having spent a useful hour or two together, they retired for the night. The priest was an early riser, and at six o'clock in the morning he called to his housekeeper to know whether the stranger was up yet. "Oh yes!" said she, "he has been gone from here this three hours; and the last words he said were, 'I must be about my Master's business.'" Here was earnestness;—and remember there is no qualification for a high pursuit like earnestness. Luther was in earnest; and he

pressed on till he had secured the glorious Reformation. Howard was in earnest; and he rested not till he had visited all the prisons of Europe, and made their sorrows patent to the world. Wilberforce, and Clarkson, and Buxton were in earnest; and they persevered till they had obtained the liberation of the slave. Napoleon was in earnest in his ambitious projects; and step by step he dashed on to victory, nor rested till he had trampled under foot the thrones of Europe, and made himself the arbiter of the destinies of the world. His one saving quality was earnestness. *Need of diligence in God's service*:—What a lesson for all young people! You think you need not begin serving God just yet. You have plenty of years before you. How do you know that? Do people never die young—suddenly, without warning? Begin at once to redeem the time. Say to yourself each morning—"My soul, thou hast to-day a God to glorify, a Christ to imitate, a soul to save, a body to keep under, time to redeem, temptation to overcome—verily, I must be about my Father's business." (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Attending to God's business*:—Dr. Parr, in his Life of Archbishop Ussher, relates that while that prelate was once preaching in the church at Covent Garden, a message arrived from the Court that the king wished immediately to see him. He descended from the pulpit, listened to the command, and told the messenger that he was then, as he saw, employed in God's business, but as soon as he had done he would attend upon the king to understand his pleasure; and then continued his sermon. (*Baxendale's Anecdotes.*) *Self-forgetfulness in the Lord's work*:—There is in New York a Christian lady, who surely is one of the bravest of the brave. It was found necessary that the surgeons should perform upon her a severe and dangerous operation, and for that purpose she was taken from her home to a private room in the City Hospital. The probabilities were against her living through the operation, but it was the only hope of relief. She stood face to face with probable death under the surgeon's knife, to say nothing of her great suffering from her disease. It might have been supposed that her anxiety for her children, her own suffering, and her great danger would have so filled her mind, that she would have done well had she fixed her thoughts on heaven, borne her sufferings meekly, and waited in unshaken faith for her summons home. But she was one of God's heroines. She found that the skilled nurse who had charge of her was not a Christian, and she lost sight of herself, in the desire to bless the soul of this stranger. She requested the nurse to read the Bible aloud to her, and selected such passages as she believed most likely to rouse the nurse to repentance. She talked to her about religion, prayed with her and asked God to give her this soul before He called her home; and the prayer was answered. We are glad to be able to add that the lady recovered, and it is likely she owed her life, humanly speaking, to her zeal for her Lord's work. For her thoughts were thus withdrawn from herself, so that sorrow for her loved ones and shrinking from suffering and dangers did not wear her nerves and exhaust her vitality. *The spirit of Christ's life*:—Such a sentence at this time in His career is solitary in its grandeur, and rears its head like a sunlit peak, flashing its golden light backward along His infancy and boyhood, revealing its hidden progress and interpreting its experiences; reaching forward to the day of His baptism, and even to the hour in which He offers Himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world; and proving that the "element" present in this early utterance makes this but one of a series of luminous summits of the same mountain range. Look into the consciousness out of which that saying leaps. It bespeaks a soul that lies like an unruffled lake in the broad and beaming sunshine of the Father's face. It is as surprising in its frankness as it is marvellous in its fulness. As if it were a flash of a divinely religious genius, we listen and ponder and admire; as when, for the first time, the spirit is spell-bound before Angelo's Moses, or when Milan Cathedral, a splendid mass of perfected thought and finished loveliness, first stands out revealed to our gaze in the clear sunlight of heaven. (*J. Clifford, D.D.*) *Christ our example*:—"Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Let us then—First, state the circumstances in which He now was. Secondly, concede what was peculiar in His case. And thirdly, explain what is common between Him and you on this subject. I. And, first, WITH REGARD TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH HE NOW WAS. A remarkable veil is thrown over the Saviour's infancy, His childhood, His youth, and His private life. But there is a difference between Him and us, and I therefore pass on—II. Secondly, TO CONCEDE WHAT WAS PECULIAR IN HIS CASE. There was much that was peculiar. 1. His relation was peculiar. God was His Father in such a sense, as He is not ours. 2. The business He had to accomplish for His Father was peculiar. He said in His intercessory prayer, "I have glorified Thee

on earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." This was, to interpose as a Mediator between God and us; to lay His hands on us both; to finish transgression. No, "He trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none to help Him." 3. His obligations were peculiar. "I must be about My Father's business." He was not originally under this obligation. He incurred it for our sakes. Lastly, His answer was peculiar. Never was there before, and never can there be again, a child to be addressed in a state like this. Though, therefore, His reply was exactly pertinent as regarded Himself, yet it is not proper in all respects for others. Yet where there is no equality, there may be a likeness. Though in all things He has the pre-eminence, He is the model of the new creation, and we are predestinated as Christians to be conformed to the image of God's own Son. And now I come to the—III. Third part of my subject, in which I purpose TO EXPLAIN WHAT IS COMMON BETWEEN HIM AND YOU ON THIS SUBJECT. 1. God is your Father. 2. That there is a business which your Father has assigned you. We call it your Father's business, because He will punish all who neglect it, and graciously reward those who observe it. What is this business? You have the Scriptures; search the Scriptures. There you will find it described both negatively and positively. There you will learn that it is to avoid that which is evil and to cling to what is right. 3. Remember that this business you are under an obligation to regard and pursue. It is not to be observed as a thing of indifference; not as an optional thing; but you must be about your Father's business. You are under the obligation of justice in this business. Whatever talents you possess, or blessings you enjoy, they come from Him, and He never relinquished His property in any one of them. 4. His answer is to be your answer, to all those who would interfere with your concern in this cause, you must say as He did, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" There are many who will in various ways do this; but for the present we may rank them under five classes. And in the first class we put those whom I shall call wonderers. The apostle says, "The natural man knoweth not the things of God, because they are spiritually discerned." They wonder with regard to your conduct. Second class, we put reproachers. That which you do from the conviction of conscience many will ascribe to obstinacy or hypocrisy, or to a wish to excite notice and to distinguish yourself. Third class, I put the hinderers. There are some persons who have nothing in the world to do themselves, and very naturally judge of others by themselves. Fourth class, I put bigots. There are some persons who seem to possess nothing like judgment, and are never able to distinguish between things that differ. Fifth and last class are complainers. But to conclude. Here is a beautiful example to the young. The youthful Redeemer, my dear children, of twelve years old, is saying, "I must be about My Father's business." Oh! be influenced by this example; and remember what He says, "They that seek Me early shall find Me." (*W. Jay.*) *How we must make religion our business*:—From this example of our blessed Saviour, in making His Father's work His business, we learn this great truth:—That it is the duty of every Christian to make religion his business. For the illustrating and unfolding of this, there are three questions to be resolved:—I. What is meant by religion? II. Why we must make religion our business? III. What it is to make religion our business? QUESTION I. WHAT IS MEANT BY RELIGION? QUESTION II. The second question is, WHY WE MUST MAKE RELIGION OUR BUSINESS? I answer, because religion is a matter of the highest nature; while we are serving God, we are doing angels' work. QUESTION III. The third question is, WHAT IT IS TO MAKE RELIGION OUR BUSINESS? I answer: it consists principally in these seven things:—1. We make religion our business, when we wholly devote ourselves to religion. "Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear" (Psa. cxix. 38); as a scholar who devotes himself to his studies makes learning his business. 2. We make religion our business, when we intend the business of religion chiefly. It doth *principatum obtinere* ["gain the pre-eminence"]. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matt. vi. 33); first in time, before all things, and first in affection, above all things. 3. We make religion our business, when our thoughts are most busied about religion. 4. We make religion our business when our main end and scope is to serve God. 5. We make religion our business, when we do trade with God every day. "Our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20). 6. We make religion our business, when we redeem time from secular things for the service of God. A good Christian is the greatest monopolizer: he doth hoard up all the time he can for religion: "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee" (Psa. cxix. 62). 7. We make religion our business when we serve God with all our might. USE I. INFORMATION.

BRANCH I. Hence learn, that there are few good Christians. Oh, how few make religion their business! Is he an artificer that never wrought in the trade? Is he a Christian that never wrought in the trade of godliness! How few make religion their business! 1. Some make religion a complement, but not their business. 2. Others make the world their business. "Who mind earthly things" (Phil. iii. 19). BRANCH II. Hence see how hard it is to be saved. USE II. TRIAL. Let us deal impartially with our own souls, and put ourselves upon a strict trial before the Lord, whether we make religion our business. And for our better progress herein, I shall lay down ten signs and characters of a man that makes religion his business, and by these as by a gospel-touchstone, we may try ourselves:—CHARACTER I. He who makes religion his business doth not place his religion only in externals. "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly" (Rom. ii. 28). CHARACTER II. He who makes religion his business avoids everything that may be a "hindrance" to him in his work. CHARACTER III. He who makes religion his business hath a care to preserve conscience inviolable, and had rather offend all the world than offend his conscience. "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience" (2 Tim. i. 3). CHARACTER IV. He who makes religion his business, religion hath an influence upon all his civil actions. CHARACTER V. He who makes religion his business, is good in his calling and relation. Relative grace doth much grace religion. CHARACTER VI. He who makes religion his business hath a care of his company. He dares not twist into a cord of friendship with sinners: "I have not sat with vain persons" (Psa. xxvi. 4). Diamonds will not cement with rubbish. CHARACTER VII. He who makes religion his business keeps his spiritual watch always by him. The good Christian keeps his watch candle always burning. CHARACTER VIII. He who makes religion his business, every day casts up his accounts to see how things go in his soul. CHARACTER IX. He who makes religion his business will be religious, whatever it cost him. CHARACTER X. He that makes religion his business lives every day as his last day. RULES FOR MAKING RELIGION OUR BUSINESS. RULE I. If you would make religion your business, possess yourselves with this maxim, that religion is the end of your creation. RULE II. If you would make religion your business, get a change of heart wrought. RULE III. If you would make religion your business, set yourselves always under the eye of God. RULE IV. If you would make religion your business, think often of the shortness of time. RULE V. If you would make religion your business, get an understanding heart. RULE VI. If you would make religion your business, implore the help of God's Spirit. MOTIVE I. The sweetness that is in religion. All her paths are pleasantness (Prov. iii. 17). MOTIVE II. The second and last consideration is, that millions of persons have miscarried to eternity, for want of making religion their business. They have done something in religion, but not to purpose: they have begun, but have made too many stops and pauses. (*T. Watson, M.A.*) *The business of youth*:—1. To regain the knowledge of God. 2. To renew intercourse with God. The business of youth is—3. To return to the service of God, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherd and to the bishop of souls." By the service of God, I intend, a life of filial obedience to God's will. His service does not consist in mere prayers and praises, in reading Scripture, and in attending public worship; even activity in spreading religion, blended with devotional exercises, does not compass God's service; that service consists in doing and in suffering all God's will, and His will embraces every act, and claims every hour. The business and the service in which you are occupied, may be made a course of duty to God: perform what you have to do, as unto God; do it according to God's will; do it in the spirit of obedience to God; and in your worldly calling you will glorify Him; your conduct will exhibit the holiness, the justice, and the goodness of His will; your spirit will manifest His nature; your circumstances will display His power and His love; the place of your daily labour will be as much the temple of your ministrations, as the place where the seraphs cry; and your avocations as truly worship, as is their song of "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord Almighty." This is the business of youth: through the provisions of the gospel, to regain the knowledge of God—to renew intercourse with God—to return to the service of God—in one word, to "Remember the Creator." Youth are expected to be thus occupied, by the highest authority and by the holiest beings. This expectation is reasonable:—Because, 1. The season of youth is the right time for the commencement of this business—it is the right time, because the youth is as much the creature of God as he ever can be—it is the right time, because the time in which God requires it to be begun. "In the days of thy youth, remember

thy Creator." I do not deny that religion is often entered upon during manhood, and sometimes in old age; but it is too late; not too late for salvation, but too late to be right. God has not given men a discharge from His service during youth; delay is, therefore, sin. Are mid-day and evening only ruled by the sun? does the earth nourish only the full-grown tree, or the full-blown flower? then why should life's morning be without God, and the plants of youth without a place in God's vineyard? The expectation is reasonable:—2. Because, in the youthful stage of life, there is no peculiar impediment to the pursuit of this business. There are impediments, and they are great, and they are many: a fallen nature, an adversary in Satan, and an evil world, involve them. But these sources of opposition exist in every stage of life; and, I ask, when are they most full and powerful? Youth has nothing in it, as youth, presenting impediments. The peculiar features of early life are these:—The character is unformed—habits are not fixed—the spirits are buoyant—cares are not heavy; but in these features of youth we find facilities, not obstacles. The Scriptures and the ordinances of religion are as adapted to youth as to old age; if they supply strong meat for men, they yield also milk for babes. God is not slow to be found of the young, to hold fellowship with them, and to introduce them to His service. "I love," saith God, "them that love Me, and them that seek Me early shall find Me." The expectation is reasonable:—3. Because, nothing so promotes the happiness of life, as the early pursuit of this business. Distinguish happiness from mere pleasurable feeling: the latter is not always the state of a godly man. But if a quickened intellect, if shelter from many moral evils, if fellowship with that Being whose wisdom and knowledge and influence are infinite, if peace of mind, if securing the chief end of life, if the love and care of God, if the prospect of a glorious immortality can constitute happiness, then it is found in the knowledge, in the fellowship, and in the service of God. The season of youth is the time in which happiness is most ardently sought; and if the young but become occupied with that which we have called the business of life, they not only secure in youth the purest and most solid enjoyment which can be found on earth, but they treasure up happiness for manhood and old age, yea, even to eternity. Godliness will promote the welfare of the young in their business. The godly youth attends to business with diligence and fidelity, and (performing his duties in the spirit of prayer) with the prospect of success. He performs everything as unto God—he acts by God's guidance, he inherits God's blessing. Any wise master will value greatly a pious apprentice, a godly assistant, a religious servant. Sunday religion—mere Bible-reading religion—mere church- and chapel-going religion, all employers, pious and profane, agree to abhor, but the reality in a youth all must prefer. (*S. Martin, D.D.*) *My Father's business*:—Once, a great Roman emperor had conquered a great country, and he had come back to Rome, and he was having what is called "a triumph." He was going up with great pomp, chariots, and soldiers, and great hosts of people! A very little boy ran out of the crowd that was looking at the emperor, and was running up to him, when the crowd put him back, and said, "Don't you know it is the emperor?" The boy replied, "Yes, he is your emperor, but he is my father!" "My father!" "That great king is your emperor, but he is my father!" A man once said, "Life is a thread; but the thread is in my Father's hand, so it is all right!" Do you understand that? What a blessed thing it is to be able to say, "My Father!" Beautiful words, aren't they? I don't know any words like them. "My Father!" It is no use unless you can say, "My." My dear boys and girls, can you look up into that great Father's face, and say, "He is my Father"? "I must be about my Father's business." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Busy*:—I have read a little fable about a hard frost. When everything was frozen there was one little stream running still. It was not frozen, and somebody said to the little stream, "Little stream, why aren't you frozen?" The reply was, "I am too busy to be frozen. I am going too fast, too quickly, to be frozen." The best way is to be very busy—have plenty to do. (*Ibid.*) *Father's business*:—I should like to say something about a man who wrote a very clever book. At one time he did not believe in God. One day he was wanting a little water, and he knocked at a cottage door and asked for some water. A little girl opened the door, and he said to her, "Will your mother give me a little water to drink?" She replied, "Come in, sir; my mother will be happy to give you some water." He went in, and saw the little girl had been reading the Bible; and he said to her, "What, getting your task done?" She said, "No, sir, no task. I am reading my Bible." "Yes," he said, "you are getting your task out of the Bible." "No, sir," she repeated, "I am reading the Bible."

He said to her, "Do you love the Bible?" In a childish way she replied, "I thought everybody loved the Bible." This struck him very much. This little girl loved her Bible; it was no task to her, but a pleasure. He went home and read the Bible for himself. That was the beginning of it. She was "doing her Father's business." How did it become God's business? And it is the great business of our day, to be reading the Bible, praying, thinking; and in our private devotions. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 50, 51. **And was subject unto them.**—*Obedience to parents:*—How significant a sentence! God, whom the angels obey, is subject to Joseph and Mary! Children, behold your model, and learn from the example of Jesus to be obedient to your parents. I. By reverence. Reverence is required—1. By the law of nature. (1) God has planted in the hearts of men a reverential feeling towards those to whom they owe their lives. Hence, even the heathen honour their parents. (2) Reverence is due to every superior from his subjects; consequently due to parents from their children, because they are the God-given superiors and guardians. 2. By the duty of gratitude. The parents are, next to God, the greatest benefactors of their children; it is from them that they receive food, clothing, education. 3. By an explicit commandment of God (Exod. xx. 12). (1) The first commandment with promise (Eph. vi. 1–3). (2) The most dreadful, because of the threats imposed upon its violation (Deut. xxvii. 16). II. By love. Love is required—1. By God Himself (Prov. xxx. 17). 2. By reason. Parents love their children, wherefore they deserve to be loved in return. The children of the Gentiles loved their parents. Æneas carried on his shoulders his old father out of Troy. 3. Love is excited by the example of good children. Joseph. Jesus. III. By deeds. 1. Obedience, which is required (1) by nature; (2) by God Himself. 2. By active charity in their necessities. Children must (1) bear their imperfections and infirmities; (2) console them in their adversities and relieve their wants if necessary; (3) assist them in their advanced age; (4) in time of dangerous illness provide for spiritual and medical help; (5) pray for them. Conclusion: If children would comply with these duties towards their parents, their reward would be temporal and eternal happiness. (*Wansidal.*) *The Holy Family:*—There is a pious legend that St. Luke, an artist as he was, painted several pictures of Jesus and Mary; however this may be, we know at any rate that he drew some lovely pictures of the youth of Jesus, and of the Holy Family in which he dwelt. I. The domestic virtues of the Holy Family. 1. Fear of God. This was manifested by their journey to Jerusalem, made by Mary the tender Virgin, though not required by law, and by Jesus hardly yet bound by law. An admonition to Christian families not to stay away from public worship. 2. Their activity. (1) Joseph was a carpenter, and supported the Holy Family by handiwork. Mary managed the household. Jesus assisted both of them. (2) They were united in their daily works. Co-operation. 3. Peacefulness and meekness. II. The characteristic virtues of the individuals composing the Holy Family. 1. Joseph. An Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile; a model to all. (1) His willingness to yield to God's arrangements. Protection of Mary. Flight into Egypt. (2) His loving care of Jesus and Mary. 2. Mary. Full of grace; a model to all women. (1) Her innocence, resignation, humility. (2) Her discretion and love of retirement. 3. Jesus is your model, ye sons and daughters. (1) His conduct at the Temple school. He manifested His knowledge, but without ostentation. (2) His obedience. This is the touchstone of the inner value of a child, and the path to wisdom and happiness. (3) His growth in wisdom and grace. (*Weinzierl.*) *Development of Christ through the influences of home:*—In the life of Christ we have the actual union of pure Divinity with ordinary human life. He traversed all its stages—childhood, boyhood, youth, and manhood; He touched all that was universally common to pure humanity in each, and from henceforth there is no life, even to the very lowest, in which the real may not become what it is in its purity—the ideal; no office, no work, which, done in His spirit, the making of a book or the digging of a garden, may not accord with the highest imagination of your spirit, and chime in with your most poetical vision of perfection. Trace the influence of His home-life upon the character of Christ. I. It established His love of man upon a sure foundation. He grew naturally in love. It was a normal, slow development of the affection which was to die for the world. II. It established in His mind a deep sense of the worthiness of domestic and social relations. He gives no sanction to the error of those who think that in separation from all domestic and social ties they can

live more purely and worship God with a more entire devotion; that a systematic contempt for all the bonds which bind mother to son, and wife to husband, is a proof of the highest spirituality; whose spiritual religion consists in a denial of the natural piety of the heart, and whose efforts for a reformation of human nature are founded on a denial of human nature. Think of Him at the marriage feast; at the grave of Lazarus; see how tenderly He deals with the widow of Nain, and afterwards with His own mother at the Cross. III. FRIENDSHIP. IV. PATRIOTISM. The source of the tears He shed over Jerusalem arose, humanly speaking, in the heart of His mother. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *The home at Nazareth*:—I. In this one verse we are admitted to see the home life of Jesus. Home life is the God-appointed training ground of the human character; from the home life of childhood springs the maturity of manhood for good or for evil. II. 1. Let children and young people learn from the example of the Divine Child that home life, with all its little duties and trials, is the discipline which God has appointed as the best training for the duties and trials of a wider sphere. 2. Not infrequently when in youth the spiritual eye is opened to the things of God, and a desire is kindled after a higher life, there follows a restlessness which rebels against the irksomeness of the small details and daily duties of common life. At such a time it is well to remember that it was immediately after the Child Jesus had recognized more clearly the Divine mission to which He was summoned, that He went down to Nazareth and there lived in subjection to His earthly guardians, conscious that in so doing He was most truly "about His Father's business." 3. Let parents also learn, from the example of the Virgin Mother, to reverence the child-mind. (*Canon Vernon Hutton, M.A.*) *Every duty has its proper place and time*:—The fact that Jesus loved Bible study did not keep Him from going with His parents when they called Him, or from obeying them so long as they had a right to His obedience. Duties never conflict. The wish to go to a prayer-meeting, or to a Sunday school, or to any other church service will not justify the neglect of any well-defined duty elsewhere. God approves of no devotion on the part of any servant of His which makes that servant less loving and considerate and faithful toward mother, sister, wife, or child. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *The true order of obedience*:—The only acts recorded of Christ's childhood are acts of obedience—to God His heavenly Father, and also to His earthly parents. He thus shows what the special duty of childhood and youth is; and teaches what the true order of obedience is, viz., that the foundation of obedience to man is to be laid in obedience to God; a lesson made more cogent by the particular circumstances of our Lord's relationship to Joseph, which was not one of natural, but of putative filiation; and therefore teaches the duty of obedience to parents, natural, civil, and ecclesiastical. (*Bishop Chris. Wordsworth.*) *The filial dutifulness of Jesus*:—He was subject—He, the great God of heaven and earth, continually submitted Himself to His parents. In little things doubtless; for domestic life consists of little things; and submission could not otherwise have been shown. If they sent Him on a message to a neighbour, He the Great Sender of the apostles, delivered the message faithfully. If they bade Him sweep the house and search for a lost coin, He, "the wisdom of God," who seeks diligently for lost souls, did even as He was bade. If they taught Him joiner's work, and showed Him how to make a plough or a yoke for oxen, He, who lays on men an easy yoke and a light burden, learned cheerfully and gladly, and threw His mind into the trade. If they bade Him work in their little plot of garden ground, and train the creepers or water the flowers, He, the great Dresser of the vineyard of His Church, who rears souls by the dews of His grace and the discipline of His providence, took in hand the water-pot and the gardening tools. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *A great love and a great lesson*:—A great love, inasmuch as He yielded this submission in our nature for our sakes; and we are freely welcome to all the benefits of it. A great lesson; for, if submission were the law of His life, how much more fitting is it that it should be the law of ours! Oh, that we may embrace the love! Oh, that we may learn the lesson! In doing both these things the Christian life consists. (*Ibid.*) *Home duties*:—The earthly call found Him, too. It was His *duty*, when found, to go with His parents, and He went. Ponder that. Hint of universal significance. Never trust a heavenly call which bids you neglect your obvious duties whilst they remain such. The things that lie near to your hand, round about you, are as much the Father's business as anything else. Don't think that being off to early communion and neglecting your children and your husband and your housework, is doing your Father's business. Don't suppose that charity out of the house, and dancing attendance on the clergyman to the

neglect of hearth and home, is your Father's business. Learn of the Saviour. When the home claim came He immediately left what, at the moment, was of absorbing interest to Him; He left the excitement of Jerusalem, the high pressure atmosphere of religious emotion—with its thrills of new knowledge and its vistas of new thought—and went quietly back eighty miles to the little rustic hamlet in the north, and the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. What divinity lies here! What Divine philosophy and Divine life, which is also a most human, a most simple, a most homely life. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *The obedience of childhood*:—There is an Oriental proverb which says, "The first deities which the child has to acknowledge are its parents"; and another, that "Obedient children are as ambrosia to the gods." The parent is to the child God's representative in a sense. Jesus places filial obedience and obedience to God together when He says (ver. 49), "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" If a king places a viceroy over a portion of his dominions, it is the duty of loyal subjects to obey the viceroy. If they make war against the viceroy, they are actually making war against the king who appointed him. So a child disobeying its parents is disobeying God. And obedience is made easy by love. What wings are to a bird, or sails to a ship, love is to the child. Heaven is high, and the path of obedience slopes up to it. (*Sunday School Times.*) *Christ's life of submission*:—Though the words, "He was subject unto them," apply especially to the period of our Lord's youth, they would be a perfectly true motto for His course in after-years. His whole life was one of subjection and submission. He submitted Himself, and He taught submission, to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. He submitted to receive John's baptism though He had no need of it. He submitted to pay the tax for the support of the Temple, though, as the only-begotten Son of the Father, whose house the Temple was, He was rightfully exempt from the tax. He bade the Jews submit themselves to the Romans who had conquered them, and render unto Cæsar the dues which were Cæsar's. He bade His disciples observe and do all that the Scribes and Pharisees enjoined, because they sat in Moses' chair, and held a position of authority. And, finally, He became obedient unto the sentence of death, drinking with the utmost meekness, even to the dregs, the cup of suffering which the Father had given Him. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Obedience to parents*:—The Rev. Herbert Palmer, master of Queen's College, Cambridge, who died in 1647, was remarkable for his dutiful affection to his parents, not only when he was a child, but during his whole life. He was peculiarly attentive to his pious, aged mother; promoting, to the utmost of his power, both her temporal and spiritual comfort, even to the day of her death, which happened not long before his own. He used frequently to enforce this duty in his ministry, observing the emphasis which God puts upon it through the whole of the Scriptures. He used to say that he had noticed the effects of disobedience to parents, so that he scarcely ever knew undutiful children escape some visible judgment of God in the present life; he also thought that the mischiefs which occur in society frequently take their rise in the contempt of parental authority. *Mr. Cecil's obedience*:—When the Rev. Richard Cecil was but a little boy, his father had occasion to go to the India House, and took his son with him. While he was transacting business, the little fellow was dismissed, and told to wait for his father at one of the doors. His father on finishing his business went out at another door, and entirely forgot his son. In the evening, his mother missing the child, inquired where he was; on which his father, suddenly recollecting that he had directed him to wait at a certain door, said, "You may depend upon it, he is still waiting where I appointed him." He immediately returned to the India House, and found his dear boy on the very spot where he had been told to remain. He knew that his father expected him to wait, and therefore he would not disappoint him. *The Christian family*:—1. The family gives a practical solution to the great problems of moral truth. It is the typical form of the vast organizations that belong to human life. It teaches subordination in love, and subordination is only another word for fitting together. 2. Order and government are likewise taught in the family, and it is the government or order which springs from paternal love that carries with it a sense of its fitness and its necessity. Love is the supreme governor. 3. It is in the family that we for the first time learn with some degree of clear intelligence what is the meaning of vicarious suffering. 4. The family also teaches, as we can scarcely find it taught otherwise, the true doctrine of sin and penalty. It is of the first importance that we should frame our theology respecting sin and penalty, not on the theory of universal civil governments, which is an

artificial thing, derived from the ideas of different nations, and which has never been wisely administered. The administration of pain and penalty in governments and courts is exceedingly rude and imperfect; but the administration of pain and penalty in the family is beautiful from the beginning to the end. The mother's frown, the mother's refused kiss, the mother's hand, carries pain, or the execution of penalty; but it is never odious, and it is never cruel. 5. We learn in the family likewise the doctrine of the liberty of law. Nowhere else is there more law than in the household—law unwritten, but well understood; and yet there is no law there that violates love. 6. We learn also, from the household, the true nature of forgiveness—what it is, and the conditions of it. Harmony with the spirit of love is forgiveness. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The eighteen silent years:*—These eighteen years are of immeasurable importance in any human life. They cover the period when human nature is most impressionable, most receptive, most plastic. The seeds of all future production are sown then. Year by year, month by month, day by day, the life is built up—life physical, moral, spiritual. By processes slow but sure, never to be undone, by steps never to be retraced, development is gained, the coil of life is lengthened and unwound. At thirty the man's character is formed. What he will be in the future depends on what he is then. Now, it is the history of this time—all-important—that St. Luke describes in these verses "obscurely bright"; revealing, yet enveloping in sacred and profound mystery, the life of the Second Adam who regenerates, redeems the world. What is here recorded is the earthly and human side of Christ's preparation for that work. What you and I are to-day, what the Church is to-day, what the world is to-day, is the outcome of those eighteen silent years. Study, then, this short, sweet record of the human life of Jesus Christ; and study it, not only to admire, but to imitate. Our motto should be—"Christ for me, Saviour, example, Lord: I for Christ, scholar, follower, servant." In this record we may trace some lessons which may enable us the better to fight the good fight. 1. Submission. The characteristic virtue of childhood, its natural and necessary condition. The daily round of home life, with its routine of duties, its continual calls for submission, often all the more difficult to obey because we cannot, even to ourselves, dignify them with the name of hardships or great trials—this Christ has consecrated by these eighteen silent years. 2. Work. Doing each day's work in its appointed time—be the work what it may—fitted Him for the future, when the work was different. Surely the lesson is not what you do, but how you do it. 3. Growth. (1) This does not necessarily mean imperfection. The child is not to blame because he is not a man all at once. It is the law of his being to grow. He lives by growth. Up to his measure he may be perfectly developed; but that measure, that capacity, is continually expanding. So we learn to think of growth as inseparable from healthy human life, of progress as the law of our nature, of increase in wisdom as perfectly compatible with all moral and spiritual excellence. In Christ this earth has for once been permitted to witness the natural development of a sinless childhood—development, not by sudden miracle, but by Divine indwelling. The glory that dwelt in Jesus shone in those eighteen quiet years in the orderly progress, step by step, of the boy to the youth, the youth to the man. For (2) nothing can be more plain than this, that the Lord's humanity was real indeed. Every line of the gospel tells us this; every word of these verses, which record, while they do not reveal, these eighteen years. We do not doubt it, indeed; perhaps we dwell on it with appreciation and thankfulness. But let us never forget that the same Lord, who thus lived and toiled, rose, ascended, lives, reigns. It is not simply by contemplation, even devout contemplation, of the perfectly human Jesus, that our spirits live. It is by personal fellowship with the God-man, as human now as ever, but God then in the days of His flesh, as now. This is the message of redemption, God's message to the Church and to the world, to the soul that suffers, sins, dies, to the world that sickens, staggers, swoons—God made man for you! (*John Brown, M.A.*) *God's lessons slowly learned:*—All these eighteen years were years of preparation. Thirty years of obscurity, and only two, or at the most three, of active work. "What extraordinary want of proportion! what failure of moral perspective!" we should have said. But God's lessons are only to be slowly learned. Mark this point. See, then, how Christ used the discipline of this preparation. See Him when He came forth from the thirty years of silence and toil. See Him as He moved among men—calm, unruffled, unresting indeed, but unhurried. Did He not know the depth of human need? "Lord, to whom shall we go but to Thee for words to express man's utter emptiness? Who has gauged sin like Thee? Who sees sin as the man does

who views it in Thy light?" Did Christ, then, not feel how short the time is? Well, He knew that "the night cometh, when no man can work." Yet, knowing man's need and life's shortness, He moves among men like a wise physician in a sick-room, the only one not flurried, not distracted, because the only one who adequately knows at once the greatness of the crisis, and the right remedies to use. Whence, then, hath this Man this wisdom and these marvellous gifts? How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned? Surely the answer on the human side is this: Because He has used rightly the opportunities of preparation, the times of waiting, all that we mean by the discipline of life. Remember, then, that God's lessons are only to be slowly learned. "First the blade; then the ear; after that"—not before—"the full corn in the ear." "What is the use of all this drudgery, all this taking pains, all this monotonous attention to little wearisome details of duty? I want to strike out boldly for the shore. I am tired of buffeting with these tiresome little waves":—it is the child's voice that speaks thus, not the full-grown man's. Experience teaches that painful, laborious learning must go before successful activity. Day by day you go on drudging, slipping, failing, hoping, blundering: at last the moment comes when you find out that you have mastered your lesson, and you sweep along the icy path with confidence and power. So in all things. God's lessons are to be mastered only by the man. First you receive some spiritual truth—say, *e.g.*, the fact of personal sinfulness—as an outside thing altogether; then by degrees it becomes more real and living; you begin to see that it has a meaning for you as a thing to be striven after; until, at last, you hardly know how, it becomes a part of your very self, nothing in the world for you more real than this, your sinful soul in God's presence. Fully to attain such knowledge you must do as Jesus did—go apart by yourself along the divinely-chosen road of difficult duty—content to fill a little space, if God be glorified—ready to learn, ready to obey, because, above all, more ready to pray. All this can only be deliberately, consciously chosen, as an act of the whole man, when you have mastered the spiritual alphabet, the sinful soul drawn and drawing toward the Divine Saviour. It is blessed, though it is very hard, and we learn but slowly, to be taught by Him. So, so only, we find rest to our souls. No higher wish can be framed, no better prayer offered than this: that all may be able to learn those lessons of daily life which Christ Himself had practised before He taught. (*Ibid.*) *Christ an example in filial duties*:—1. First, we may remark, that the subjection of our Lord to His parents was that of love. Again, the love of children to their parents should manifest itself in a ready compliance with their wishes, and in a disposition to correct everything in the temper or conduct which gives them pain. 2. Another point in the subjection of Christ to His parents worthy of notice is, that it was yielded to those who were so much His inferiors. 3. Again, the subjection of Christ to His parents included obedience to them. 4. And another point in our Lord's example of subjection to His parents is, the returns He made to them. If we were favoured in childhood with wise and religious guardians, they have laid us under a debt of obligation for which we can never be too thankful to them and to God. Jesus Christ toiled as a carpenter with His father until nearly thirty years of age, and probably supported the family after Joseph's death; while many a young lad among us feels that he is hardly dealt with if he does not receive his earnings before he comes of age. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*) *Subjection of children*:—"Whatever else you teach, or omit to teach, your children," said the Rev. T. Scott, "fail not to teach them subjection, and that to the mother as well as the father. This is as essential to their own welfare, temporal and eternal, as to that of the family, the Church, and the State. Establishing authority—which is quite consistent with kindness and affection—so that from childhood they shall never deliberately think of having or doing what a parent disapproves; this is the greatest safeguard you can place around young persons. Subjection to authority is God's ordinance, essential to the belief and practice of religion. If it be true," he adds, "that there are more pious women than men," he ascribes it much to this circumstance, "that they are more used to restraint and subjection." *Duty to parents*:—A pious servant girl, who had "lived out" for a number of years, and laid by a considerable sum of money, hearing that her aged parents were feeble and in needy circumstances, left her situation, and went home to take care of them. She spent her savings for their comfort, making the money last as long as possible; but in time it was all gone, and her own health began to fail. Worldly-wise friends uttered their sympathetic regrets that she should have spent all her supply when she needed it so much herself. "I have only done my duty to my parents,"

she said. "God will provide for me somehow. He will never let me perish for doing right." God did provide for her. She was able to continue her loving ministrations till the death of both her father and mother; and then a whole applauding neighbourhood united to place her in circumstances of comfort for the rest of her life. *Gratitude to parents:*—I thank God for two things—yea, for a thousand; but for two among many—first, that I was born and bred in the country, of parents that gave me a sound constitution and a noble example. I never can pay back what I got from my parents. If I were to raise a monument of gold higher than heaven, it would be no expression of the debt of gratitude which I owe to them for that which they unceasingly gave, by the heritage of their body and the heritage of their souls, to me. And next to that I am thankful that I was brought up in circumstances where I never became acquainted with wickedness. (*H. W. Beecher: from his last public letter.*) **His mother kept all these sayings in her heart.**—"*His mother kept all these sayings in her heart*":—Not in her memory, nor her understanding, nor her diary, but in her heart—that well of silence in the bosom of true motherhood, where all freshest, purest waters are kept fresh and pure. Infiltered there, and stored by loving thought, they are not vapourized and shallowed by much talk, and seem to be only the sweeter the deeper fill they make. Her family story she cannot carry into the street, or even speak of with her friends. And things are occurring with her Jesus every day, in which stamps and signatures of His divinity are distinctly, and even visibly, manifest, but which cannot be advertised without becoming tokens of weakness in the mother and precocity in the child. She sometimes wants to even strike a song of triumph, but her loudest song will be silence—a hymn that she keeps hid in her heart, as she does all the sayings and great acts of her wonderful Son. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *The memory of the heart:*—They tell us that memory is one of the intellectual powers. I think that the strongest memory is a power of the heart. There are memories of the intellect which are short-lived and evanescent; they are like the morning cloud that vanishes away. But the things that are kept in the heart are not evanescent; they last for ever. There are those who complain of having short memories, but how often does it spring from want of sufficient interest? If we could transfer our duties from the intellect to the heart, we should rarely forget them. Love photographs impressions of the past, in colours that do not fade; the things which are kept in the heart are kept for ever. (*G. Matheson, D.D.*)

Ver. 52. **And Jesus increased in wisdom.**—*A pattern childhood and youth:*—1. He grew, not in stature only, but in wisdom and favour with God and man. Christ, as Divine, must have had all knowledge and power from the first. But subjecting Himself to the laws of human development, He thereby consented to an unfolding which, in childhood should exhibit a perfect Child, in youth a perfect Youth, in manhood a perfect Man. It was the unfolding of a perfect bud into a perfect flower. At each advancing step He was only evincing larger measures of that wisdom and moral excellence which, in possibility and germ, were in Him from the first. 2. He was content with an obscure and humble home. In these days there is everywhere a great crowding into cities and populous towns. These are thought to have peculiar advantages for the training and education of children. But have not the solid men, for whose living in it the world has most reason to be grateful, oftenest come from hillsides and homes like that of Nazareth? It is in obscure places that youth escapes the wasting strifes of ambition, the unproductive chase after vanities; that he learns not only "to scorn delights and love laborious days," but to think his own thoughts and to stand alone. The wise youth is content just where it has pleased God to place him. If the station is lowly and the lot obscure, he does not chafe and repine; he rather gives thanks. 3. He was a winning example of filial piety and obedience. For thirty years He was contentedly subject to parental guidance and authority. It is the discipline of a well-ordered home which makes good citizens. It is a blessing, above all others, to grow up in a house where the gospel rule prevails. There it is that foundations are laid for every moral virtue. There is the best safeguard of purity. It is there that one learns the sweetness of lowly ambitions and the surpassing wealth of pure affection. 4. It is time to speak of His self-subjection to the discipline of helpful industry. He was called "the carpenter's son." He was Himself "the carpenter." Justin Martyr, who lived as near to Him as we do to George Washington, speaks of Him as "a worker in wood," and says that He "made ploughs and yokes and other implements relating to husbandry." After Joseph's death, the care of His mother

would devolve upon Him. It is therefore proper to think of Him as early sharing the lighter labours of His home. His little feet bear Him on many a helpful errand for His mother. Pitcher in hand, He runs for water to the well. To kindle the fire He gathers and brings the wood. Soon, with growing limbs, He begins to wield the hammer, the axe, and the saw in the shop; to invent and shape toys for Himself and useful things for the house. In the process of time, He settles into a more patient industry. In the little village on the hillside of Nazareth, He is "the carpenter." And such a shop as that in which He wrought, must have been! Do you think He ever made reckless promises, and failed to keep them? Do you think He ever did poor work, and charged the price of good? That He ever concealed a flaw, or tried to get the better of another in trade—can you believe that? 5. He was not in undue haste to have done with the work of preparation and to enter upon His public ministry. In such backing lies the strength of all great workers. Have we not often seen men of ripened age, men of whom the world never so much as heard the name, suddenly burst upon the stage of action, assume an easy leadership, and carry off the best prizes of emolument and honour? They are equal to the places they attempt to fill. They endure. Such men have taken time for preparation. They have both knowledge and self-knowledge. They have that self-control which comes of quiet introvision. They have root; and a root grows: it is not made; only to an extent can it be forced. 6. The childhood and youth of Jesus were marked by delight in the truths and ordinances of religion. At twelve years old, when taken to Jerusalem, His feet swiftly bare Him to the Temple. Let no parent, or teacher, or worker in the Lord's vineyard look upon a child as too young to be interested in holy things. Little feet linger where earnest words are spoken about God and duty to Him. Little minds are full of wonder concerning the very deep things of the world unseen. Little hearts would gladly know and choose the way of grateful and loving service. Childhood's years may be given to God. And oh, what glory and safety and blessedness it is to have begun thus early. 7. He made His most earthly work a service unto His Father. Back at Nazareth He was all the time doing His Father's business, just as truly as when sitting among the doctors in the Temple. There is a time to pray, and there is also a time to read, and a time to work. Give to each its own time. And if, in each, your purpose is equally to do the will of God, and bring honour to Him, He is just as well pleased with the one as with the other. Go where God bids you go, abide where He would have you abide, and do each hour the work He appoints for that hour; do all in faith and love, and for His glory; for the rest you need have no fears. Thus the lowly can win as sweet a smile and as large a reward as those who fill the highest places. He is with us in life's valleys as truly as on the mountain-tops. The little child can come as close to His heart as the great king. It is not a great name, or a giant intellect, or conspicuous service, which God wants. It is only a trusting and obedient heart. Who cannot, who would not, give that? (*H. M. Grout.*) *Progress in spiritual things:*—Religion is a generous and noble thing, in regard to its progress; it is perpetually carrying on that mind, in which it is once seated, towards perfection. Though the first appearance of it upon the souls of good men may be, but as the wings of the morning, spreading themselves upon the mountains, yet it is still rising higher and higher upon them, chasing away all the filthy mists and vapours of sin and wickedness before it, till it arrives to its meridian altitude. There is the strength and force of the Divinity in it; and though, when it first enters into the minds of men, it may seem to be "sown in weakness," yet it will raise itself "in power." As Christ was in His bodily appearance, He was still increasing in wisdom, and stature, and favour with God and man, until He was perfected in glory; so is He also in His spiritual appearance in the souls of men: and accordingly the New Testament does more than once distinguish of Christ, in His several ages and degrees of growth in the souls of all true Christians. Good men are always walking on from strength to strength, till at last they see God in Zion. Religion, though it hath its infancy, yet it hath no old age: while it is in its minority, it is always *in motu;* but, when it comes to its maturity, it will always be *in quiete;* it is then "always the same, and its years fail not"; but it shall endure for ever. (*John Smith.*) *Orderly development:*—An orderly development; none of your monstrous athletes; none of your mere intellectual book-worms; none of your emaciated, hysterical saints and ascetics; none of your hermits or fanatical anti-social visionaries. He grew in body, in mind, in soul, and heart; stature, wisdom, favour—human and Divine. Is not that parable of childhood writ clear! Is not the message to you and to your children? Follow the lines, not of your crushed,

but of your restrained, controlled, and regenerate nature. Learn, like Him, by the things that you suffer, undergo, have to put up with. Learn, before you teach; obey, before you command; going in and out amongst men, toil hand and heart about the Father's business, and with an ear ever attuned to the voices in the upper air, until we all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Christ's growth in wisdom*:—The increase of Jesus in wisdom during this period was—1. Real. Jesus had to learn from the words of others what as yet He knew not; and that was entirely unknown to Him as a child, which He had a glimpse of as a boy, conjectured as a youth, and first clearly perceived as a man. 2. Unchecked. In attributing to the Lord Jesus the relative imperfection of childhood, we must carefully avoid imputing to Him the failings of childhood. His life showed no trace of childish faults, to be hereafter conquered. The words of John (Matt. iii. 14) show, on the contrary, what impression was made by His moral purity when thirty years of age, and the voice from heaven (Matt. iii. 17) sets the seal of the Divine approval on the now completed development of the Son of Man, a seal which the Holy One of Israel would only have offered to absolute perfection. 3. It was effected by means—(1) Careful home-training. (2) The natural beauties of the neighbourhood of Nazareth. (3) The Scriptures. (4) The annual journeys to Jerusalem. (5) Prayerful communion with His heavenly Father. 4. Normal, and so an example of what our development should be in fellowship with Him. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *The growth of Jesus in wisdom*:—Our Lord's body grew in stature, so that, when He reached manhood, He had attained fair and comely proportions. And while the body grew, His human mind grew also; His human intelligence unfolded itself gradually into full blossom, in the same manner as the mind and intelligence of other children, only, doubtless, in a much greater degree. Perhaps you cannot understand how this could be. To grow in wisdom must imply that the person who grows is, at a more advanced age, wiser than when He was younger; knows something, understands something, which he did not know, and understand before. But how could this be in His case? you may reasonably ask. Was He not God, you may say, even when He was quite a young child? And how can God be ignorant of anything, or fail to understand anything? Now it is true, doubtless—absolutely true—that our Lord, even while He was a child, was the everlasting God. But it is true also that He was "God manifest in the flesh," God sinking Himself down to the low level of human nature. He became really and truly for our sakes an infant, a child, a youth, a man. He did not merely *seem* to be human, but He actually *was* human. Now in order that He might be really and truly a man, He consented, in His wonderful condescension, not to call into exercise those powers which He had as God. You can quite understand a person having strength, but not using it. A man might have the strength of a giant, who might choose to exert Himself very little, might never walk above a few yards, might not employ his hands in any harder work than turning over the leaves of a book or reeling off a skein of silk. And in like manner a man may have a perfectly strong and good eyesight, but he need not use it farther than he pleases. He may shut his eyes altogether, in which case he will see nothing. He may only half open them, in which case he will see but dimly and confusedly; or he may go and live in a dungeon, where only a few straggling rays of light pierce the gloom; and then, however good his eyesight may be, he will for the first few seconds be able to see nothing; but when the eye has adjusted itself to the circumstances in which it is placed, he will begin to make out the forms of things around him, but will not see their colours, or have any power at all of examining them closely. This may help you to understand how our Lord, while He had in His Divine nature all power and all knowledge, yet, when He made His appearance among us as man, was ignorant of certain things, and unable to do certain things. In coming into the world, He, by His own free will and consent, limited Himself to do the things which a man could do, and to know the things which a man could know. He came into our poor, narrow, dark nature, just as a free man might come out of the light of day into a narrow, dark, prison-dungeon, and there consent to be shut up. Such an one might have the power of walking miles, but in the dungeon he can only walk a few paces; he might have a very keen eyesight, but in the dungeon he cannot even see to read. Christ took a nature which, till He took it, was not His own, and accommodated Himself to the feebleness and ignorance of that nature—limited Himself, if I may use the expression, to the walls of it. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Christ's increase in the favour of God*:—We may compare our Lord's period of

growth, during which He was prepared for His work, to the gradual execution of some great piece of sculpture, a bust or a statue. Let us say that the marble chosen for the work is a piece without flaw, spotless white, without a single vein running through it. Thus our Lord's human nature, unlike that which all of us inherit, was perfectly free from all tendency to evil; holy, harmless, undefiled at His very birth. But a white block of marble, though white when it is drawn from the quarry, can be made a more perfectly beautiful thing by being chiselled into an exquisite form. And a human nature, which was originally sinless, may be made a more perfectly beautiful thing by being disciplined through grace, and through the experience of suffering, into the perfect likeness of God. And you can quite understand how a sculptor, who is daily at work upon a statue, has an increasing satisfaction in it, as the work becomes more and more perfect, views it with greater pleasure and complacency to-day, when it has received so many flourishing touches, than he did some months ago, when it was a mere resemblance of the human form in outline. The work increases in favour with him daily; and when it is finished, he is then perfectly satisfied. Thus it was that Jesus, as a man, "increased in favour with God." (*Ibid.*) *On the education of children*:—It is not, alas, according to this model, that the generality of Christians form their children. We behold them principally intent on procuring for them worldly accomplishments, while they totally neglect to make them acquainted with the great duties of Christianity. 1. The human mind cannot be too early impressed with religious principles. The prudent will, indeed, be careful not to make that a burden which should be a pleasure; they will be content to unfold the gospel principles by degrees, as the youthful mind is able to receive them. 2. Nature only requires a little gentle assistance to perfect all her productions. You have seen a tender plant springing upon a fertile soil, what though tall and straight, and promising to become the pride of the forest, since one unlucky stroke may have crushed its aspiring head, and forced it from its natural direction, from that moment it bended and grew downwards to the earth, instead of towering to the skies. Thus, the human mind while young and pliable, is in perpetual danger of growing luxuriant by too much indulgence, or losing all its strength by the unnatural restraint of too much severity, to be suppressed by misfortune, checked by disappointment, or chilled by penury. How liable is it to deviate from the straight line of rectitude and honour, by the fascination of example, and the influence of imitation; to folly, vice, and ruin. It is the pleasing but important task of parents and guardians, to direct and defend this young and delicate production; leading it from lower degrees of perfection to higher, from the nursery to the field of action, till it is adorned with the fairest honours, enriched with the most precious fruit, and ripe for transplanting to the paradise of God, where it shall bloom afresh under the immediate sunshine of heaven, and flourish for ever in immortal beauty and perfection. 3. The prejudices received in youth are sometimes so violent and inveterate, that even maturity of years, the admonition of friends, the principles of hope, fear, honour, and religion, are unable too often to restrain them. Nay, the best of all teachers, experience, frequently attempts, but in vain, to cure the maladies of a wrong education. It is nonsense to expect a harvest, where the seed-time has been lost, and you must be disappointed, who wish to reap where you have not sown. 4. The least indulgence of the bad inclinations of children, sometimes produces the most fatal effects in society. Witness David's indulgence of Amnon—it produced incest; of Absalom—it produced assassination and a civil war; of Adonijah—it produced a usurpation of the throne and crown. Observe, again, how God punished Eli, who neglected to correct duly the crimes of his children. Can you, O parents, hear these awful truths, and not shudder at the idea of indulging the least vicious propensity in your children? But let me turn from those gloomy images, to hold up to your view the picture of a parent's care, rewarded in a wise and virtuous offspring. These will be your pride and glory in the day of your health and strength; but in the gloomy and melancholy season of sickness and old age, they will be the light of your eyes, and the cordial of your fainting spirits; and as once with tender care you watched their tender infancy, so shall they with pious duty support your failing strength, soften the pangs of a dying hour, close your eyes in peace, and eventually follow you to that world where love and bliss immortal reign. (*B. Murphy.*) *God's favour to be sought*:—Jesus won the favour of man by seeking the favour of God. It is not so important that man should be pleased with us as that God should. But man's favour is more likely to be won through seeking God's favour than in any other way. If we are always asking

how those about us will look at us; if we give large weight in our thoughts to the opinion of our fellows; if we endeavour to so shape our course as to win popular approval, we are by no means sure to have what we strive for; we may fall far short of the coveted favour of man; and, moreover, may utterly lack God's approval, whether man likes or dislikes us. But if we are always asking how God will look at our course; if we give large weight in our thoughts to His opinion and His commandments; if we seek to shape our course to win His approval, we are sure to get what we most long for; and we are surer of having also the favour of man than we could be through any other course. If God is our friend, He can secure to us man's approval. The best of human friends cannot win for us God's favour. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *The secret of the growth of Jesus*:—See the daisy. It opens its petals when the light dawns, and closes them at sunset. It is in the right place to absorb out of earth and atmosphere the nutritive forces it needs, and it grows. Go into a garden and ask what all these various plants are doing. They toil not neither do they spin; they have no visible machinery and yet they are all capturing sunbeams and converting them into fragrances, essences, flowers and fruits for the welfare of the world. Does your boy trouble about growth as he eats and drinks and plays? No! He takes no thought for the morrow's growth. Flowers and children, rightly placed, grow. Get a piston and place it where the steam is and it will go. Put your water-wheel in the stream, and it turns. Man takes advantage of the energies close to hand and multiplies his forces a million-fold. So long as we are in the wrong place we cannot grow. The secret of the growth of Jesus is that He starts in the right place and keeps in it to the very end; He lives in and for God; is bathed with the warm light, and refreshed by the pure breath and nourished by the sweet fellowship with, and work for, the Father. (*J. Clifford, D.D.*) *The silent growth of Jesus*:—It is perplexing to some of us that there should be eighteen years of unbroken silence in such a life as Christ's. We have asked what was Jesus at 17, 20, and at 25? and though no audible voice responds to us, yet the silence, read in the light of the wonderful work accomplished in His brief ministry, is itself a sign of the depth, continuity, and fulness of the moral growth. All growth is silent. When nature is baptized in the fulness of spring forces, you hear not a rustle. The whole movement takes place secretly and silently, and the world comes up anew without the sound of trumpet or the message of herald. God builds His temples without the sound of hammer. His great moral structures go up from day to day without noise, His kingdoms come without observation, notwithstanding the moment of their arrival may be one of tempest and storm. Tyndall says: "All great things come slowly to birth. Copernicus pondered his great work for thirty-three years; Newton, for nearly twenty years, kept the idea of gravitation before His mind; for twenty years also, he dwelt upon his discovery of fluxions; Darwin, for twenty-two years pondered on the problem of the origin of species, and doubtless he would have continued to do so had he not found Wallace upon his track." So Jesus stayed in His place, did His carpentry, was obedient to His parents, accepted the restraints of His position, silently devoured the many chagrins of His lot, met His cares with a transcendent disdain, drank in the sunlight of His Father's face, and possessed His soul in perfect patience, though urged by deep sympathy and throbbing desire to save men. No boasting, no hurry, no impatience, but a quiet maturing of power, and then so clad was He in strength that He never lost an opportunity through delay or marred a bit of His work by haste. When Perseus told Pallas Athene that he was ready to go forth, young as he was, against the fabled monster Medusa the Gorgon, the strange lady smiled and said, "Not yet; you are too young, and too unskilled: for this is Medusa the Gorgon, the mother of a monstrous brood. Return to your home and do the work which awaits you there. You must play the man in that before I can think you worthy to go in search of the Gorgon." It is hurry that enfeebles us. (*Ibid.*) *The three ages of Christian life*:—God in Christ has appeared among men to raise up again fallen humanity. In order to do this, He laid hold upon it, in the cradle, and left it only at the tomb; passing through all the stages of its growth, traversing in succession all the ages of life, sanctifying our nature at all periods of our existence, and causing us to see in His person, from the moment when He came into the world till that of His exaltation in glory, the perfect type of innocence and holiness. It is thus that He became in turn an infant, youth, man; an infant, obedient and submissive; a young man without reproach and keeping Himself pure from all defilement of the flesh and of the world; a full-grown man showing us in His character and in His conduct the

model of absolute perfection. He stopped there; for He by whom and for whom are all things ought not to fail; it was necessary that He should offer Himself a sacrifice in all the vigour of age and in all the fulness of life: it was not becoming that He should present to us the picture of decrepitude and old age. But as there has been a birth of the Son of God in the Man Jesus, a growth of the God-man in the person of the Redeemer, so there has been, there is, and there will be, to the end of time, a birth and growth of Christ in all the souls belonging to Him. Christ is truly born. He grows up, He developes Himself in His people. There is in turn, in their case, the infant, the youth, and the grown-up man, and He completes in them the work of His grace till they come to the height of His perfect stature. (*J. H. Grandpierre, D.D.*) *The humanity of Christ*:—That Jesus was really a man. Here it may be observed, I. That He was really man BECAUSE HE HAD A HUMAN BODY. It was formed and fashioned in His mother's womb by the great Parent of all flesh. So it was, says the inspired writer, that while His mother was at Bethlehem, "the days were accomplished that she should be delivered." II. He was really man BECAUSE HE HAD A HUMAN SOUL AS WELL AS A HUMAN BODY. This is necessarily implied in what is said of Him in the text. He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Here both His wisdom and piety are asserted; and we know that these are properties of the soul, and not of the body. III. That Christ was properly a human person will appear, if we consider THE STATE AND CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH HE WAS PLACED WHILE HE LIVED IN THIS WORLD. For—1. He was fixed in a state of dependence. 2. He was placed under law, which implies that He was a human moral agent, and accountable to God like other men. We are told that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." 3. That Christ was placed, like all other men, in a state of probation from His birth to His death. I now proceed to improve the subject. 1. If Christ was really man, then the Arian notion of His pre-existence before He came into the world is entirely unscriptural and absurd. The Arians suppose that Christ was the first and noblest of created beings, and existed before the foundation of the world. For it is absurd to suppose that Christ had both a human soul and a super-angelic soul, and that both these were personally united with the Second Person in the Trinity, and so constituted Him a Divine Person. The true scriptural doctrine of Christ's divinity is founded upon the true scriptural doctrine of Christ's having a human body and a human soul, which was personally united with the second person in the Godhead. It is necessary, therefore, to believe the real humanity, in order to believe the real divinity of Christ. It has been found by observation and experience, that the denial of Christ's humanity directly leads to the denial of His divinity. 2. If Christ had a human body and a human soul, then we cannot account for the early depravity of children through the mere influence of bad examples, or bodily instincts and appetites. He was an infant, but He did not sin in infancy. He had a frail, mortal body, but it did not corrupt His heart. He lived in a wicked world, where He saw many bad examples, but they did not lead Him to follow them. He was a free moral agent, but He never chose to sin. 3. If Christ was really a man, then there is no natural impossibility of men's becoming perfectly holy in this life. 4. If Christ was really man, then God is able to keep men from sinning consistently with their moral agency. 5. If Christ was really man, then there is no absurdity in the doctrine of the final perseverance of saints. 6. If Christ was really man, then there is no reason to suppose that men possess a self-determining power, or a power to act independently of the Divine influence and control. 7. If Christ was really man, then His conduct is a proper example for all men to follow. 8. If Christ was really man, then He is well qualified to perform all the remaining parts fo His mediatorial office. In particular, to perform the part of an intercessor. 9. If Christ be really a man, then they will be unspeakably happy, who shall be admitted into His visible presence, and dwell with Him for ever. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

CHAPTER III.

VER. 1. **Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar.**—*The fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar:*—In this year, which fell between August, A.D. 28, and August, A.D. 29, the Roman empire lay under the shadow of the darkest years of the tyrant, now an old man of seventy-one. Among those alive at the time, and remembered since, for good or for evil, the elder Pliny—afterwards, when a Roman admiral, killed at the first eruption, in historical times, of Mount Vesuvius—was a child of four; Vespasian, hereafter, with his son Titus, to crush Jerusalem, was full of the ambitions and dreams of a youth of nineteen; Caligula, one day to horrify the world by the spectacle of an insane despot at the head of the empire, was a lad of sixteen; Claudius, one day to be emperor, was a poor lame trembling man of thirty-eight; and among the marriages of the year was that of the daughter of the ill-fated Germanicus, from which, nine years later, was born Nero. Pontius Pilate had been two years procurator of Samaria, Judæa, and Idumea; Herod Antipas had been reigning for about thirty-two years over Galilee and Samaria, and was now a man of about fifty; and Philip, his brother, about the same age, and of the same standing as ruler, was still tetrarch of the rest of the land beyond the Jordan, living a quiet life, usefully and worthily. (*Dr. C. Geikie.*) *The date:*—Singularly enough this very exactness is a source of difficulty. Augustus Cæsar died, and was succeeded by Tiberius in August, A.D. 14. Reckoning from this date, the fifteenth year of Tiberius was from August, A.D. 28, to August, A.D. 29. But this does not fit with the date which, on other grounds, we are led to assign to the beginning of our Lord's ministry, viz., A.D. 27. The solution, however, is simple and satisfactory. The reign of Tiberius as sole emperor began at the death of Augustus; but he had been joint emperor with Augustus—a sort of vice-emperor—for two years previously. The word used by St. Luke, translated "reign," by no means implies sole empire, but applies with perfect accuracy to this share in the government, which had special reference to the provinces. We therefore understand the fifteenth year of Tiberius to have begun in August, A.D. 26. (*E. R. Conder, D.D.*) *Lysanias:*—It has been said that St. Luke erred in stating that Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. [Strauss, "Leben Jesu," § 44.] Lysanias, it is said, died sixty years previously, and St. Luke has ignorantly made him alive, being deceived by the fact that Abilene continued to be called the Abilene of Lysanias, after its former ruler, for sixty or seventy years subsequently. Now, here it is in the first place assumed, without any word of proof, that the Lysanias who died B.C. 34, once ruled over Abilene. Secondly, it is assumed, also without any word of proof, that Abilene came to be known as the Abilene of Lysanias, from him. I venture to assert that there is absolutely no ground for believing that the old Lysanias was ever ruler of Abilene; and I venture to maintain that Abilene came to be called the Abilene of Lysanias from a second or later Lysanias, a son of the former one, who is the person intended by St. Luke. Till recently, Christian apologists were defied to show historically that there was ever more than one Lysanias, and were accused of inventing a second to escape a difficulty. But a few years since a discovery was made which must be regarded by all reasonable persons as having set the whole matter at rest. This was an inscription found near Baalbek, containing a dedication of a memorial tablet or statue to "Fenodorus, son of the tetrarch Lysanias, and to Lysanias, her children," by (apparently) the widow of the first and the mother of the second Lysanias. Fenodorus was already known as having succeeded the first Lysanias in his government. It is thus clear that there were, as previously suspected, two persons of the name, a father and a son, and there is not the slightest reason for doubting that the latter was tetrarch of Abilene in the fifteenth of Tiberius. (*Professor Rawlinson.*)

Ver. 2. **Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.**—*Annas and Caiaphas:*—The way in which these two names occur in the New Testament has given some trouble to commentators. They are found in St. Luke's Gospel, mentioned both together at the commencement of the preaching of John the Baptist, and are there called "the high priests." St. Matthew, in the narrative of our Lord's trial, speaks only of Caiaphas, and calls him "the high priest." But St. John, who also mentions Caiaphas as "the high priest," tells us that Jesus, after His arrest, was first brought to Annas, as if he were of chief importance, and then was sent by him to Caiaphas.

Lastly, in the Acts, we have Annas called the high priest, and the name of Caiaphas mentioned at the same time, but no title is given to the latter. But we know from Josephus that Annas (Ananus), who was father-in-law to Caiaphas, was made high priest by Quirinus (Cyrenius), A.D. 7, and continued in that office for seven years, when he was deprived of it by Valerius Gratus, and was never chosen to be high priest afterwards. It is clear, however, that from the earliest times down to a date after the composition of the Acts of the Apostles, there were often circumstances under which two men were called high priests at the same time. That one who had once been high priest, but had ceased to be in office, would still be called high priest, is evident from that principle which is laid down in several places in the Talmud, that "you may elevate in the matter of a sacred thing, or office, but you cannot bring down." As with us, "once a bishop, always a bishop." We see, therefore, that when Annas had been high priest, it was not only likely that he would continue to be so called, but that, according to Jewish usage, he could be called nothing else. The age of Annas, and the influential position naturally occupied by one who had been acting high priest himself, whose son had twice held the same office, and who was father-in-law to the present high priest, are sufficient to warrant the action of the crowd in taking Christ to Annas first; while in the passage of the Acts, the mention of Annas at the head of the list, with the title of high priest, was nothing more than was due to his years and to the relationship in which he stood to Caiaphas, while the omission of the high priest's title after the name of Caiaphas is no more a proof that he was not also high priest than the language of St. Mark's Gospel, where it is said, "Go your way, tell His disciples, and Peter," is evidence that Peter was not one of the disciples. (*J. Rawson Lumby, D.D.*) **The Word of God came unto John.**—*An important statement*:—The events of the first verse, as compared with the events recorded in the second, are of the most trifling importance. In the first instance there is a list of governmental personalities and districts, and in the second verse there is the solemn fact that the word of God came unto the forerunner of our Lord. This juxtaposition of events is remarkably suggestive as bearing upon what is current in our own day. The world has a large list of its own appointments, regulations, and authorities, which reads most imposingly: on the other hand there are single sentences bearing upon spiritual life and work which totally eclipse the pomp of royal nomenclature and dominion. Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate, Herod, Philip, and Lysanias, are names which will perish from the roll of the highest factors of human history and service; but the name of John will be remembered and reverenced as the highest name known amongst men before the building up of the distinctive kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word of God came unto John. This is a most remarkable expression, showing that John did not run before he was sent, and showing also that God knows where to find men when He wants them for any work in the world. John in the wilderness is nobody, but the word of God entering into this same John kindles him into a light that is seen afar. The true minister of God is charged with the word of Heaven. That which he speaks he speaks not of himself, he simply pronounces and proclaims with earnestness and persistency the truth which has been breathed into his own heart by the Spirit of God. The sword in the scabbard is a useless weapon, but when grasped by the hand of the trained soldier carries with it alike death and victory. It is, indeed, possible to have received the word of God as a commandment to go forth, and yet to have stifled the great conviction. There are men who are silent to-day in the Church, who, if faithful to their convictions, would be heard in loud protest against evil, and vehement proclamations as the apostles of Christian truth. Grieve not the Spirit! Quench not the Spirit! We do not begin by quenching the Spirit; the deadly work begins by grieving the sacred presence. It is to be noted that John was in the wilderness when the word of God came unto him. Time spent in solitude is not misspent if the ear be bent towards God, and our love be listening for the coming of His word. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Teachings of the wilderness*:—Few Bible characters are so strangely fascinating to the devout reader as that of John the Baptist. In the wilderness God came to him; in the wilderness he was equipped for public service; from the wilderness he began his missionary work. This fact suggests three ideas of practical importance. I. THE NATURE OF WILDERNESS LIFE. 1. Solitude. 2. Abstemiousness. 3. Privation. II. THE LESSONS OF WILDERNESS LIFE. What John was taught in the wilderness gave him his regal manhood, viz., the high moral lessons of—1. Self-denial. 2. Humility. 3. Courage for what is true and holy.

"Separate from the world, his breast
Did deeply take and strongly keep
The print of heaven."

III. THE REASON OF GOD'S VISITATION IN THE WILDERNESS. The "word" was a call to active endeavour in the busy world. The wilderness had done its work, that is, had made John a fit person in the sight of God to be called to the important work of heralding the ministry of Christ. That same "word of God" is constantly coming to us all in all the great and little wildernesses of life. In all ages notable instances of such visitations have been recorded. Moses, Luther, Wordsworth, amongst the hills and vales of his native Westmoreland; Carlyle, who, in the wilderness of Craigenputtock, heard and obeyed a call to preach in his books repentance as the first and last need of his age. If we would be true to our higher nature we must cultivate the love of solitude.

"Morn is the time to act, noon to endure,
But O! if thou wouldst keep thy spirit pure,
Turn from the beaten path by worldlings trod,
Go forth at eventide in heart to walk with God."

And if to solitude there be added suffering in our wilderness, let us despise it not. Though often dreary, it has its charms, its blessings. God may be found there. (*J. McGavin Sloan.*) *John in the wilderness*:—Wide as was the moral and spiritual difference between the two great prophets of the Jordan wilderness, and the wild ascetics of later times, it is for this very reason important to bear in mind the outward likeness which sets off this inward contrast. Travellers know well the startling appearance of the savage figures who, whether as Bedouins or Dervishes, still haunt the solitary places of the East, with a cloak—the usual striped Bedouin blanket—woven of camel's hair thrown over the shoulders, and tied in front on the breast; naked except at the waist, round which is a girdle of skin, the hair flowing loose about the head. This was precisely the description of Elijah, whose last appearance had been on this very wilderness, before he finally vanished from the eyes of his disciple. This, too, was the aspect of his great representative, when he came, in the same place, dwelling, like the sons of the prophets, in a leafy covert, woven of the branches of the Jordan forest, preaching, in raiment of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle round his loins, eating the locusts of the desert, and the wild honey or manna which dripped from the tamarisks of the desert region, or which distilled from the palm-groves of Jericho. To the same wilderness, probably that on the eastern side, Jesus is described as "led up" by the Spirit—up into the desert-hills whence Moses had seen the view of all the kingdom of Palestine—"with the wild beasts" which lurked in the bed of the Jordan, or in the caves of the hills, "where John was baptising, beyond Jordan." (*Dean Stanley.*) *John's life in the desert*:—A soul lost in the greatness of eternal truths, like that of John, may well have risen to an indifference to the comforts, or even ordinary wants of the body, otherwise almost impossible. We have no record of his daily life, but that of one who, in saintliness of spirit, trod in his steps, is still preserved. Saint Antony, in the deserts of Egypt, was wont to pass whole nights in prayer, and that not once, but often, to the astonishment of men. He ate once a day, after the setting of the sun; his food was bread with salt, his drink nothing but water. Flesh and wine he never tasted. When he slept, he was content with a rush mat, but mostly he lay on the bare ground. He would not anoint himself with oil, saying that it was more fit for young men to be earnest in subduing the body, than to seek things which softened it. Forgetting the past, he, daily, as if beginning afresh, took more pains to improve, saying over to himself, continually, the apostle's words—"Forgetting what is behind, stretching forth to what is before"; and mindful, too, of Elijah's saying, "the Lord liveth, before whom I stand"—he said, in himself, that the ascetic ought ever to be learning his own life from that of the great Elias, as from a mirror. The picture may not suit in some particulars, but as a glimpse of the mortified life of the desert, in its best aspect, it may serve to realize that of John, in the loneliness of the rough wilderness of Judæa. (*Dr. C. Geikie.*) *John in the wilderness*:—Here St. John the Baptist spent long years of solitary musing on the things of God, till his soul kindled into irresistible ardour, which drove him forth among men to plead with them to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. During the hot months it is a land of scorpions, lizards, and snakes, so

that his experience readily supplied him with a comparison for his wicked contemporaries, whom he denounced as "a generation of vipers." Wild bees make their combs in the hollows of the limestone rocks; the aromatic thymes, mints, and other labiate plants, sprinkled over the face of the wilderness, furnishing them with honey, which is more plentiful in the wilderness of Judæa than in any other part of Palestine. They thus provided for him a main article of his diet, while in one wady or another, or in some cleft, there was always water enough to quench his thirst. Locusts, the other article of his food, are never wanting in this region, and, indeed, are to this day eaten by the Arabs in the south-east of Judæa, the very district where John lived; by those of the Jordan valley, and by some tribes in Gilead. They stew them with butter, and travellers say—for I myself have never tasted them—that they are very like shrimps in flavour. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 3. **The country about Jordan.**—*The river Jordan*:—The river Jordan rises in the Anti-Lebanon, to the north of Jerusalem. Imagine that you are looking, as your glance may be directed towards me, to Jerusalem; yonder on your right is Hermon. The river Jordan rises in the Anti-Lebanon range, 1,700 feet above the sea level. There are many streams that contribute to it in its first flow, it is disputed which of them is the real source. The streams gather; they enter the waters of Merom, the first little lake. From that they pass, and, after a course of a few miles, they enter a larger lake, and one more familiar to us all, and endeared to us all, the Lake of Gennesaret, the Sea of Galilee. They pass through this lake, which is itself between six and seven hundred feet below the sea level. It is said that their current may be traced through the lake. They pass from the Lake of Galilee and go down, and ever down, until they enter into what we now call the Dead Sea, the Lake Asphaltites. Now, reading the Scripture, we cannot discover the wonder of this lake, and this itself is noticeable. The Scripture instructs us respecting the Jordan and the events that occurred on its sides, but modern travel tells us that in all the wonders of the world there is none, of its kind, comparable to the great chasm of the Jordan. It is the lowest of rivers. We go to the margin of the sea, and there we count ourselves indeed low. We descend from the mountains to the sea. Near the sea, as, *e.g.*, in Cornwall, there are sometimes mines; you descend those mines, and of course you are below the sea level. The Jordan is a river that flows down and down, till, when it enters the Dead Sea, it is 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, below our ordinary holiday seaside level, and if you try the depth of the water itself, you find there is another 1,300 feet before you reach the bottom. The waters of the Dead Sea are briny, sour, smarting; they hang about your skin like oil; they enter into any chaps of the skin and torment you. They are so heavy that if you go in and bathe you can, as it were, sit on the waters. Heavy, salt, sour, sharp, are these terrific waters—waters of death, flowing towards Jerusalem from the north, but lying far below Jerusalem, as they pass it on the east, for the mountain city is 2,600 feet above the level of the sea—the Mediterranean; and the river Jordan as it enters its lake of death is 1,300 feet below the level of that sea, or 4,000 feet below the level of Jerusalem; and again the bottom of that lake—the sunken sea—is 1,300 feet below its surface. There is no parallel to this in the globe—none. You do not get a hint of it in the Bible. Does it mean anything? If I take a poker and dash a coal to pieces for the sake of feeding my fire, do I care how the fragments split? Not I. But I arrange the fragments presently that they may burn in the most agreeable manner. Does anybody suppose that Jehovah made the world as a man splits a coal for the Christmas fire, caring even less for the arranging of the parts or pieces; that He made a height here and a hollow there, and a broad river here and a comparatively narrow but foaming cataract there, without any purpose or meaning in His arrangements? Does any one suppose that in the placing of such a people as Israel there was no correspondence between the character and story of the people and the kind of country that they occupied? Do not think it. "Sodom" is a proverb of wickedness, and the Sodomites lived in the lowest place on the globe. "Jerusalem" is a name of glory, and Jerusalem is the mountain city of the world. Is there no meaning there? The one river, so called, of Palestine is as crooked as a serpent. It rushes on, muddy and foaming, like a maddened sinner, and it loses itself utterly in the sea of death, a sea without an outlet, a sea without a city on its shore, a sea without any animation of boats and traffic upon its surface, a sea without fish—not without its aspects of occasional loveliness though—and a sea that sends forth from its surface waters purified

invisibly into the heavenly air. Wonderful sea! Does this mean anything, or does it mean nothing? . . . The Jordan is the river of judgment. There is no such emblem of a sinner in the world as the river Jordan. There is no such emblem of the prohibitive law of Moses in its ultimate results as the Jordan and the lake into which it enters. The sinner goes down, down, and the end of his way is death. The prohibitive law drives us down, down, and the end of it is the sentence of death. Die we must if sin drive us on; dead we are if we understand not the law spiritually. But were we born to be destroyed? No; but to be saved. Were we born to be driven on by mere impulse? No; but to be rescued from such "driving." Were we born to enter into and be lost in the deep, the to us, as it were, unfathomable brine? No; but to be raised from it, purified, exalted. *There* is the Dead Sea: *here* the living Jerusalem. You look up—the living Jerusalem: you look down—the Dead Sea. From the heights of Jerusalem we look down and think of the Dead Sea as the sea from which we are rescued. We think of the Jordan, muddy, swollen, rapid, and know that not such is now the course of our life; but that we are rescued from such a course, and that we are to enter into "life" itself by Jesus Christ, who died to become the rescuer. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *Symbolism of the Jordan:*—Pass from the thought of the Jordan to that "river of God which is full of water," whatever river may be by this phrase specially denoted in the Psalms, and recall this fact, that Jerusalem is especially the city of waters. Springs of water and subterranean streams are there in so much that if you are on the site of the old temple of Jerusalem, you may lay your ear to the ground and hear water running underneath, running, running. It is a wonderful thing. In the Church when it is most desolate, lay but your ear to the ground and you shall hear the waters of God running, running. The earth shall not perish of thirst, then? No, it shall not. The river of God, it is full of water. Glorious river! Will He keep it full? He will. Has not He kept the Nile "in its courses" through these thousand, thousand years? Has not He kept all the great rivers in the world; and He will keep the river of His own truth, of His own love running, running. Fear not, then; deliver thyself up, as to the "flesh," to Jordan. Let Jordan make away with thee, and the swellings of Jordan carry thee down, down. Let his twenty-seven cataracts, or some of them, sweep thee on. Care nothing for the descents of Jordan. God will make away with thee by the current of Jordan, and yet will give thee to dwell by the river of His love and mercy, the river of which He will make us to drink; the river beside which trees of life grow; the river about which the Beautiful City is builded, the City of God so glorious and so peaceful. Believe in this river and take the imagery of Scripture, and use it as you will, this way to-day and another way to-morrow, yet always so as to enable your heart to trust and love God more and move, and you will rejoice that Scripture, as it were, is written in cipher; not merely in English, or Latin, or Greek, or Hebrew, but in cipher; in the language of hieroglyph, so that the more a man has of the Holy Ghost in his heart, the more he finds the Holy Ghost's meaning and comfort as he reads the ancient Word. (*Ibid.*) *Baptism in the Jordan:*—The Jordan was regarded by the Israelites as the glory of their country, for it is the only river in Palestine which always flows in a copious stream, though its sunken, tumultuous, twisted course, which, between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, winds for some two hundred miles over a space only about sixty miles in direct length, has made it useless for navigation, or as an attraction to human communities, except at the plain of Jericho. The great miracle when the Hebrews passed over made it sacred to them, so that its waters were already regarded with reverence when Elisha commanded Naaman to wash in them as a cure for his leprosy. Hallowed still more by the preaching of John and the baptism of Christ, the Jordan has been the favourite goal of all pilgrimages to the Holy Land in every age since the first Christian centuries. As early as the days of Constantine, to be baptized in its waters was deemed a great privilege, while in the sixth century Antoninus relates that marble steps led down into the water on both sides at the spot where it was believed our Lord had been baptized, while a wooden cross rose in the middle of the stream. Upon the eve of the Epiphany, he adds, "great vigils are held here, a vast crowd of people is collected, and after the cock has crowed for the fourth or fifth time, matins begin. Then, as the day commences to dawn, the deacons begin the holy mysteries, and celebrate them in the open air; the priest descends into the river, and all who are to be baptized go to him." Holy water was even in that early age carried away by masters of vessels who visited it as pilgrims, to sprinkle their ships before a voyage; and we are told that all pilgrims

alike went into the water wearing a linen garment, which they sacredly preserved as a winding-sheet to be wrapped round them at their death. The scene of the yearly bathing of pilgrims now is near the ford, about two miles above the Dead Sea, and each sect having its own particular spot which it fondly believes to be exactly that at which our Saviour was baptized. The season of baptism has been changed from the colder time of Epiphany to that of Easter, and as the date of the latter feast differs in the Roman and Greek Churches, no collisions take place. Each Easter Monday thousands of pilgrims start in a great caravan from Jerusalem under the protection of the Turkish government, a white flag and loud music going before them, while Turkish soldiers, with the green standard of the Prophet, close the long procession. On the Greek Easter Monday the same spectacle is repeated, four or five thousand pilgrims joining in this second caravan. The streets of Jerusalem are, for the time, deserted, to see the vast cavalcade set out: women in long white dresses and veils, men in flowing robes and turbans, covering the space outside the walls and the slopes and hollow of the Valley of Jehoshaphat in a parti-coloured crowd, eager to see the start. At last the procession streams from the gate and pours along the camel-track towards Bethany and the Jordan; some on foot, others on horseback, or on asses, mules, or camels. . . . The broad space between the Sultan's Spring and Eriha is soon an extemporized town; tents of all sizes rising as by magic, while at night the plain is lighted up by the flames of countless fires. Next morning they start from this resting-place before sunrise, and march or ride by the light of the Passover moon towards the brink of the Jordan, but the pace of such a confused throng is slow. To help them on the first stages of their way multitudinous torches blaze in the van, and huge watchfires, kindled at the sides of the road, guard them past the worst places, till, as daylight breaks, the first of the throng reach the sacred river. Before long the high bank above the trees and reeds is crowded with horses, mules, asses, and camels in terrible confusion; old, young, men, women, and children, of many nationalities, all pressing together in seemingly inextricable disorder. Yet they manage to clear themselves after a time, and then, dismounting, rush into the water with the most business-like quiet, too earnest and practical to express much emotion. Some strip themselves naked, but most of them plunge in clad in a white gown, which is to serve hereafter as a shroud, consecrated by its present use. Families bathe together, the father immersing the infant and his other children that they may not need to make the pilgrimage in later life. Most of them keep near the shore, but some strike out boldly into the current; some choose one spot, some another, for their bath. In little more than two hours the banks are once more deserted, the pilgrims remounting their motley army of beasts with the same grave quiet as they had shown on leaving them for a time, and before noon they are back again at their encampment. They now sleep till the middle of the night, when, roused by the kettledrums of the Turks, they once more, by the light of the moon, torches, and bonfires, turn their faces to the steep pass up to Jerusalem in such silence that they might all be gone without waking you if you slept near them. It was thus with a great caravan of pilgrims who encamped a few yards from my tent near the Lake of Galilee. Noisy enough by night, with firing of pistols and guns, they struck their tents and moved off in the morning without breaking my sleep. (*C. Geikie, D.D.*) **Preaching the baptism of repentance.**—*The preacher and his message*:—I. THE PREACHER. You can often guess a man's style or the character of his message from his personal appearance and demeanour. I presume it is because of this that Scripture, a book intended for man's salvation, should still find space here and there for notices of the personal appearance of some of its chief actors and characters. John Baptist, like Elijah, was a thorough *man*. We are told that his raiment was of camel's hair, that he had a leathern girdle round his loins, and that he lived upon the poorest of food; but I wonder why all this is described, unless to show us that there are times and crises in the history of nations and of towns when a true man cannot live in society. God help the towns and communities that drive a John Baptist into the wilderness that he may there live and thrive and gather mental and spiritual strength. II. HIS MESSAGE. 1. What he preached was a gospel of Divine origin. There can be no other. A human-made gospel is a self-condemned thing. You cannot manufacture a gospel—it comes like the grace of God; it comes like a breath of heaven filling the soul and commanding a rugged, rough man even in the very wilderness to cry out, "I am a preacher." It is inspiration—"the word of the Lord came." If the gospel be not Divine, it is nothing. 2. This gospel is

an old-fashioned one. A recent writer has declared that the producers of truth are very few, that the jobbers in truth are many, and that the retailers of truth are numberless. I believe it is precisely the same with the gospel. The originators of the gospel are few—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; I know none other. The jobbers in the gospel are many, alas; and the retailers of the gospel are numberless. But it is the one gospel, and it must be an old-fashioned one, because the thing that called it into existence is as old as the history of mankind. What called the gospel into the world? Man's helplessness and sin. 3. Notice, further, that the gospel according to John Baptist is a self-accredited thing. It has its credentials within itself. It does not need inspiration to tell me that such a verse as "God is love" is inspired: there is the fragrance of heaven upon that thought. 4. This gospel is a simple, intelligible gospel. It is said of Molière that he would allow no play of his to be published in which there was a single word which his slave did not understand. Simpleness was the secret of his success, as it was of Shakspere, Milton, and John Bunyan. They don't manufacture, as it were, long words, they speak in the language of nature, and that is pre-eminently the great qualification and sign of the gospel of God. 5. Now, let us notice the universal tone of John Baptist's gospel. "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." How unlike a Jew is this style! Let us all—ministers, Sunday-school teachers, &c.—beware of preaching the gospel in a narrow way. Do not cramp it; give it free currency, and be sure that the gospel you preach is not your own, but God's. 6. The subject-matter of the Baptist's gospel is "Repent." When a man's heart is wrung with grief for sin there is not, and there never has been, any gospel that can be preached to him save this. Repentance means atonement; atonement demands love; and the harsh, brassy sound of the call to repentance may bring a man face to face with the more mellow, happier music of the spheres of glory—"God is love." (*J. B. Meharry, B.A.*) *John Baptist's preaching*:—The preaching of the Baptist was—1. Stern, as was natural to an ascetic whose very aspect and mission were modelled on the example of Elijah. The particulars of his life, dress, food—the leathern girdle, mantle of camel's hair, living on locusts and wild honey—are preserved for us by the other evangelists, and they gave him that power of mastery over others which always springs from perfect self-control, and absolute self-abnegation. Hence "in his manifestation and agency he was like a burning torch; his whole life was a very earthquake; the whole man was a sermon." 2. Absolutely dauntless. The unlettered Prophet of the desert has not a particle of respect for the powerful Sadducees and long-robed, luxurious Rabbis, and disdains to be flattered by their coming to listen to his teaching. Having nothing to hope for from man's favour, he has nothing to fear from man's dislike. 3. It shows remarkable insight into human nature, and into the needs and temptations of every class which came to him—showing that his ascetic seclusion did not arise from any contempt of, or aversion to, his fellow-men. 4. It was intensely practical. Not only does it exclude all abstract and theological terms such as "justification," &c., but it says nothing directly of even faith or love. In this respect it recalls the Old Testament, and might be summed up in the words of Balaam, preserved in Micah vi. 8. 5. Yet, though it still belongs to the dispensation of the shadow, it prophesies of the dawn. His first message was "Repent"; his second, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." 6. It does not claim the credentials of a single miracle. Without a "sign" it stirred to its depths the heart of a sign-demanding age. What enormous moral force, then, it must have possessed. 7. It had only a partial and temporary popularity. The lamp is laid aside when the sun has dawned. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Repentance the first thing*:—A ship's company rise against their officers, put them in chains, and take the command of the ship upon themselves. They agree to set the officers ashore on some uninhabited island, to sail to some distant port, dispose of the cargo, and divide the amount. After parting with their officers they find it necessary, for the sake of self-preservation, to establish some kind of laws and order. To these they adhere with punctuality, act upon honour with respect to each other, and propose to be very impartial in the distribution of their plunder. But while they are on their voyage one of the company relents and becomes very unhappy. They inquire the reason. He answers, "We are engaged in a wicked cause." They plead their justice, honour, and generosity to each other. He denies that there is any virtue in it. "Nay," he declares, "all our equity, while it is exercised in pursuit of a scheme which violates the great law of justice, is in itself a species of iniquity." "You talk extravagantly," they reply; "surely we might be worse than we are if we were to destroy each other as well as our officers." "Yes

wickedness admits of degrees; but there is no virtue of goodness in all our doings; all has arisen from selfish motives. The same principles which led us to discard our officers would lead us, if it were not for our own sake, to destroy each other." "But you speak so very discouragingly; you destroy all motives to good order in the ship; what would you have us do?" "Repent; return to our injured officers and owners, and submit to mercy." "Oh, but this we cannot do: advise us to anything which concerns the good order of the ship, and we will hearken to you." "I cannot bear to advise in these matters. Return, return, and submit to mercy!" (*A. Fuller.*) *The religion of penitence:*—The only religion possible to man is the religion of penitence. The righteousness of man cannot be the integrity of the virgin citadel which has never admitted the enemy; it can never be more than the integrity of the city which has been surprised and roused, and which, having expelled the invader with blood in the streets, has suffered great inward loss. *A true penitent's feeling towards sin:*—I once walked into a garden with a lady to gather some flowers. There was one large bush whose branches were bending under the weight of the most beautiful roses. We both gazed upon it with admiration. There was one flower on it which seemed to shine above all the rest in beauty. This lady pressed forward into the thick bush, and reached far over to pluck it. As she did this, a black snake, which was hid in the bush, wrapped itself round her arm. She was alarmed beyond all description; and ran from the garden, screaming, and almost in convulsions. During all that day she suffered very much with fear; her whole body trembled, and it was a long time before she could be quieted. That lady is still alive. Such is her hatred now of the whole serpent race, that she has never since been able to look at a snake, even though it were dead. No one could ever persuade her to venture again into a cluster of bushes, even to pluck a beautiful rose. Now this is the way the sinner acts who truly repents of his sins. He thinks of sin as the serpent that once coiled itself round him. He hates it. He dreads it. He flies from it. He fears the places where it inhabits. He does not willingly go into the haunts. He will no more play with sin than this lady would afterwards have fondled snakes. (*Bishop Merd.*)

Ver. 4. **The voice of one crying in the wilderness.**—*Self-effacement:*—John Baptist is a type of those who resolve, at all risks, to discharge their duty and to deliver the message entrusted to them by God, without one single thought of self, without one transient wish to appear themselves in the matter. There is no indolence here, nor cowardice. There is simply an absence of any ambition to be prominent, and of any desire to hear their name whispered among the crowd. It is enough to be a "voice"—to preach God's Word, and not their own; to pursue some truth which is not to enhance their own reputation; to advocate some cause which is not to redound to their own advantage. Alas! how few are such persons; but how precious in proportion to their rarity! If any of us, then, be on the way to the attainment of this high grace, let us be supremely careful that our own self-effacement be both genuine in itself and be a sacrifice offered to a worthy cause. For if I merely surrender to the first comer, or abdicate in favour of some worse person than myself, the very humility that "should have been for my wealth, becomes to me an occasion of falling." Instances are not uncommon, in every one's circle of acquaintance, where a man has surrendered not his pleasures, or his advantages, but his principles, to some other person's opinion. But if a single person's private opinion be sometimes thus overpowering, what must the combined force of a thousand people's opinion, of "public opinion," be! Every one, it is obvious, has a visual horizon of his own, in the centre of which he lives and moves and has his being; and just so every one has a social circle—"a world" (as the Bible calls it) of his own, amid which he lives, and which reacts too often with fatal influence upon his character. We must, by prayer and watchful circumspection, safeguard this precious grace of humble self-effacement, lest we expend it on unworthy objects. (*Canon G. H. Curteis.*) *Admission to the kingdom:*—I. 1. The one thing that is essential in order that we may enter the kingdom of God is that we should be sincere. It was the evident sincerity of John the Baptist which drew around him the sinners of Judea, even rough soldiers and mercenary tax-gatherers. He demands sincerity in return. He could not do with professions unless they were accompanied by fruits worthy of repentance. 2. But there were those who came out to John's baptism in insincerity. II. It is not necessarily a proof of sincerity that we are keenly interested in the religious movements which are agitating men's minds. It is a better test when we are

willing, in all simplicity, to put away those special sins which are hindering us from surrendering ourselves to the rule of God. (*Canon Vernon Hutton, M.A.*) *The voice in the wilderness*:—"When the tale of bricks is doubled, then comes Moses": this is an apothegm familiar among the Jews even to the present day, and rehearsed in their stories of the past. But Moses came twice; and, the first time, he was abruptly rejected. The "Prophet like unto Moses," promised and at last announced to our sin-enslaved race as the Redeemer, was introduced by a forerunner, who was not accepted any more than his Master. John the Baptist was ultimately beheaded for his reward of fidelity; and the Lord Jesus was crucified. Thus it comes about that Christ's sad history strikes back on John's, and gives it an unexpected interpretation. Very true have proved those words of Heinrich Heine: "Wheresoever a great soul in this world has uttered its thoughts, there always has been Golgotha." Affairs had now reached the last crisis. Pontius Pilate was misgoverning Judea, filling history with extortions and infamies of crime. A new Herod, worthy of the name, was shaming the people with villainous lusts and defections in faith, his desperate morals fitly keeping pace with his downward career in apostasy. Suddenly was heard a voice in the wilderness. There was singular pathos in it, as there is in all human tones that have power. But it had, besides that, a sort of vibrating ring in it which intimated a challenge. Experts say that idiots, even in the midst of a gibbering frolic, will pause abruptly to listen to the sound of a musical instrument; perhaps some vague recollection of primal harmonies in a healthy nature before it was shattered may be awakened at the stir near by; the soul seems seeking to render answer, but only succeeds in giving wistful attention. That was not a loud voice in those days down by the Dead Sea, but all Judea heard it, and up the Jordan it rushed with more than the usual celerity; it certainly in due time reached the villagers in the land of Gennesareth, for some of them journeyed at once towards it—notably, Simon son of Jonas, and John, and James, and Andrew, who were destined to figure in the train of Jesus Christ. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The reality of the Baptist*:—John the Baptist was a reality. This poor world of ours has been so often trifled with, that it has learned to be satisfied thoroughly only with what is honest and true. There could be no ordinary possibility of mistaking such a man; he was genuine. And he shook that miserable generation of hypocrites as might have been expected. Virgil tells us that when Æneas descended into Hades to visit his father, he came to Charon's ferry across the dark river; as he stepped into the light boat, accustomed to carry only spirits, so heavy a burden of a real and living man made the craft tremble and creek dismally through all the length of its sewed seams. We can presume that the hollow forms of social life in those wretched days were writhed and strained, if not shattered, by an uncompromising reality of manhood like that of John the Baptist at the Jordan. He was a man among the shadows of men. He had an actual "idea." He shook off the shams of religion, and told souls a great deal more about religion itself than they ever knew before. He put himself within the reach of living people, and down on their planes of existence. Only he shred away the veils and tinsels and mockeries of an outward show, and with an unsparing hand tore up the traditions and mere commandments of Pharisees. (*Ibid.*) *Repentance is not alike in all*:—Let every man come to God in his own way. God made you on purpose, and me on purpose, and He does not say to you, "Repent, and feel as Deacon A. feels," or, "Repent, and feel as your minister feels," but, "Come just as you are, with *your* mind and heart and education and circumstances." You are too apt to feel that your religious experience must be the same as others have; but where will you find analogies for this? Certainly not in nature. God's works do not come from His hand like coins from the mint. It seems as if it were a necessity that each one should be in some sort distinct from every other. No two leaves on the same tree are precisely alike; no two buds on one bush have the same unfolding, nor do they seek to have. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The Baptist's gospel*:—John, too, had a gospel to preach, though at the first sounding of it there was terribleness enough in the tone. John preached the baptism of repentance, but, behold, it was repentance with hope, repentance and the remission of sins. John the Baptist is not a mere historic figure; his ministry represents a great fact which has a prominent place in the spiritual transformation and progress of mankind; his voice of repentance must always be first heard; his call to humiliation must always, in the first instance, bow down the soul; and after the thunder and fire of his ministry will come the still small voice of redeeming and welcoming love. John did not appear before

his contemporaries without connection with all the solemn and beautiful past of Jewish history. Though he came from the wilderness, yet, as to the spiritual aspects of his ministry, he came up from the region of holy prophecy, and upon him there rested the benediction of holy men of old. It is something, after all, to feel that, as preachers of repentance and grace, we are not speaking in our own name, or clothing our words with the petty authority of merely personal position; the ages repeat their demands in our voices; the prophets are heard again when we speak in the name of Jesus Christ. John's speech seemed to be regulated by the music of prophecy. This quotation from the Book of Isaiah is like the sounding of a military march, the anthem of those who move on to momentary battle, followed by everlasting triumph. In this prophecy it will be observed that there is the same combination of the human and Divine which is found throughout the whole of the gospel scheme: men are called upon to make straight paths for the Lord, and they are also called upon to work out their own salvation; they are exhorted to prepare the way, as they were commanded to roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre; and when they have done their little part, there comes the full outflow of the Divine sympathy, power, and love. Nothing can exceed in minuteness and completeness the description which is given in verses 5 and 6. The sixth verse contains the grandest utterance that can possibly be put into human words, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Character and mission of the Baptist*:—These words, quoted by John the Baptist, had been spoken seven hundred years before by Isaiah. Nearly three hundred years after that, Malachi closed the course of Scripture with these remarkable words: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet," &c. Then intervened a period of four hundred years, during which the voice of prophecy was mute, and all that was left to guide the Israelite was that of which Malachi reminded him in the previous verses: "Remember ye the law of Moses My servant." And then, when these four hundred years were closed, suddenly, immediately before the Messiah's advent, there appeared in the wilderness a wonderful man, living a life like that of Isaiah and Elias, applying to himself this prophecy of Isaiah, and having applied to him by Christ that of Malachi concerning Elijah. I propose to endeavour to answer these two questions. 1. By what right, and in what sense, are these two prophecies, the one originally spoken by Isaiah of himself, and the other distinctly marking out a particular man Elias, referred to John the Baptist? And—2. In what sense was John the forerunner of the Redeemer, preparing His way before Him? I. Now, to understand on what principle these words are applicable to John, we must carry along with us the leading principle of prophecy. It is not merely a prediction of separate events, but far rather an announcement of principles; through the interpretation of the present the prophets predicted the future; for the announcement of every principle connected with a fact is a prediction of all future events that shall occur under similar circumstances. For instance, the astronomer, in the announcement of the eclipse, has so plainly discovered the principles that regulate it as to be able to foretell without a doubt the very moment of its return. Thus it was that our Lord and the prophets applied their prophecy. The prophet Malachi uses the name of Elijah, and says, "Before another great and dreadful day come, another man shall rise up in the same spirit as Elijah." Our blessed Lord applies this prophecy to John the Baptist. He told men that "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things," but that the Elias that was to come was not the Elias they had expected, but one in the spirit and power of Elias, who should turn the hearts of the fathers, &c. He thus reminded them that what the prophet meant was not a resurrection of the man, but of his spirit. II. In the next place we return an answer to the second question proposed—In what sense was John the forerunner, &c. The expression of the prophet a figurative one. In Eastern countries, when a monarch desired to pay a visit to a distant part of his dominions, he was accustomed to send his messengers before him to demand of the inhabitants of every part through which he was to pass that they should make his road easy by filling valleys and cutting through hills. Precisely in the same way was John the Baptist to prepare the way for Christ. He came proclaiming a King, declaring the conditions without which the kingdom could not come, and without which the King could not reign. The first of these conditions was this: he prepared the way for Christ by declaring private righteousness preparatory to public reformation. "Change yourselves, or to you at least no kingdom of God can come." 2. John prepared the way for the advent of the Messiah by a simple assertion that right is right, and wrong, wrong.

3. The Baptist prepared the way for the Messiah by teaching simple truths, falling back upon first principles. Observe that all this was to prepare the way for Christ —it was not Christ. Yet in all ages the baptism of John in the laver of duty must precede the baptism of Christ in the laver of self-sacrifice. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*)

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

"Also of John a calling and a crying
Rang in Bethabara till strength was spent,
Cared not for counsel, stayed not for replying,
John had one message for the world—REPENT.

John, than which man a sadder or a greater
Not till this day has been of woman born;
John, like some iron peak by the Creator
Fired with the red glow of the rushing morn.

Thus, when the sun shall rise and overcome it,
Stands in his shining desolate and bare,
Yet not the less the inexorable summit
Flamed him his signal to the upper air." (*F. W. H. Myers.*)

Preparing the way of the Lord in worship:—The way of the Lord should be prepared in our hearts. If we would have the Lord come to us in our Sabbath worship, we must think of Him in our week-day work. As it often is now, when the Sabbath comes, the gathered rubbish of a whole week must be cleared away. The way of the Lord is blocked up by the remembrance of the week's cares. A man brings his business right up to the borders of the Sabbath, and, of course, the Sabbath itself is full of it. Boxes and barrels, bales, dry goods, groceries and hardware, remain over in the mind from the week's work and worry. Now, a man has no more right to take these things with him in his thoughts, than to leave his goods exposed for display and sale in his store. If it were not for disturbing others, he might just as well take his ledgers and invoices with him to church, and be making out his bills and checking off his goods while there, as to be doing these things in his thought all day. He might just as well wheel his boxes and bales right into the aisle, as to have them present to mental vision all the time. Jesus drove out the traders from the temple with a scourge of cords. But if He should come into our modern churches and drive out all who in their thoughts have brought money, and merchandise, and trade into the house of God, He would leave some very small congregations. If all the business that is planned in church were really transacted there, it would make that a busier place than ever the Jewish Temple was in the days of the Passover. If we would enjoy the Sabbath as a day of rest and communion with God, we must drive these money-changers of our thought out from the sacred temple of our hearts, and let those hearts be again the temples of the Holy Ghost. We must prepare for the day, not merely by laying aside our work, but by excluding it from our hearts, that God may come and dwell there. Thus, in all things, we must prepare for God's work. We must lay our plans for it, and shape our affairs for it. The Lord comes to reign, if He comes at all. We must so prepare the way that He can come and can reign. There must be fore-thought as well as good will; preparation as well as diligence. It is true the Lord sometimes comes suddenly to His temple. But when He thus comes, "Who shall abide the day of His coming? for He shall be like a refiner's fire." *All may assist in preparing the way of the Lord*:—Not one little brown and withered leaf falls to the ground on one of the November days but the shape of the plant is changed; so there is not one little act of yours, one whispered prayer that His kingdom may come, but becomes a factor in the world's redemption. If I can only place one little golden brick in the pavement of the Lord's highway, I will place it there, that coming generations may walk thereon to the heavenly city. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *Various ways in which the way of the Lord has been prepared*:—Strangely, too, the movements of science, art, and commerce seem to wait on ministerial life. Printing had just been invented in time to give the Bible to the people in the period of the Reformation. The magnetic needle was applied to navigation to send that Bible and its preachers to all lands. The spirit of exploration, which has sought out every island, and is now engaged in revealing the

character of Central Africa and the steppes of Asia; the study of all languages; the preparation of grammars and lexicons; the knowledge of the currents of the air and the water, of the powers of steam and electricity—all these are so many voices crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!" They are so many indications that when man will carry God's message all the power of Omnipotence waits on his service. (*M. Simpson, D.D.*) *St. John the Baptist*:—How shall we picture John the Baptist to ourselves? Great painters, greater than the world seems likely to see again, have exercised their fancy upon his face, his figure, his actions. We must put out of our minds, I fear, at once, many of the loveliest of them all; those in which Raffaelle and others have depicted the child John, in his camel's-hair raiments, with a child's cross in his hand, worshipping the Infant Christ. There is also one exquisite picture, by Annibale Caracci, if I recollect rightly, in which the blessed Babe is lying asleep, and the blessed virgin signs to St. John, pressing forward to adore Him, not to waken his sleeping Lord and God. But such imaginations, beautiful as they are, and true in a heavenly and spiritual sense, are not historic fact. For St. John the Baptist said himself, "I knew Him not." The best picture of him which I can recollect is the great one by Guido, of the magnificent lad sitting on the rock, half clad in his camel's-hair robe, his stalwart hand lifted up to denounce he hardly knows what, save that things are going all wrong, utterly wrong to him; his beautiful mouth open to preach he hardly knows what, save that he has a message from God, of which he is half conscious as yet—that he is a forerunner, a prophet, a foreteller of something and some one which is to come, and which yet is very near at hand. The wild rocks are around him, the clear sky is over him, and nothing more. There, aloft and in the mountains, alone with nature and with God, he preaches to a generation sunk in covetousness, superstition, party-spirit, and the rest of the seven devils which brought on the fall of his native land, and which will bring on the fall of every land on earth, preaches to them, I say, what? The most common, let me say boldly, the most vulgar—in the good sense of the old word—the most vulgar morality. He tells them that an awful ruin was coming unless they repented and mended. How fearfully true his words were the next fifty years proved. The axe, he said, was laid to the root of the tree; and the axe was the heathen Roman, even them master of the land. But God, not the Roman Cæsar only, was laying the axe. The people, the farming class, came to him with, "What shall we do?" He has nothing but plain morality for them. The publicans, the renegades who were farming the taxes of the Roman conquerers, and making their base profit out of their countrymen's slavery, came to him, "Master, what shall we do?" He does not tell them not to be publicans. He does not tell his countrymen to rebel, though he must have been sorely tempted to do it. All he says is, "Make the bad and base arrangement as good as you can; exact no more," &c. The soldiers, poor fellows, came to him. Whether they were Herod's mercenaries, or real gallant Roman soldiers, we are not told. Either had unlimited power under a military despotism, in an anarchic and half-enslaved country; but whichever they were, he has the same answer to them of common morality, "You are what you are; you are where you are. Do what you have to do as well as you can. Do no violence to any man," &c. Ah, wise politician, ah, clear and rational spirit, who knows and tells others to do the duty which lies nearest them; who sees (as old Greek Hesiod says) how much bigger the half is than the whole; who, in the hour of his country's deepest degradation, had Divine courage to say, "Our deliverance lies, not in rebellion, but in doing right." But he has sterner words. Pharisees, the separatists, the religious men, who think themselves holier than any one else; and Sadducees, materialist men of the world, who sneer at the unseen, the unknown, the heroic, came to him. And for Pharisee and Sadducee—for the man who prides himself on believing more than his neighbours, and for the man who prides himself on believing less—he has the same answer. Both are exclusive, inhuman, while they are pretending to be more than human. He knew them well, for he was born and bred among them, and he forestalls our Lord's words to them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (*Charles Kingsley, M.A.*)

Ver. 5. **Every valley shall be filled.**—*The King's highway*:—I. VALLEYS MUST BE LEVELLED UP. 1. Inattention. 2. Apathy. 3. Despondency. II. EMINENCES MUST BE LEVELLED DOWN. 1. The mountain of pride must be reduced. (1) The pride that will not make full confession of sin. (2) The pride that will not receive the

kingdom of heaven as a little child. (3) The pride of reason that will not accept salvation until its mysteries are comprehended. (4) The pride of worldly professors. 2. The mountain of presumption must be depressed. (1) Sinners are presumptuous when, without forsaking their sins, they attempt to believe for salvation. (2) Professors are presumptuous when they expect the work of God to revive in the Church without exerting themselves to promote a revival. (3) While we work as though everything depended upon working, we must trust as though everything depended upon trusting. 3. The hills of ingratitude must be brought low. III. THE CROOKED PLACES MUST BE STRAIGHTENED. 1. Prejudice. 2. Jealousy. 3. Censoriousness. 4. Covetousness. IV. THE ROUGH PLACES MUST BE SMOOTHED. 1. The ugly rock of Sabbath desecration must be removed. 2. That rut of drunkenness must be filled up. 3. Those sinks of immorality must be filled—lying, cheating, oppression, uncleanness. 4. The rough places of instability must be smoothed. (*Prof. F. W. Macdonald, M.A.*) *Preparing the way of the Lord*:—Before John, the wilderness preacher, the mountains of Pharisaic pride were levelled, the valleys of Sadducean unbelief were filled up, the tortuous vices of the courtly Judean were corrected, and the rude ignorance of the Galilean smoothed and reformed. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Road-makers*:—(To children.) In ancient times, especially in Eastern lands, when an emperor or king was travelling through his dominions, men were sent before them to prepare the way. Sometimes they had to make a new road through pathless wildernesses and rocky passes, hewing down trees, cutting a level way along steep or rugged hill-sides, clearing away rocks, and making embankments across valleys, and bridges over streams. Or sometimes the old road was overgrown with bushes and brambles, or washed away by floods, or covered with rubbish which the winter storms and swollen torrents had brought down from the mountains. In some Eastern lands, even at this day, travellers tell us how the roads are often so destroyed in the rainy season, that before a governor or high officer of state makes a journey, the highways must be mended and made ready for him to travel speedily and safely. So when the prophet Isaiah was speaking of the coming of the Lord Jesus, he foretold that some one would be sent by God to "prepare the way," &c. Look at the Gospels and you will see that the messenger whom God sent to prepare the way for His beloved Son was John the Baptist. Now, how did John prepare the way? There were four things which he taught the people, in order to make ready their hearts for the Lord Jesus. I. To EXPECT HIM. II. To FEEL THEIR NEED OF HIM TO SAVE THEM FROM THEIR SINS. III. To REPENT OF ALL SIN. IV. To HEARKEN TO HIM, AND BELIEVE, LOVE, AND OBEY HIM WHEN HE CAME. Now, if the Lord Jesus were coming to the place where you live, would you not be glad if you were invited to help to prepare the way for Him? Would you not think it a great honour and happiness to take one stone out of His way? Oh yes! Your heart would dance for joy, and perhaps your feet too. Who would not like to be a pioneer for Jesus, the King of kings? Well, but don't you know that He really wishes to come; not to pass along the streets, but to come into the homes and hearts of all the people, not to pay a visit, but to dwell there? Then what hinders His coming? Only that people are not ready for Him. Do you know what God calls a heart that does not love and fear Him? He calls it "a stony heart" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26). Well then, if you do not love and trust and try to obey the Lord Jesus as your own Saviour and King, don't you see that there is one stone to be taken out of His way? How? Just by coming to Him in prayer to make you truly His. (*E. R. Conder, D.D.*) *Valley and mountain*:—Every valley shall be filled; that the people might know what our Lord would do, to exalt the mercy of God to undone sinners, who, like valleys, lay very low under despondency of spirit; John bid them repent, which the law did not admit of. This word repent is a most sweet word, and tends to advance mercy and God's free grace, and so to fill up those valleys, I mean despairing and desponding sinners. When God sends a messenger to rebels, and commands them to repent and believe, a sweet pardon be sure is comprehended therein; and this tends to fill up or exalt two valleys. 1. The lowly and desponding soul. 2. The mercy of God is exalted, which was one grand design of God in sending His Son to satisfy Divine justice; for mercy and Divine goodness could not be raised to run level with justice, until our Saviour had made a complete satisfaction for our sins. I. But before I proceed, let it be considered (as I conceive) that the grand obstructions or obstacles which lie in the way of God's being reconciled to sinners, and of sinners' reconciliation unto Him, are comprehended by these metaphorical expressions. 1. The haughty Jews and Pharisees, who were swelled with pride; yea, like lifted up high mountains and hills; how did the Pharisee glory, "God, I thank Thee I am

not as other men, nor as this publican"? 2. They were like mountains, in respect had to their legal privileges, being God's covenant people, boasting "They had Abraham to their father, and never were in bondage" (John viii. 33). John Baptist in his ministry strove to level these mountains, when he saw them coming to his baptism, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" 3. The Jews and Pharisees might be compared to mountains and hills, in that they boasted they had the key of knowledge, and were the only teachers and masters of Israel, and that all besides themselves were ignorant and foolish persons. Do but read what holy Paul speaketh of them, to bring them down level with the ground. II. Sin (as Mr. Caryl notes, speaking of this very text) may be also meant by these mountains. III. By mountains here also may be meant, or refer unto those great oppositions our Lord Jesus met withal, in His working out our salvation. 1. From men. 2. From the devil. These stood in His way like mighty mountains, like as Sanballet stood as a mountain in the way of Zerubbabel (a type of Christ): "And who art thou, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain" (Zech. iv. 7). IV. As valleys may refer to despairing sinners, so mountains and hills may refer to haughty and presumptuous sinners; I speak not here of self-righteous persons. V. Valleys may refer to the low estate of mankind, or of God's elect, as considered dead in the first Adam, or as under the law and curse thereof. (*B. Keach.*) *The crooked shall be made straight*:—1. Crooked may refer to men's crooked opinions; they speak not right of God; they do not judge according to the straight and equal glory of all the perfections of God's holy nature; nor according to the straight rule of His holy law, but magnify the glory of His mercy, to the eclipsing the glory of His justice; and of this crooked opinion are the Socinians, and all that magnify the pardoning grace of God, without having respect to a plenary satisfaction, made to the justice and law of God by Jesus Christ. 2. Crooked things may refer to those false and crooked ways of worship which many walk in; ways which Christ never instituted or appointed: the Word of God is the only rule for worship, and administration of ordinances. Now all pretended ordinances and Divine worship, that doth not exactly agree with this rule, but vary in matter or manner from it, are crooked way. 3. Crooked may refer to the lives and conversations of men; the law of God (as it is in the hand of Jesus Christ) and the glorious gospel is the only rule of our lives; and all whose lives and conversations do not agree with that rule, are crooked ways. 4. Crooked may also refer unto men's crooked spirits; how cross and uneven are some men's hearts and spirits to the word and will of God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7). (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 6. **The salvation of God.**—*Salvation all of God*:—We are to be saved, not by what we are worth ourselves; not by that which we have attained. Looking at ourselves in some sense as a piece of art, a picture, a statue, or an exquisite piece of machinery, we are not worth saving. In and of ourselves, there is nothing worth preservation. And all the work that we have ever done on our own character and nature does not amount to any considerable value. If we are saved, it will not be because of that which we have succeeded in doing; it will be because of that which has been done upon us and in us by another and higher artist-hand. If we inherit salvation in the life which is to come, if we enter upon a life of immortality in blessedness, it will be because we are saved by grace. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *God's part and man's part in salvation*:—A ship is stuck on a mudbank, and, the tide going out, it careens over, and there it lies, like many discouraged Christians. They do not need the anchor. The anchor is out, though. By and by the tide begins to come in, little by little. The captain calls up the crew, and orders them to hoist in the anchor. It is hoisted in and stowed away. "Trim the sails," is the next command, and that is obeyed. The tide is still coming in, coming in, coming in; and by and by the vessel floats off; and the crew look up with admiration, and say, "What a captain we have! It was the hauling in of the anchor and the trimming of the sails that saved us. The captain gave his orders, they were obeyed, and then she floated." No, it was not the captain's doings. The Lord God, who swings the stars through the heavens and exerts His power upon the ocean, did it. The captain merely foresaw the coming of the tide, and adapted the circumstances of the vessel to influences which existed before. (*Ibid.*) *Christ the only way of salvation*:—Mrs. Bennet, wife of John Bennet, minister of an Independent Church in Cheshire, the day before she died, raised herself into a very solemn attitude, and with most striking emphasis delivered, in the following lan-

guage, her dying testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus:—"I here declare it before you that I have looked on the right hand and on the left—I have cast my eyes before and behind—to see if there was any possible way of salvation but by the Son of God; and I am fully satisfied there is not. No! none on earth, nor all the angels in heaven, could have wrought out salvation for such a sinner. None but God Himself, taking our nature upon Him, and doing all that the holy law required, could have procured pardon for me, a sinner. He has wrought out salvation for me, and I know that I shall enjoy it for ever." (*Clerical Library.*) O that all flesh, that is, all men that believe, may—1. See the glory of God's wisdom in His contriving the way of our salvation by Jesus Christ. 2. The glory of His infinite love, mercy, and Divine goodness. 3. The glory of His infinite justice and holiness, in that His justice is as much exalted in and by Christ, as His love and mercy. Thus in respect of all the glorious attributes of God, the glory of God is in and by Jesus Christ revealed. Take the glory of God here, for His glory personally considered, 1. How doth the glory of God the Father shine forth herein, or what revelation is there of it in the gospel! 2. How is the glory of God the Son revealed also! 3. How is the glory of God the Holy Ghost likewise revealed and magnified! And all this is done and displayed in Jesus Christ the Mediator. And all flesh shall see it; that is, not the Jews only, but also the Gentiles, or all nations; *i.e.*, some in all nations; nay, the whole world at last.

Vers. 7, 8. **Then said he to the multitude that came forth.** — *John and the populace:*—It is a matter of some interest, even as a memoir of ancient manners, to conceive the various and strikingly marked aspect of the multitude that now fled to John in the desert. There stood the Pharisee, covered from head to heel with the emblems of his sanctity, the haughtiest and most scornful of men; but then, for once, divested of his spiritual influence, and asking, "What shall I do to be saved?" There stood the splendid and voluptuous scribe—the man of affected philosophy, for once feeling that he had a soul to be saved. There stood the grasping and the iron hand of the publican, the common tribute gatherer, laying his accumulated gains before the feet of the prophet, and bowing down to the dust. There stood the soldier, subdued and hardened by the barbarous habits of his life, until he became a merciless murderer, there he stood, flinging down his sword at the feet of the prophet, and imploring to be purified from blood by the waters of baptism. In the midst of these kneeling and humble thousands stood the prophet full of the Holy Ghost, in utter defiance of human power, undaunted by the voice of human authority, and undismayed by the barbarism of the multitude, tendering to all alike the words of judgment: "Ye men of sin, ye splendid voluptuaries, who now cry out for mercy, show not by your words but by your deeds that you have abjured sin; and you, ye haughty despisers of all men's virtue, be ye holy. Ye jealous and persecuting Pharisees, cast off your self-righteous praises, rend the heart and not the garment, be humble, contrite, and holy." (*G. Croby, M.A.*) *Necessity of warning:*—A man left to himself will go to the devil. If he turns away from his sin, it is because of some outside pressure. The attraction of gravitation is seen in souls as well as in all material things. They fall by their own weight. If you see them going upwards, you may be sure that a strong hand or a strong wind has been under them to start them in that direction. Sinners need to be warned of their danger. The responsibility is on us to warn others, and to heed the warnings which come to us. Who has warned you? Whom have you warned? (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *Taking warning:*—Waldus, a rich merchant in Lyons, seeing one drop down dead in the streets, went home, and repented, changed his life, and became a preacher, and was the father and founder of the people called Waldenses. 'Tis good to take warning by others' harms, and by the sight of their death, to look after our own life. (*Venning.*) *Warnings of God:*—As the mother bird shrieks when the hawk is in the sky, that her young ones may hide themselves under her wings, so God, the Father of men, utters His voice of warning against sinners, that they may rush to His mercy's protection, before the devouring lion of hell overtake them in destruction. (*John Bate.*) *The Baptist's heraldry:*—Nor is it difficult to account for this widespread and profound agitation. In the first place, the people were chafing under the yoke of pagan Rome. Remembering that they were Jehovah's covenant-people, their yearning for deliverance naturally took on a religious form. Again, there was at this time among the Jews, and perhaps throughout the East, the expectation, more or less distinct, of one who was to be a heaven-sent deliverer. Hearing of the sanctity of Judea's hermit, how natural that the Jews, weary of

bondage and shame, should flock to John in the hope that he was the promised one. Again, there is in asceticism something which is fascinating. It betokens an exceptional, earnest, character; and men are ever moved by the exceptional, especially when it takes the form of terrible moral earnestness. And John was a terribly earnest ascetic. And therefore all Israel flocked to his preaching, feeling the thrall of his magnetism, even as idolatrous Israel centuries before had swayed under stormy Elijah, and as voluptuous Italy centuries afterward bowed before stern Savonarola, and frivolous France centuries still later grew solemn before saintly Lacordaire. Once more, John's message was a message of terror. No soothing words were his, no soporific platitudes. So it was in Assyria when heathen Nineveh robed herself in sackcloth before the denunciation of Hebrew Jonah. So it was in France when awakened Europe wept and groaned before the Tartarean oratory of St. Bernard. So it was in New England when Northampton church-member and and Stockbridge Indian quailed and wailed before the wrathful eloquence of Edwards. How, then, came such persons to the Jordan to listen to the wrathful eloquence of the stern apostle of repentance? Ah, there are times when the proudest, most worldly of natures are stirred to their very depths. There are times when even the Pharisee finds that his rubric is too narrow and icy, and that he has been living a hollow life. There are times when even the Sadducee feels his moral nature asserting itself at cost of every barrier of unbelief and moral petrifaction. There are times when conscience speaks louder than will or passion. Thus did the desert-preacher rightly divide the word of truth, giving to each his appropriate share, not demanding of the publican repentance for the Pharisee's self-righteousness, nor of the Sadducee penitence for the soldier's crime. In this respect, at least, John of the desert was a model preacher. Would God, all the ministers of His word were as faithful! (*G. D. Boardman.*) *Insincere penitents*:—Fra Rocco, a Dominican, preached a celebrated penitential sermon on one occasion; when all the audience were in terror and fell on their knees, showing every sign of contrition. Then he cried, "All who are truly penitent, hold up your hands!" Every man in the vast multitude held up his hand. Then he said, "Holy Archangel Michael, thou who standest with adamantine sword at the judgment-seat of God, cut me off every hand which has been held up hypocritically." Every hand dropped. (*E. P. Hood.*) *Appropriate preaching*:—It is related of John Wesley that, preaching to an audience of courtiers and noblemen, he used the "generation of vipers" text, and flung denunciation right and left. "That sermon should have been preached at Newgate," said a displeased courtier to Wesley on passing out. "No," said the fearless apostle; "my text there would have been, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!'" (*Baxendale's "Anecdotes."*) *Folly of arguing about instead of escaping from coming wrath*:—"Many have puzzled themselves," says John Newton, "about the origin of evil. I am content to observe that there is evil, and that there is a way of escape from it; and with that I begin and end." One of the most exquisite mechanisms of torture devised, by the Hohenstaufen family, during the height of their despotic control, was a cell which gradually shrunk in upon itself, the walls day by day contracting, till the prisoner was finally crushed in the pressure of their embrace. For a day or so he would perceive no alteration—at first he would doubt the evidence of his senses; but at last the fearful truth would burst upon him that day after day the dimensions of his cell became smaller, and that in its slow but certain contraction he would, if he remained, be finally destroyed. Suppose that a door opened to him, and a voice said: "Escape for your life—now is the time. To-morrow will be too late." Is it likely he would sit down and say, "I do not understand the principle of this complex piece of mechanism. I prefer investigating it, and will stay behind for the purpose"? And yet what does the man around whose heart sin is gradually winding itself closer and closer do but this when he rejects Christ's gospel? Human reason alone tells him that a heart swathed in the bandages of wrath, or pleasure, or passion, can never, until released, be fit for the peace and love of heaven. Experience tells him that the terrible thraldom is every day becoming closer and closer, so that soon he must be crushed in its folds. The gospel tells him, escape for thy life! And why, oh, reader, when thy only thought should be about such escape, wilt thou sit down and speculate upon the causes of thy imprisonment?—causes unto which, when thus confined, thou canst never penetrate. Fly through the open door, and in the omniscience of the next world thou wilt know why sin was permitted for time. Take heed lest, by remaining where thou art, thou findest that for the impenitent sin is the portion for eternity. *Earnestness is needed in warning others*:—

The energy of the manner of the late Rowland Hill and the power of his voice are said to have been at times overwhelming. While once preaching at Wotton-under-Edge, his country residence, he was carried away by the impetuous rush of his feelings, and raising himself to his full stature, he exclaimed, "Beware, I am in earnest; men call me an enthusiast, but I am not: mine are words of truth and soberness. When I first came into this part of the country, I was walking on yonder hill; I saw a gravel-pit fall in, and bury three human beings alive. I lifted up my voice for help, so loud, that I was heard in the town below, a distance of a mile: help came and rescued two of the poor sufferers. No one called me an enthusiast then—and when I see eternal destruction ready to fall upon poor sinners, and about to entomb them irrecoverably in an eternal mass of woe, and call on them to escape by repenting and fleeing to Christ, shall I be called an enthusiast? No, sinner, I am not an enthusiast in so doing."

Ver. 8. **Fruits worthy of repentance.**—*Fruitfulness:*—Every living fruit-tree is in some measure fruitful; though some bring forth more fruit, some less, yet all bring forth some. All living Christians are thriving and bearing fruit; though some are more eminent for growth and proficiency in grace, yet all bring forth "fruits meet for repentance." The hypocrite, like a dead stake in a hedge, continues at a stay, is without good fruit, nay, grows more rotten every month; but the true saint, like the living tree, the longer he continues rooted in Christ the more abundant he is in the work of the Lord. (*George Swinnock.*) *Fruit-bearing the test of life:*—When we see the effigy or portraiture of any king stand still without motion, exquisitely graven in metal or painted out in lively colours, we know that, for all the eyes and mouth and nose it has, there is no life in it. So, when we see professors of religion without the powerful practice of godliness, and supreme officers of state without the administration of justice, we can safely conclude that the life of God is not in them; that they are not actuated by any Divine principle within, but are mere idols and images of vanity. (*C. Leslie.*) *Deceptive appearances:*—Those persons who practise devotion, and who fail to do works of faith and charity, are like trees in blossom. You think there will be as much fruit as flower, but there is a great difference. (*Vianney.*) *The life must accord with the profession:*—His religion is in vain whose profession brings not letters testimonial from a holy life. Sacrifice without obedience is sacrilege. (*W. Gurnall.*) Thou callest thyself Christian; but we question whether thou hast a right to the title; thy conduct is too contrary to that sacred name, which is too holy to be written on a rotten post. (*Ibid.*) *Repentance results in change of action:*—Just as the whole ship turns in obedience to the helm, so the change of mind produces a change of life. Here comes in the well-known story of the storekeeper who could not recollect the sermon; she only knew that after it she went straight home and destroyed all her light weights. A Hindu candidate for Christian baptism was asked what evidence he had to offer of his conversion. "Formerly," he said, "I was proud, and delighted in evil, but since I heard the words of Jesus, I delight in these things no more." (*Sunday School Times.*) *Repentance shows itself:*—The real thing always shows itself. Whether it is love, or friendship, or generosity, or gratitude, or trust, or repentance, it will evidence its genuineness in something more than profession. There are shams and there are realities in all these spheres, and the differences between them will stand out in the long run. There is a great deal of sorrow over sin and over sinning that is not repentance. The guilty prisoner is sorry that he got caught. The guilty man who has not got caught is sorry that so much of evil and trouble comes of his wrong doing. There is sorrow because of the results of sin, in every sinner's soul. But that is not repentance. Repentance is the turning away of the soul from sin as sin; it is the turning toward something better than sin. This state of mind will show itself in conduct that gives proof of sincerity. Sinful courses will be abandoned. Reparation will be made. A new course of living will be adopted. In word and in action there will be fruits worthy of the name of true repentance. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *Change of mind involves change of practice:*—The fruits worthy of repentance are the renunciation of formerly indulged sins, and the performance of formerly neglected duties. We, ourselves, would not give credit to a man who said he was sorry for having offended us, but who still went on repeating the same offence: as little need we suppose we are penitents if we persevere in our disobedience to God. Repentance begins, and chiefly consists in a change of mind; but that change must evidence itself, and if it be real it will evidence itself in outward reformation and in an exemplary life. John called on

his hearers to let it be seen, by their subsequent conduct, that they were converts indeed. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *Motives to repentance* :—Motives to repentance are found in, 1. Divine precepts. 2. Penalty. 3. Promises. 4. The danger of delay. Time may fail. The Spirit's aid may be refused (John iii. 27). Habits are formed (Jer. xiii. 23). The will is inefficient (John vi. 44). The flower of existence spent in sin; blind and lame, a mere wreck brought at last to God. (*W. H. Van Doren, D.D.*) *Repentance is more than penance-doing* : — One of Luther's happiest moments was when, reading in his Greek Testament, he found that repentance meant a change of mind rather than penance-doing. A captain at sea discovers that by some mistake the steersman is steering the ship directly for the rocks. How is the danger to be avoided? By scrubbing the decks or setting the men to the pumps? No! these things are good enough in their own time, but if the ship is to be saved, one thing must be done—her course must be changed. So the captain utters a few quick words, and the ship turns and speeds away from the danger. John's preaching was in like manner. A call to men to turn from the dangerous rocks of sin, and to make for the only safe haven. (*Sunday School Times.*) *Fruits meet for repentance* :—A coal merchant in one of our American cities was approached by a minister in regard to the salvation of his soul. The merchant declared it an impossibility for him ever to become a Christian. He gave as a reason his mode of business. For a long term of years, he had, according to a too general custom, given short weight. He had thus grown rich, and now felt the inconsistency of seeking religion without restitution. This was impossible: many of his customers were dead, others beyond his knowledge. The thought of the poor who had paid for coal they never received rested heavily on him. He asked the minister if he thought the substitution of a gift to the poor would be acceptable to God. The minister advised him to try it. A large donation, more than equal in amount of his unjust gains, was accordingly made, and the merchant sought God in earnest. He was happily converted, and is to-day a prominent member of the Church. *Proof of turning from sin* :—One of two infidel companions was converted to God. He went to tell his sceptical friend, who was surprised, and sneered at him. "Well," said the Christian, "I have a duty to do to you, and I have scarcely slept two nights for thinking of it. I have got four sheep in my flock that belong to you. They came into my field six years ago, and I marked them with my mark. They are in my field with the increase of them. I have laid awake, groaned over it, and I have come to get rid of it. I will do what you will, go to prison, pay the money, or restore the property." The infidel began to tremble. "If you have got them sheep you are welcome to them; I don't want nothing of you, if you will go away; something must have got hold of you I don't understand! You may keep the sheep if you will only go away." "No," said the Christian, "I must settle this up." He counted out the value of the four sheep, 6 per cent. interest, and then put double the amount down. This was turning from sin. (*G. Bowden.*) *The necessity of penitence* :—I. PENITENCE IS NECESSARY FOR THE SINNER, in order to be reconciled to God. 1. According to the written Word of God (Luke xiii. 5; John iii. 5). No excuse. No grace in case of negligence. 2. According to the example of all the saints. David. Magdalen. Peter. 3. Reason teaches its necessity. (1) As satisfaction for the guilt, the injury against God (Matt. v. 26). (2) As atonement (Zech. i. 3; Ezek. xviii. 21). (3) As punishment. Man is the author of sin. The Divine Justice owes it to itself to resent every attack upon the moral order (Psa. lxxxviii. 33). (4) As spiritual remedy. To repair moral damage —the balsam to heal the wound, after the arrow has been taken out. Exciting zeal, conferring grace, setting aside the occasions of sin. II. PENITENCE IS NECESSARY TO THE JUST. 1. No one is sure of justification. 2. Every one offends daily in little things, and for every sin satisfaction must be made. 3. After the remission of guilt and eternal punishment, there remains yet temporal punishment to expiate. Call to mind the rigour of the ancient Church, of her penitential canons, &c. 4. Every one is liable to fall, while he lives. "Fruits worthy of repentance" are like a hedge of thorns around the paradise of virtues. (*Valke.*) *The ministry of John Baptist* :—1. Moral, not theological, in its aim. 2. Faithful, not temporizing in its appeal. 3. Symbolic, not superstitious, in its ritual. 4. Humble, not haughty in its spirit. (*Dr. Thomas.*) *A father brought to repentance* :—It pleased God to visit one of the daughters of a wicked father with mortal sickness; but before her death she was instrumental in exciting the attention of her parent to the concerns of his soul. "Father," inquired the dying child, can you spell "repentance"? The artless question, through the blessing of God, was

effectual to awaken concern. "Spell repentance!" repeated the astonished father; "why, what is repentance?" Thus he became desirous of knowing, and ultimately was taught its sacred meaning; and discovered that he had been a stranger to it, both in theory and experience. He also discovered that he needed repentance; that he was a guilty condemned sinner, deserving God's wrath and everlasting misery; and repentance unto life was granted to him. He spelled out his Divine import; and obtained an acquaintance with that Saviour whom God has exalted to give repentance and remission of sins; and by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, he in afterlife supported and adorned his Christian profession. *A call for John the Baptist:*—John had a word and a sign. The word was—Repent; and the sign was—Baptism. Word and sign were intimately related. His was the baptism of repentance. The word commanded. The sign accepted. A great moral and religious impulse swept wave-like over the people. The baptism of repentance became the order of the day. But, unfortunately, in the degree that the baptism became a fashion it also became a form. John's soul was too upright to be blinded by what looked like success. His language, its directness, and the form with which he clothed his ideas, all showed how radical was the thing he aimed at. The axe, winnowing, uprooting, fire-cleansing, were the symbols that naturally expressed his violent and stormy thoughts and intents. What would John the Baptist say, if he were now to come into our churches and pulpits? He would fiercely denounce all shows and shams in religion. He would scathe and scatter with the lightnings of his indignation all moral delusions. He would demand the putting away of all unholiness. He would say, "Let us have soundness and solidness, sincerity and spiritual mindedness, or nothing at all." No doubt there would be a sensation. Well-bred people would be scandalized. Prudent men would say, "You must use milder language, sir, or we shall have the church empty." And the prophet would reply, "Exactly; that is what I have come for. I have come to drive either the sinners or their sins out of the churches." The great truth to be carried home is, that genuine repentance must always precede the kingdom of God. There is a repentance that is easy and cheap, and is worth as much as it costs or a little less. Repentance is—(1) Not a piece of ceremonialism; (2) more than an emotion, an excitement; (3) a resolve, an action against sin. The call to repent is a call to action. It means, change your mind about wrong-doing; change your whole course of moral thought, feeling, conduct. It must be personal and spring from a personal source. The kingdom of heaven is at hand, and it is as full of promise as of judgment. (*W. Hubbard.*) *Repentance:*—The word is often used for the compunction with which one may reflect on a particular sin. Whether such compunction procures the forgiveness of the sin, seems to me a question which it is rather too bold to ask, but which is quite unimportant to have answered, unless forgiveness of sins were the same thing as forgiveness of sin. They are entirely different, and there is an equal and exactly corresponding difference between repentance in the sense just mentioned, and in that signified by the word which in the New Testament expresses the condition to which forgiveness of sin is attached. The Greek word denotes a change of mind, heart, or disposition, which is equivalent to the cessation of sin as a habit or state. Sins may be repented of without any such annihilation of sin. And without such annihilation I venture to doubt whether God Himself could forgive sin, any more than He could make two contrary propositions identical, or the same thing to be and not to be at the same time. (*Bishop Thirlwall.*) *The ministry of John:*—An awful ministry truly! The gospel concludes with benediction but it invariably begins with sword and fire. One of the first things that a true minister has to do is to destroy false hopes. It is thus that John did when he broke in thus rudely upon the traditional hopes of those who heard him. They were living securely in the facts that Abraham was their father, and their reasoning was that if Abraham was their father they themselves were necessarily good, and their moral position was invincible. John takes the roof off this house of refuge, and pours the Divine storm upon their heads. He throws down the walls within which they had enclosed themselves, and sends the floods of Divine judgment along the courses of their foundations. But there is a word of hope even in this storm of vengeance. John declares the possibility of repentance even on the part of a generation of vipers. The Christian teacher ought not to content himself with mere denunciation. Let him be faithful in describing the real character of those who hear him; but when he has done so, let him see that they do not die of despair, for want of the hopeful

word of repentance. A severe thing this to say about Abraham was it not? The meaning is that hereditary piety is of no use; that we are not good simply because we have a good ancestry; and that as for mere history, God is able to make it out of the very stones under our feet. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A parable of the fig-trees*:—What fruits are meet for repentance? To that question let me reply with a parable. You remember that as our Lord went from Bethany to Jerusalem He saw a fig-tree by the wayside, full of leaves, and came to it that He might eat of its fruit. But when He reached it, He found nothing but leaves on it. The conscious tree withered beneath His rebuke. This story is familiar to you all: but perhaps you did not know that three other fig-trees were growing hard by, near enough to hear what passed between Christ and the fruitless tree, and to mark how it withered beneath His curse. Yet there were such trees, or we shall assume that there were. And being observant and reflective trees they were very much alarmed to see that "the axe was laid to the roots of the trees," and that "every tree which brought not forth good fruit would be hewn down and cast into the fire." They said among themselves: "We, indeed, have some fruits; but, oh, how few! We will do better next year, lest we should likewise perish." The seasons passed; the winds blew, the rains fell, the sun shone; and now, at last, "the time of figs" has come round again. We take the road to Bethany, to see how these three trees have kept their purpose of amendment. 1. We approach the first tree; and looking at it attentively, we are surprised and grieved to find that, though it is thick with broad tender leaves, it has but little fruit, and that but poor. We say, "How is this?" And the tree replies, "I waited day after day, month after month, and no prophet passed this way. Why should I trouble myself? I have done more than last year. I have some fruits to show, and many leaves. Why should I not be content? No prophet will ever pass this way again; or if a prophet should come, I have done enough to save myself from his curse." This tree has not brought forth fruits meet for repentance; for it has done nothing from love, and very little from fear. 2. We advance to the second tree; and on this also we find only a few figs: but they are very large and good. We do not for a moment mistake it for a cumberer of the ground; its few but large fruits show plainly through the leaves. Yet the tree wears an aspect of sadness, and waits with some apprehension to hear what we have to say to it. Noting its aspect of settled grief, we do not ask, "Why are your fruits so few when your purpose was so earnest?" We say, "Be not sad and discouraged, O tree, because you have borne but little fruit; rather be glad that your fruit is so fine and sweet. You will do more and better next year, if you hold fast to your purpose of amendment, and soon your fruit will be as abundant as it is good." This tree has brought forth fruits meet for repentance; for it has done well, and is sorry that it has not done better. 3. We pass on to the third tree; and on this we find much fruit indeed, but its fruit is exceedingly various in quality; some of the figs are large and sweet, but some are so small and rude that there is little chance of their being brought to perfection. In haste to prevent us from giving it more than its due, it says, "It grieves me that my fruit, which is so abundant, is yet so poor. I have discovered in myself, since I resolved to amend, both a power that I knew not of, and an impotence which I did not suspect. I did not know I could do so much as I have done; but I did think that what I could do, that I should do well. Power is mine; alas, that I should so have wasted it! but, alas, weakness is also mine; and though I can do much, I do it but to little purpose!" This third tree, like the second, has brought forth fruits meet for repentance; for it has done much and would fain have done better: and, therefore, we bid it be of good heart, and leave it with good hope that, as it has already borne much fruit, so, in due time, all its fruit will become perfect. 4. But here some humble soul may cry out, "Alas, sir, I am no fruit-tree! I am but as a thorn or a brier. Have you no word of comfort, or promise for me?" Surely I have. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree," &c. In the kingdom and garden of Christ strange transformations take place. However wild and barren your nature may be, if you crave comfort and promise, that is, if you honestly desire to amend, there is a power in Christ capable of making you better. You are repenting of the past; and He will show you how, in the future, even you may "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." (*T. T. Lynch.*) *Tests of religious life*:—I. FALSE TESTS ARE FOUND IN THE POSSESSION OF ADVANTAGES. "We have Abraham," &c. This may be regarded—1. As a sentimental advantage: related to the past. Their Church not a thing of yesterday. 2. As an ecclesiastical advantage: they were related to a privileged past. 3. As a moral advantage: they were related to a worthy past—had a noble ancestry.

II. THE TRUE TEST FOUND IN THE MANIFESTATION OF FRUITFULNESS. This—1. The demand of Scripture. Insisted upon by—(1) prophets (Isaiah and Micah); (2) apostles; (3) the Lord. 2. The demand of society. In relation to—(1) secular questions; (2) religious questions. The test is applied everywhere. III. HOW MAY FRUITFULNESS BE GAINED? Only by union with Christ. "Abide in Me," &c. (John xv. 4, 5). (*W. Glyde Tarbolton.*) **We have Abraham to our father.**—*Pride of ancestry*:—Pride of ancestry is a common evil, and it was very prevalent among the Jews. I. LET US ATTEND TO A FEW GENERAL REMARKS ON THE PASSAGE. 1. It must be admitted that it was once a privilege to have Abraham for a father. It was in consequence of the Israelites being the children of Abraham, that unto them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. It was, therefore, one of the first honours, to belong to the family of Abraham (Deut. xxxiii. 29; Psa. cv. 42; Rom. ix. 4). 2. It was no unusual thing for the Jews, in their most degenerate state, to boast of their descent from this eminent patriarch. 3. To be descended from pious parents is still a privilege, which we should carefully improve. A heathen philosopher blessed God that he was born at Athens; and have we not greater reason to bless Him that we were born in a Christian country, and descended from godly ancestors. David mentions the piety of his mother as a motive for devoting himself to the service of God, and as a reason of his having obtained mercy. "Oh, Lord," says he, "truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaid; Thou hast loosed my bonds." And in giving a solemn charge to his son, he uses similar language, "Thou Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father" (2 Tim. i. 5; Psa. cxvi. 16). 4. Though it is an honour to be descended from pious ancestors, yet we are warned against trusting in it as a substitute for personal religion. "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father"; for so had Ishmael and Esau; and yet they were none the better for it. Do not imagine that this will be any excuse for sin, or a sufficient plea for mercy. II. Consider THE REASONS THAT SHOULD CAUTION US AGAINST PLACING ANY DEPENDENCE ON NATURAL DESCENT, as giving us a title to eternal life, or rendering us more secure from the wrath to come. 1. The children of pious parents are defiled with original sin as well as others, and therefore have the same propensities to evil. Corruption runs in the blood, though grace does not. Though the Jews themselves were circumcised, their children were born in uncircumcision; and were by nature children of wrath, even as others (Psa. li. 5; Eph. ii. 2, 3). 2. In too many instances, the children of religious parents, like the prodigal son, have grown weary of restraint, and indulged in those criminal excesses which are common to the most abandoned characters. What were the sons of Eli, and the sons of Aaron; their conduct, and their end! Guilty of intemperance, impurity, and profaneness, they died under the visible marks of Divine displeasure. That excellent prince Josiah had four sons, and they all proved wicked. Benjamin was so called, to denote that he was the son of his father's right hand; and yet most of the left-handed men we read of in Scripture were Benjamites, as if it were intended to show that the course of events and the formation of character are oftentimes the reverse of what we had reason to expect. 3. It is still more painful to observe, that some of the best of men have had the very worst of children, who have been a grief and a dishonour to their parents. The sweetest wine makes the sharpest vinegar, and the most promising children sometimes turn out the worst of characters. Nabal the churl was of the posterity of the noble and disinterested Caleb. Absalom who murdered Amnon, and Amnon who defiled his sister, were the sons of David, the man after God's own heart. 4. Our being the children of pious parents merely can no more effect our salvation, than our being the children of wicked parents can effect our destruction; personal character being that alone by which our future state will be determined. 5. The futility of every plea arising from our connection with pious ancestors is also evinced in what is alleged by the sacred writer, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. He who gave Abraham a son when he was past age, and afterwards raised him up in a figure from the altar, can be at no loss to give him a spiritual seed as numerous as the stars of heaven. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *Regeneration*:—I. Now with regard to these stones. I shall pass Joshua by with his stones, and the heathen soldiers also, and give you a Scriptural proof that ruined sinners with stony hearts are the persons really meant—sinners that are like stones—and I will give you a passage of Scripture that confirms this statement without the possibility of contradiction, because it is God's own. If you turn to the seventh chapter of the Prophet Zechariah you will find what God says about them, "They

refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder and stopped their ears that they should not hear, yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone." Why, they are as incapable of feeling as stones—they are as helpless as stones. But mark a little further, for I want you to have a right and an humbling view of the Fall, he is worse than a stone; find a stone where you will, it has got no enmity in it. I grant it is hard and helpless, and immoveable, but it has got no enmity in it. Now, my Bible tells me expressly that, "the carnal mind is enmity against God." II. But I am very anxious, having said thus much in as concise terms as I could, to lead on your attention to the almighty grace put forth, "God is able." How does He manage to raise up children? Does He do as a mason would, hew out the stones and carve them, and shape them, and cut them? That is the way men make Christians. I know they get hold of these rough stones, and they say they are very rude and very ignorant, perhaps very licentious, perhaps very immoral, perhaps very unjust and dishonest, very ugly rough forbidding stones, such as one hardly likes to have in one's sight; but forth comes one of these skilful masons, and cuts them, and carves them, and polishes them very nicely with the tools of education and superstition. Take your stone, and carve it as handsomely as you can, and work it into a statue as tall as any of you, and give the handsomest features that any of you possess, and throw the most graceful robes around it that can be worn, and paint it what colour you please, it is a stone after all—and that is a striking emblem of thousands who pass for Christians. But when God works, He puts the Spirit of life from God into a poor sinner's heart; it is another and a new principle; a holy life that cannot sin. And observe here, that He invariably exercises His own absolute sovereignty. But just mark further. This new life which God Himself imparts and bestows, this quickening by the power of the Holy Ghost according to the sovereignty of His own will, is nourished and trained up by Him. I should like to detain you a moment longer here to mark, that when Jehovah thus exercises His absolute sovereignty, and quickens sinners to newness of life, He excludes all vain boasting, all creature pretensions. III. Now let us, for a moment or two, glance at the nature thus bestowed. Peradventure you will say, "You have surely taken up this all along." Well, I must say a little more about it. And, first of all, it is relative, and claims relationship with Abraham—"children unto Abraham." Well, why not unto some Gentile parent? Why not relationship to some among the heathens that surrounded John while he was thus speaking? Why, beloved, if you will consult the statement of the Holy Ghost by the apostle, you will find what is really descriptive of all the children of Abraham, whether Jews or Gentiles. "So then," he says, after a lengthened argument, "they that are of faith are the children of faithful Abraham." Now this is the relationship that is bestowed upon them. Come a little closer into apprehension of it. Abraham's faith "talked with God as a man talketh with his friend"; more than that,—Abraham's faith pleaded with God, and even proposed terms and conditions for the saving of Sodom, because his brother Lot was there. Abraham's faith was such as constituted him "the father of the faithful"; consequently, the sons must be something like him—they must be partakers of like precious faith." (*J. Irons.*) *False reasoning:*—The Pharisees taught that no child of Abraham could perish. His name was thus used as a shield to turn aside the arrows of truth. But we must remember that ties of blood, ancestral piety, or rites of the Church, cannot save. Abraham's blood, without Abraham's faith, will avail only to condemn. The Church of saints and martyrs can give the unrenewed no passport to heaven. Paul in the pulpit would perish, if Paul were not in Christ. It is a terribly perilous doctrine among the Romanists, that a wicked "Catholic" (so-called) is more certain of reaching heaven than the best Protestant who ever lived. (*Various.*) *False reliance:*—It was not that the Jews were to disown their descent from Abraham, but that they were not to rely on that descent as their means of salvation. There is a great deal of this looking to one's stock or to one's surroundings as a hope of heaven. One thinks that his mother's prayers will save him. Another, that his Church-membership is a fair ground of confidence. Another, that his being included in a good congregation will sweep him over danger. Every expectation of this sort is even more foolish than the confidence of the Jews in their earthly parentage. Begin not to say anything of the kind in your heart as a source of hope; and if you have begun to say it, quit it forthwith, and find something to rest in that will stand the test to which your faith must finally be subjected. (*H. C. Trumbull.*)

Ver. 9. **The axe is laid unto the root of the trees.**—*Radical and seminal reform:*—It seems to me a total mistake to apply the words of the Baptist, "And now also the axe," &c., to any work ordained for man. When the appointed time comes, God does indeed show forth His justice by sweeping away that which is utterly corrupt. Yet even the Son of God, in His human manifestation, came not to destroy, but to save. Assuredly this is the only part of His office which we are called to discharge. As His ministers, we are to be ministers of salvation, not of destruction. The evil in ourselves, indeed, we are to pluck up, branch and root; but in our dealings with others, unless we have a special office committed to us by the laws of family or national life, our task will mainly be to contend against evil by sowing the seeds of good, not by radical reforms, but by seminal. The satirist, the rhetorician, the moralist, will indeed try the former, and will therefore fail. The Christian has a higher power entrusted to him, the power of God's goodness and mercy, the gospel of redemption and salvation; not the woes of the Trojan prophetess, who could gain no credence, but the glad tidings of the kingdom of heaven. And if he relies on this power, he will succeed where others must needs fail. (*A. W. Hare, in "Guesses at Truth."*) *The axe lying at the root:*—We may learn from it, in the first place—I. THE KIND OF FRUIT WHICH GOD REQUIRES FROM US. In our text it is called "good fruit"; and, in the eighth verse, "fruits meet for repentance." With what propriety, my brethren, are fruits like these denominated "good." They are the result of a good principle, even of that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of"; they proceed from a good source, for they are the fruits which the Holy Spirit Himself produces in the heart and life which He controls; and they accord with the Divine revelation and with the Divine will, "for He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" II. THE MEANS WHICH GOD EMPLOYS TO RENDER US PRODUCTIVE OF THIS KIND OF FRUIT, AND WHICH SHOW HOW REASONABLE IT IS THAT HE SHOULD EXPECT IT FROM US. In the first place, God has endowed you with a capacity to produce this kind of fruit. A stone is not capable of producing the fruits of a tree, because it is destitute of vegetable life. A tree is not capable of producing the fruits of instinct and sagacity, because it is destitute of animal life. And the beasts of the field are not capable of producing the fruits of reason and of conscience, because they are destitute of intellectual and moral life. Nor are such fruits required from them. God never requires from His creatures any actions which they are naturally incapable of performing. "But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding." He has endowed us with reason and with affections. You retain the ability, but you have lost the disposition, to exercise the mind aright. You may destroy the eye by which you behold the surrounding universe; you may destroy the link that binds your spirit to your mortal flesh: but your responsibility to God, and your immortality of existence, you cannot destroy, you cannot touch. Secondly: In order to enable you to bring forth this good fruit, God has supplied you with the gospel of His Son. The gospel contains also the motives to fruitfulness; and these motives are the most powerful that can be presented to the mind. And the gospel contains also the promise of that Divine influence by which fruitfulness is infallibly secured; for "He giveth His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Thirdly: God has visited you with various dispensations of providence, and with various convictions of conscience, all of which have been intended to direct your attention to the gospel, that thereby you might bring forth fruits meet for repentance. III. THE CONTINUED UNFRUITFULNESS OF SOME PERSONS, NOTWITHSTANDING ALL THE MEANS WHICH THE GOD OF MERCY HAS EMPLOYED. 1. Some of these unfruitful persons are sensual and profane. Their bodies and their souls are given to sin. 2. Some of these unfruitful persons are intellectual, and moral, and amiable. 3. Some of these unfruitful persons are professors of the gospel. They are branches in the vine, but they bear no fruit. IV. THE AXE WHICH IS LYING AT THE ROOT OF SUCH UNFRUITFUL PERSONS. "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees." This "axe" may therefore be considered as emblematical of death, at which period the character and condition of the fruitless, as well as of others, will be decided and fixed for ever. 1. The axe which is lying at your root reminds you of the patience and long-suffering of God. If you had had a servant in your family who had cared as little for you as you have cared for God, would you have continued him in your house as long as God has continued you? No, my brethren, you would not. You would have cut down the tree, and you would have dismissed the servant. 2. The

axe which is lying at your root reminds you of the critical circumstances in which you are placed. Remember that, though you have not yet been hewn down, the axe is actually lying at your root. The axe has not to be prepared; it has been prepared, and sharpened. The axe has not to be brought to you from a distance; it has been brought, and is now lying at your root. 3. The axe which is lying at your root has sometimes admonished you of its being there. You have seen others fall under its influence; but have you never felt it yourself? Has the cold iron never sent its chilling influence through your frame? V. THE AWFUL CONDITION TO WHICH SUCH UNFRUITFUL PERSONS ARE DOOMED. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." The nature of this condition is indescribably terrible. There is an awful peculiarity even in the death of a fruitless sinner. "He is hewn down." And the language intimates at once his own unwillingness to die, and the determined and penal manner in which his death is inflicted. The certainty that this condition will be incurred by the finally impenitent is another sentiment which our text conveys—a certainty so sure and perfect, that the event is spoken of as having actually taken place. "He *is* hewn down, and cast into the fire." If you die unfruitful, your destruction is as certain as your death. (*J. Alexander, D.D.*) *Little value set on trees in the East*:—The remarkably broad statement implied in this bold figure of speech must strike a European as somewhat extraordinary; and yet there is more of literal truth in it than one would at first thought be disposed to imagine. The fact is, in Western Asia trees, as trees, are but little valued. The fruit-trees are preserved and nourished with great care; but nearly all other trees are cut down for fuel, mineral fuel being exceedingly scarce. An exception is made in favour of poplars. These are permitted to grow to their full height for the sake of the long beams they supply. (*Biblical Things, &c.*) *The destructive axe*:—This is judgment—destruction. The axe is not for planting, or pruning, or dressing, or propping, or protecting, but for cutting down. The axe against Israel was the Roman host, and many such axes has God wielded, age after age. Every judgment is an axe: pestilence is God's axe; famine God's axe; adversity God's axe. There is a great difference between the axe and the pruning-knife. Yet some of God's judgments are both in one—an axe to the ungodly, a pruning-knife to the saint. It is God's axe, not man's; its edge is sharp; it is heavy; it will do its work well. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The axe laid to the root of the tree*:—I. THE ROOT. That which bears up the branches, and on which the trees and branches stand and grow. 1. The root, then, was the covenant God made with Abraham and his natural seed or offspring, which covenant did, in a mystical sense, as clearly bear up the national church of Israel and all the trees (*i.e.*, members or branches thereof) as common natural root doth the tree or trees growing out of it. 2. By the root may also be intended the foundation of all the Jews' hopes, confidence, and outward privileges. 3. By root, in a more remote sense, may be meant the state and standing of every ungodly, unbelieving, and impenitent person. II. THE TREES. Men and women, but chiefly the seed of the stock of Abraham, according to the flesh, of whom the national church of the Jews was made up, and did consist; as also, all wicked and unbelieving persons whatsoever, who embrace not the offers of grace in the gospel, or believe not in Jesus Christ. III. THE AXE. 1. The dispensation of God's providence, or time. Time is pictured with a scythe, but then man is compared to grass; but it may be pictured with an axe, since men are compared to trees; a scythe is no fit instrument to cut down trees. 2. The axe also may refer to the gospel: the Word of God is an axe to hew and square some persons for God's spiritual building, and to cut down others also, as trees that are rotten, and bear no good fruit; "Therefore," saith the Lord, "I have hewn them by the prophets"; and what follows, mark it, "I have slain them by the words of My mouth" (Hos. vi. 5). 3. The axe may refer to men, whom God makes use of, as instruments in His hand, to cut down and destroy a wicked and God-provoking people; hence wicked rulers and kings, whom God raises up, as instruments in His hand, to chastise and cut down a rebellious people, are called "His sword, and the rod of His wrath and indignation" (Psa. xvii. 14). 4. By the axe may in general be meant God's wrath; however it is, or may be executed, or upon whom, wrath will sooner or later cut down all the ungodly, both false Churches and tyrannical powers of the earth, and all who continue in unbelief and in rebellion against God. The laying the axe to the root discovers the final fall and ruin of sinners, whether considered as a Church or as particular persons; dig up or cut down the root, and down falls the body and all the branches of the tree. Or are you self-righteous persons? Do you build on

your own righteousness, like the Jews and hypocritical Pharisees? If so, the axe will cut you down also. You must bring forth good fruit, every soul of you, or perish; and this you cannot do till your hearts are changed, and so you become good trees. Make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good; "an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit," &c. All works of regenerate persons—yea, their religious duties—are but dead works, not good fruits; nor can they bring forth good fruits unless they are planted by faith into Jesus Christ. Nay, I must tell you that gospel-holiness will not save us; it must be the righteousness of God by faith. (*Benjamin Keach.*) *The discovery of hypocrisy* :—1. It cutteth the Sabbath-breaker to hear his profaneness still cried out upon; it cutteth the adulterer to hear his viciousness continually found fault with; it cutteth the drunkard to hear his excess so often threatened; it cutteth the rioter and voluptuous liver, that his course should ever and anon be so eagerly reproved. And so, in the other particulars, it doth even enrage men's hearts that the Word of God doth so meet with them, as it were, at every turn; and it causeth many to come to hear it no more than they needs must, because, though they set a face upon it, and would make themselves and others believe that it is not so; yet this same sharp axe of the Word, when the edge thereof is turned towards them, doth strike some wound or other into them almost at every sermon. So that as Scripture hath avouched it, so common use will not suffer it to be untrue, that the ministry of the Word is a sharp axe, which hath a biting edge, and cutteth and pierceth where it goeth. The use of it, in a word, is to justify and to maintain to the faces of all gainsayers that that very Word which they hear daily, and which they would fain make themselves and others believe is but an idle word, is indeed and in truth the very Word of God. 2. Another thing in the axe is, that as it cuts, so it frameth and fashioneth the hearers to a place in the spiritual building in God's Church. And as a crooked and knobby tree must first be hewn and squared, and cut again and again, before it can sort with the rest of the building, so must we also be even cast, as it were, in a new mould, and transformed into a new shape, before we can have a place in God's spiritual house. There is a great deal of crookedness and corruption must be pared from us; we must pass under the workman's tool before we can be an habitation of God by His Spirit. Now, the means to frame us to become fit for the Lord's building is the public ministry of His Word. By it the Lord doth lop off the superfluity of our corruption; thereby He doth smooth us and make us plain and compact, and join us in, as it were, by certain mortices and joints with the rest of that holy frame, that being once fast coupled unto it, He may preserve us ever unto Himself. Therefore we find in Scripture that as the Church of God was never destitute of this workmanship, so likewise those whom His pleasure was to bring into the society of His chosen—they were framed thereby, and first felt the power and edge of the Word before they were linked together with God's people. 3. It followeth, an axe put to the root of the trees; that is (as I have expounded it), urged and applied to men's consciences, laid and pressed to the hearts of the hearers. For look what the root is unto the rest of the tree; the same is the heart to the whole man. Nathan the prophet laid the axe to the root when he told David, "Thou art the man." So did Elias, when he said to Ahab, "It is thou and thy father's house that have troubled Israel." So did Amos, when he preached at Bethel, the king's own chapel, the destruction of the king's own house. So did Hanani, when he said plainly to the king that he had done foolishly not to rest upon the Lord. So did Zachariah, when he told Joash he should not prosper if he forsook the Lord. So did John the Baptist, when he spake directly to the Pharisees, and called them a viperous generation, and when he told Herod to his face he might not have his brother's wife. So did Christ, when He preached woe to the Scribes and Pharisees, "Woe to Chorazin and Bethsaida." So did Peter, when he told the Jews, "You, I say, have crucified and slain the Lord of life." So did Paul, when he called them "foolish Galatians." It is to no purpose, as it were, to stand hacking at the branches, and to strike here and there upon the outward rind; but a man must go to the root, and knock at the door of every man's conscience, that every soul may tremble, and men at the least may be convinced against the day of reckoning. "If thou doest not well," saith God unto Cain, "sin lieth at the door." Sin is like a cruel beast, which lieth sleeping at the door of every man's heart. It must be awaked and stirred up, that men may see their danger. (*S. Hieron.*) *Unfruitful trees cut down* :—"The axe is laid unto the root of the trees" in the East with a significance which we can hardly understand in the West. It is not merely because the tree cumbers the ground in a physical sense; for even

shade-trees—trees of any sort—are greatly to be desired throughout the Holy Land. But the fruit-trees are all taxed; and if unfruitful, they are a heavy incumbrance. If a tree bears no fruit, it brings its proprietor in debt, and that to the most merciless of creditors, a tax-farmer. Some four years ago, when the taxes were heavy and the olive product light, multitudes of olive-trees were cut down on the spurs of Lebanon. It was cutting off the owners' means of support in the future; but that was still in the future, and uncertain. In the immediate present, all that the proprietor could see was cruelty, oppression, and taxes. Future starvation was not a heavier burden than present hunger, with debt as a load above it. It is probable that this is just the same sort of cumbering the ground which was the troublesome one in old times. Space could be spared in the ground for a tree whose only use was ornament; wild trees are still allowed for that purpose; but a fruit-tree which bore a tax is quite a different matter, and probably was so then. The fruit-trees paid a religious tithe; and the secular government could scarcely have been less exacting. The tax on fruit-trees, too, is a heavy one. Read any recent work on the political condition of Egypt, and see how much every palm must pay. Travellers are often surprised at the extra charges which they have to pay—more than the natives—for the use of a horse or a boat; but they forget that the Government is on the look-out for those who own the boat or the horse, and is apt to get the lion's share of all such seeming extortions. (*Professor Isaac H. Hall.*) *Sternness necessary*:—When we lay the axe to the root of the tree—when we hew off men's very members, when we snatch them like brands out of the fire, when we make them to see their own faces in the law of liberty, the face of a guilty, and therefore cursed, conscience—there will be need of much boldness. A surgeon who is to search an inveterate wound, and to cut off a putrified member, had not need to be faint-hearted, or bring a trembling hand to so great a work. (*Bishop Reynolds.*)

Vers. 10–14. **What shall we do then?** *Common sense applied to every-day duties*:—I. JOHN DISCRIMINATES BETWEEN THE EASE-HARDENED, SELFISH, AND SCARCELY REACHABLE PHARISEES AND HIGH-PLACED REPRESENTATIVES OF OFFICIAL JUDAISM, AND "THE MULTITUDES" (Matt. iii. 7). II. HE RISES ABOVE THE PREJUDICES AND ANTIPATHIES OF THE PUBLIC OPINION OF HIS COUNTRYMEN IN A REMARKABLE WAY. Publicans. Soldiers. III. HE IS EMINENTLY REASONABLE IN HIS REQUIREMENTS. Whilst he counsels the owner of "two coats" to show the reality of his avowed "change of character" and new-born life, of which repentance is the sign, he still leaves him "one"; and the man having food he would not have starve whilst he relieves, or that he may relieve the starving, but share only. There was no communism, no sinking of the individual in the mass, or rights of property in the properties of right. Simply a proof of unselfishness, of caring for others, is set before the first inquirers. He puts his finger unerringly on the besetting sin. When I was in Palestine and Syria, and Asia Minor, and the dominions of Turkey generally, I felt that if to-day a John the Baptist were to have the old question asked him by the pashas and other tax-farmers, his answer would go to the root of the evils that are bleeding to death the entire dominions of the sultan. One gets a glimpse herein of how far-reaching really, though local and personal seemingly, was the Baptist's answer and counsel, "Extort no more," &c. I can well conceive that some of those who had asked, "What shall we do?" must have winced under the plain-spoken answer. The answer must have darted like a lightning bolt across the inquirers' lives, at once illumining specific acts, and by the immediate encompassing darkness and silence, as John passed to his next group of inquirers, shutting them up to self-examination and self-abasement. The same observation applies to the counsel addressed to the soldiers. They, too, had a "besetting sin." The teacher warns them that he knows all about them, and their violent, outrageous, evil ways, when set free from discipline, and on semi-marauding expeditions. And so he sends home to their consciences the brave and needed counsel, "Do violence," &c. The last thing demanded all John's high-hearted courage and fidelity to the truth, to put it so unqualifiedly. Here again, in all probability, if not certainty, he spoke to men's "businesses and bosoms." There were secret or more audible complaints, murmurs, accusations. John has heard these, has inquired into them, has come to a conclusion on the matter: and so they get it articulately, and without touch of currying favour: "Your wages are sufficient—you are well paid for all that you do—be content." Your mere enthusiast, your mystic, your man preoccupied about his functions and dignities, never would have been thus solid-sensed, thus practical, thus reasonable. IV. HE IS CONVINCING IN HIS COUNSELS. As with our Lord (gener-

ally) "the people," and "the publicans," and "the soldiers," gave assent and consent by silence. To us, on the first blush of it, John's advice has the look of a come-down from the molten warnings and accusations that immediately preceded, and out of which the inquiries were born. But their silence showed that to them the counsels were adequate, not trivial; went to the root of their necessities. They recognized—and we shall do well to follow in their steps—that Christian life is not made up of so-called great things, or evidenced by ecstasies, and high and higher emotion, but is constituted of habitual putting into our "walk and conversation," in DEEDS which we profess to know and believe. The most evangelical preacher and teacher may fearlessly answer, as John the Baptist did, every-day and ordinary inquirers, with no fear of not thereby "preaching" or "teaching" the gospel. For it was of these very exhortations that it is written, "With many other exhortations, therefore, preached he good tidings unto the people." These answers enshrine living principles for all time. To-day, with so much giving out of what we can spare and never feel it, when the very thing is to feel it, we need to be recalled to the first answer, to the gospel fact that our generosity must be after this type, of taking the coat off our back (if need be) to let our brother-man have "one," as we still have; and that we are to feed others, not with food different from our own, by paltry gradation of inferior, inferiorer, inferiorest, and a mocking thought, "It's quite good enough for the like of them," but with our very own food. It would again overturn tables, ay, in God's own house, and all through the commercial world and the learned professions, if John's second answer were but vitalized by present-day acceptance and influence, "Extort no more," &c. In different ways and degrees extortion—taking advantage of opportunity and circumstance—is a still wide-reaching sin. You that call yourselves Christians, and haste to be rich, beware! Then, in conclusion, how burning and high-hearted was the third answer—to the soldiers. As Dr. Reynolds put it: "There is room to suppose that the answer previously given to the publicans might be regarded by the soldiers as some kind of justification for their own high-handed acts. John tore off the cloak which their professional position was drawing over their selfishness, and he bade them terrorize no one, and bring no vamped-up worthless accusation. The professional soldier of modern times might be offended by such plain speaking. Armed authority is always open to the temptation of working on the emotion of physical fear." (*Dr. A. B. Grosart.*) *The questions of conscience and the answers of truth*:—The voice crying in the wilderness had awakened an answering echo in the breasts of the multitudes. The axe which God was already laying at the root of the tree was the Roman Conqueror of the land, and the tree fell when, with great slaughter, Jerusalem was taken, and of her goodly temple not one stone was left upon another. Well might the people tremble as their consciences, quickened from their long lethargy by the stern and powerful preaching of this Elijah of later days, awoke to the sense of their moral and spiritual degradation. For the moment, as often before in their history, this greatly-sinning, though highly-favoured people seemed ready to repent. They listened to John's burning words, and cried out to him, "What shall we do then?" It was the right question to ask, if only they had been possessed of the abiding spiritual conviction and the strength of purpose which would have enabled them to turn John's answers to good account. It was the question of Saul of Tarsus, of the Philippian jailor, of the multitude on the day of Pentecost. And it is the question which every awakened soul must ask, cannot help asking. Three classes came to John with this question. The answers which he returned to them were one and all directed against the vices and temptations peculiar to his questioners as respective classes. Doubtless from our Christian standpoint there is something defective in these utterances. To fulfil all these behests would not, it will be said, make any man a Christian. But it must be remembered that John himself was not a Christian. Great though he was, the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he. He was a preacher of righteousness. Upon him, last among men, the mantle of the old prophets had fallen. And his words are the echoes of those which had been spoken so long before: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen," &c. (Isa. lviii. 6, 7). John's preaching of repentance was intended to pave the way for the Christian doctrine of the righteousness which comes by faith. And when at length Christianity did come and preach to men, it had something more to say than either John or any of his predecessors, but not one word of that Old Testament inculcation did it unsay, for it had not come to destroy, but to fulfil. John's words were true, though they were not the whole truth. And the world has not yet grown so wise, or generous, or honest, as to have risen above the need for such moral teaching as this. The

answers of John to these conscience-stricken inquirers contain underlying principles suitable to men of all callings, and in all ages, who desire to lead sober, righteous, and godly lives. I. THE PURSUIT OF ONE'S SECULAR CALLING AND DAILY OCCUPATION IS NOT INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE DESIRE TO LEAD A RELIGIOUS LIFE. John does not say to these questioners, "Quit your callings for others in which you will be less exposed to difficulty and danger"; but "Do the right thing in the situation in which you find yourselves." Even as Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. vii. 24), "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." While there are some perhaps among the many employments which obtain amongst men, in which no Christian man can consistently engage, for most of us, and for ordinary circumstances, the advice is good and sound, "Do not quit your occupation or grow restless and uneasy in it, as if you could not serve God honestly in it as in another. But see to it that you serve God in it, and that meanest duties are done from highest motives." II. OUR RELIGION OUGHT TO ENTER INTO AND FIND ONE OF ITS GREAT SPHERES OF ACTION IN OUR DAILY LIFE AND BUSINESS. If business is not incompatible with religion, it is only because it is possible for us, and demanded of us, that we infuse the spirit of religion into our businesses. The difference between our Sundays and our week-days to be done away, or at all events lessened, not by degrading Sunday to the level of other days, but by elevating them to its level, in regard to the spirit we breathe, and the principles that govern us, and the consciousness of God's presence with us. III. WE MUST BRING THE SPIRITUAL STRENGTH WHICH GOD GIVES US TO BEAR CHIEFLY AGAINST THE TEMPTATIONS TO WHICH WE ARE PECULIARLY EXPOSED. Some of our temptations arise out of our own evil hearts. Others are incidental to existence in a world like this. Against these general onslaughts we have all in common to strive. But there are temptations peculiar to us as individuals, or as members of a certain class—arising from the circumstances in which we are placed, and the positions we hold. It was so with the publicans and soldiers who came to John, and his advice to them was, "Oppose yourselves with all your might to the besetments which assail you in your respective callings." And what is true of the peculiar dangers arising from position and circumstance is true also of those which have their origin in personal disposition and temperament. Let us all strive so to live that men shall not be able to point to glaring inconsistencies in our lives—that they may see that our religion is no mere profession, but a living power, which has all our life and thought and conduct under its sway, which can sanctify the trivial round and common task, and transmute the base metal of our ordinary acts and occasions and duties into the gold of the cheerful obedience of loving hearts and consecrated lives. (*J. R. Bailey.*) *Preaching producing discomfort*:—I remember one of my parishioners at Halesworth telling me that he thought "a person should not go to church to be made uncomfortable." I replied that I thought so too; but whether it should be the sermon or the man's life that should be altered so as to avoid the discomfort, must depend on whether the doctrine was right or wrong. (*Archbishop Whately.*) *The proof of effectual preaching*:—Do you not know that a man may be preached to liturgically and doctrinally, and never be touched by the truth, or understand that to which he listens? Suppose I were to preach to you in Hebrew, how much would you understand? Now, when I preach so that a banker, who has all along been sitting under the doctrinal preaching, but has never felt its application to his particular business, feels the next day, when counting his coin, a twinge of conscience, and says, "I wish I could either practise that sermon or forget it," I have preached the gospel to him in such a way that he has understood it. I have applied it to the sphere of life in which he lives. When the gospel is preached so that a man feels that it is applied to his own life, he has it translated to him. And it needs to be translated to merchants and lawyers, and mechanics, and every other class in society, in order that all may receive their portion in due season. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Powerful preaching*:—When Massillon preached at Versailles, Louis XIV. paid the following most expressive tribute to the power of his eloquence. "Father, when I hear others preach, I am very well pleased with them; when I hear you, I am dissatisfied with myself." The first time he preached his sermon on the small number of the elect, the whole audience were, at a certain part of it, seized with such violent emotion, that almost every person half rose from his seat, as if to shake off the horror of being one of the cast-out into everlasting darkness. (*Percy.*) *Effect of true preaching*:—It was a beautiful criticism made by Longinus, upon the effect of the speaking of Cicero and Demosthenes. He says the people would go from one of Cicero's orations, exclaiming, "What a beautiful speaker!

What a rich fine voice! What an eloquent man Cicero is!" They talked of Cicero; but when they left Demosthenes, they said, "Let us fight Philip!" Losing sight of the speaker, they were all absorbed in the subject; they thought not of Demosthenes, but of their country. So, my brethren, let us endeavour to send away from our ministrations the Christian, with his mouth full of the praise—not of "our preacher," but of God; and the sinner, not descanting upon the beautiful figures and well-turned periods of the discourse, but inquiring, with the brokenness of a penitent, "What shall I do to be saved?" *Giving to the needy*:—A man doesn't need to be rich before he shows whether he is generous or not. Nor is a man's generosity to be limited to one-tenth of his income. Dividing one's scantiest store with others is a duty, quite as clearly as giving out of one's abundance. A great many wish that they were rich, in order that they might be generous; but unless one gives freely while he has little, he could not give freely if he had much. Generosity often diminishes with one's growing wealth; it never, never, never increases with one's worldly accumulations. And mark you, the giving which tells in God's ears is giving to the destitute; not giving to friends and relatives who already have something. Most of the holiday giving, and the birthday giving, and the free-hearted and open-handed giving, in this world, is to those who are already well-to-do in life. That is all very well in its way—as a means of pure personal enjoyment; but it is not charity, not any sign of a love toward God. If you would show that you are God's children, and would do your duty as in God's sight, let him that hath two coats give to him that hath none, and let him that hath meat do likewise. (*H. C. Trumbull.*) *Two coats*:—The Jews of the first century always wore the tunic and mantle or robe. These were the two indispensable garments. As a rule the Jew had at least two complete suits in his possession that he might be able to change often. A man must be very poor to have only one cloak; and yet this is what Christ enjoined on His disciples. According to Luke's Gospel He said one day: "If any man would go to law with thee and take away thy cloak, let him have thy coat also." This precept can be understood; a robber would naturally lay hold first of the outer garment. But Matthew puts it the other way: "If any man will take thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." Under this form it is harder to understand, and we may well suppose that in transcribing the copyists have misplaced the two words coat and cloak. (*E. Stapfer, D.D.*) *A self-denying gift*:—People wondered why George Briggs, Governor of Massachusetts, wore a cravat but no collar. "Oh," they said, "it is an absurd eccentricity," and they said, "he does that just to show himself off." Ah! no. That was not the character of George Briggs, Governor of Massachusetts, as I might intimate by a little incident which occurred at Pittsfield, Mass., just after a meeting of the American Board of Foreign Missions. My brother was walking on one side of the Governor, and on the other side of the Governor was a missionary who had just returned from India. The day was cold, and the Governor looked at the missionary and said, "Why, my friend, you don't seem to have an overcoat." "No," said the missionary, "I haven't been able to purchase an overcoat since I came to the country." Then the Governor took off his great cloak and threw it around the missionary and said, "I can stand this climate better than you can." Governor Briggs did not do anything just to show off. This was the history of the cravat without any collar. For many years before he had been talking with an inebriate, trying to persuade him to give up the habit of drinking, and he said to the inebriate, "Your habit is entirely unnecessary." "Ah!" replied the inebriate, "we do a great many things that are not necessary. It isn't necessary that you should have that collar." "Well," said Briggs, "I will never wear a collar again if you will stop drinking." "Agreed," said the other. They joined hands in a pledge that they kept for twenty years, kept until death. That is magnificent. That is gospel, practical gospel, worthy of George Briggs, worthy of you. Self-denial for others. Subtraction from our advantage that there may be an addition to somebody else's advantage. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Duty of helping the poor*:—When a Christian lady once came to Carlyle and asked what she should do to make her life more useful, he replied, "Seek out some poor friendless lassie and be kind to her." *The blessedness of giving*:—One of the best things said by the late George Peabody is this, spoken at a reunion at his native town:—"It is sometimes hard for one who has devoted the best part of his life to the accumulation of money to spend it for others; but practise it, and keep on practising it, and I assure you it becomes a pleasure." *The pulpit in politics*:—"What shall we do?" each asks in turn. Observe the Baptist's method in reply. He was able to answer that question because he had a firm hold of a few fundamental principles—righteousness, equity, love. That was

his charm, his power, his resource. He was not political, but he dealt with politicians; nor military, but he dealt with soldiers; nor mercantile, but he dealt with finance; hence we may learn, by the way, the relation of the pulpit to politics. Unless the preacher can raise politics out of the sphere of party spirit, let him keep silence; but when a Government policy infringes on the moral plane, when and where it can be tested by common principles of righteousness, equity, and love, then its policy is as much the preacher's sphere of comment as murder, theft, or selfishness. If any Government, *e.g.*, is culpably indifferent for years to the state of Ireland, and can only be roused to activity by Parnellism: when I observe that the Indian budget, upon which hangs the well-being of distant millions, is proverbially discussed by an apathetic group in an empty House: when I see the men of Parliamentary authority combine to crush out the risings of freedom in Egypt with brute force, simply because influential speculators want a high rate of interest for their money on an iniquitous loan—why, it is time to ask, "ought the pulpit to keep silence?" Certainly not. The policy infringes on the moral sphere, and has to be judged by the same Divine principles to which the Baptist invariably appealed. Aye, and I will go further and say that the *temper* of political debate is also a matter for pulpit comment. When public time is wasted, crises at home and abroad neglected, and the whole tone of the House lowered because two political gladiators want to have a stand-up fight, and the honourable members are content to form a ring, is such wanton fooling as that in high places not to be arraigned by those who profess to view party conduct by the light of a morality which seems unknown to party politics? (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *John's counsels to inquirers*:—John's touch was throughout light but firm, and quite infallible in particulars, just because he appealed to simple and universally intelligible principles of right and wrong. Listen to his answer to the people generally. "You want to know what to do? Do the right thing *now*. There's a man without a cloak, the sun's going down, he's over-heated, he'll catch fever—you've got an extra wrap, give it him. That woman yonder is fainting for a little food, she was so eager to be baptized she forgot her provision basket—you have more than you want, give her some. To the publican, or portitor, who paid so much to the Government for the right of collecting the taxes, and then got as much more as he could by squeezing the people: "You tyrants, you extortioners, every one knows your trade, and is willing to give you your margin of profit; well, don't exact more." To the soldiers: "You Jacks-in-office, don't levy blackmail by threatening to accuse innocent persons. Don't use the prestige of the Roman arms to oppress the civilian in the provinces, and don't mutiny and keep striking for higher pay; respect the people whom you ought to protect, and the master whom you profess to serve." This was pretty smart and practical teaching. The man of the crowd could not go home and say that the man of the desert knew nothing about him. He could go home and "repent"! (*Ibid.*) *Do what you can*:—The Baptist's answer to the question of the people, "What shall we do?" is exceedingly remarkable if we consider that John's mission was to prepare the way for Christ. If this question were put to many amongst ourselves, who profess to lead men to Christ, they would answer—"You can do nothing. All works of men in your unreconciled state are displeasing to God. You can in no way, by any works of your own, further your own salvation. It is the worst of errors to think so." But the Baptist, filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, gives an answer implying the very reverse. It is—"You must do something. You must do what is in your power. You can, at least, give food and raiment to the poor starving creatures around you. Begin with this. If you begin thus with denying your selfishness, God will soon show you a more excellent way—the way of grace in His Son. But till that Son comes and reveals Himself to you, do what your hand finds to do. Do some good to your fellow-creatures. The way for you to obtain mercy is to be merciful." Now, in saying this, did St. John in the least degree swerve from his mission of preparing the way for Christ by preaching of repentance? No, not for a moment. When the people asked him what they were to do to avoid the wrath to come, it was a plain sign that God had touched their hearts with some degree of repentance, and this repentance was no repentance at all unless it cut at the root of their selfishness, and every unselfish, self-denying act would deepen it. Notice, also, that St. John said this to the masses. Instead of saying to them, "You have little to give, and so God will excuse you from contributing," he says to them, "Whatever you have that you do not absolutely need, give it." Looked at in this light, the words are very strong, very searching. If they make such a demand on the crowds, what do they make on the few who have

abundance of this world's goods? Of course such words as these of the Baptist are to be understood in the light of common sense: men are not to *give*, to enable others to be idle. The best commentary on the passage, according to Jerome, is 2 Cor. viii. 13, 14. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*)

Ver. 13. **Exact no more than that which is appointed you**—*Oppressions and extortions of tax-gatherers*:—Present-day conditions of Eastern lands painfully illustrate the continuance of some of the most demoralizing customs of the past. When the crop is reared, and while the winnowing is actually going on upon the threshing-floor, the tax-gatherer stands by and appropriates one-tenth as soon as the work is completed. The Mahommedan government adopts the oppressive system of the Romans, sells the tithes to the highest bidder, for a sum of money which he is ready enough to pay in advance. This purchaser, or farmer of the taxes, has then to make his profits on the transaction by forcing the most extravagant payments from the people, and in so doing he is armed with irresponsible authority. The tithe-gatherers go through the land, employing every device for the purpose of overreaching the cultivators of the soil, and obtaining from them more than their dues. The farmers are strictly ordered not to thresh their grain before the tax-gatherers are ready, which is the means of additional extortions. Crops, therefore, sometimes remain heaped upon the threshing-floors for many weeks, the distressed owners not daring to thresh and harvest them, and being compelled both to watch them by day and night, and to devise means to protect them from being wet with showers. (*Biblical Things not generally known.*) *Exacting more than was just*:—In the *Edinburgh Weekly Review* we find some anecdotes relating to the Rev. William Anderson, D.D., more than fifty years pastor of the John Street United Presbyterian Church, of Glasgow, who died some time ago. He was one of the most eminent and beloved ministers of that city. He was once expounding the 15th Psalm, and had come to the word "usury"—"He putteth not out his money to usury." "Does that mean," he asked, "taking ten per cent. or more? Not entirely. It means also the spirit in which the ten per cent. is taken. There was once in this Church a poor widow, and she wanted twenty pounds to begin a small shop. Having no friends, she came to me, her minister. And I happened to know a man—not of this Church—who could advance the money to the poor widow. So we went to this man—the widow and I—and the man said he would be happy to help the widow. And he drew out a bill for £20, and the widow signed it, and I signed it too. Then he put the signed paper in his desk and took out the money and gave it to the widow. But the widow, counting it, said: 'Sir, there is only £15 here.' 'It is all right,' said the man; 'that is the interest I charge.' And, as we had no redress, we came away. But the widow prospered. And she brought the £20 to me, and I took it myself to the office of the man who lent it, and I said to him: 'Sir, there is the £20 from the widow.' And he said: 'Here is the paper you signed, and if you know any other poor widow I will be happy to help her in the same way.' I said to him: '*You* help the widow! Sir, you have robbed this widow, and you will be damned!' And, my friends, I kept my eye on that man. And before six months were over, God smote him, and he died." We can still recall, after many years, the creep of soul with which we listened to the closing sentences, and the vivid glimpse we got of a Divine retribution falling suddenly on a bad man. *The law of exaction*:—It gives us a fresh sense of the greatness of that reformer who makes this answer to see in it how free he was from the infirmities of his class. It is comparatively easy to see that things are wrong, and that they ought to be changed and righted. It is less easy, but still not uncommon, to have the courage that denounces wrong and that rebukes its perpetrators. It is quite another thing to have the practical insight and the patient determination that can discover a remedy for abuses and point the way to its successful application. There are wrongs that have been denounced and then forgotten, as though their denunciation and their repression were identical. And by such a course the moral sense of a community, of a man, becomes dulled, and at length slumbers and is inert. People see that behind the passionate voice there is wanting the guiding hand; that the scream of indignation somehow exhausts the impulse of reform, and that men who are eager in general terms to tell other men what they ought to do are quite powerless often to tell them how to do it. It explains the confidence with which men followed John the Baptist that he not only rebuked their vices, but that he showed them how to forsake them. "What shall we do?" "Do!" said John, "do something for your brother-man.

Instead of hoarding, spend. Instead of accumulating, give. It is not much to do, but it is a beginning. Get your shrunken heart enlarged a little by making it sensible of the needs of others. Exact no more than that which is appointed. It is a law for all men, and of manifold application. Let us see this morning, as the preacher in the wilderness turns on it the strong, full light of this personal application, what that is which it has to say to us. At the base of every man's consciousness is the sense of his relationship to God. While we are arguing about the existence of such a Being, the deepest convictions of men are more or less candidly owning it as beyond argument. Next to a man's relations to his Maker are his relations to his fellows, and here the personal consciousness is far less certain or clear. What each one of us owes to our neighbour—in what spirit we shall maintain our business or social relations with our fellow-men—what is human brotherhood, and how men shall practically illustrate it—these are questions concerning which many people are in frequent and serious perplexity. If you are a capitalist, and I am a tradesman, or a farmer, or a labourer, the time will almost inevitably come when in one way or another you will have me in your power. You are stronger than I am, like the Hebrew or Roman publicans. You may do with impunity things that I cannot. Above all, owing to my necessities, it may easily be that you have obtained a knowledge of my affairs, which gives you, in our business dealings, an overwhelming advantage. You can "freeze me out" after one fashion or another. You can foreclose on me, if I am a little behind in my interest. We read of men in civic place who, entrusted with the care of the stranger and the immigrant, make them welcome to these shores by robbing, and even ruining them. And our cheeks flush at an infamy so shameless and so inhuman. But here is some imposing personage to whom men bow obsequiously on 'Change, and who finds a hospitable welcome at the tables of eminent Christian citizens, who only differs from the immigrant runner or a boarding-house striker in the bulk and the boldness of his transactions! In essence these are of precisely the same nature, for they are both trading upon the ignorance of the unsuspecting and wringing their profits out of the poverty of the poor and the weakness of the weak. To all such, and to you and me, just in so far as we are tempted by their success to descend to their methods, the gospel speaks in plain and stern rebuke, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." And no less does it say to that other life which most of us live in homes. Here, as between man and woman, parent and child, master and servant, there is a large field for undue and unwarrantable exactions. How many sweet and gracious relationships, begun in love, and cemented, it may be, by mutual sympathies, have been spoiled at length by a temper which was all the time throwing itself back upon its wifely or husbandly rights, and exacting not only these but more than these with a petulant impatience and peevish and fault-finding querulousness, a harsh imperiousness, which thought only of itself! In every such relation there is one who is stronger and one who is weaker. "I wish," said a father to his son's teacher, "that I could at least persuade my son to treat me like a gentleman." "Suppose," replied the other, "that you try the effect of treating him like a gentleman!" Does it ever occur to some of us that because God has constituted the family as a Divine institution in which the parent is king, it does not follow that our sovereignty is to be an absolute despotism. Few of us are in danger of working seven days in the week. Some of us would be happier if we did a little more work on the remaining six. But this at least we can do—we can protect on Sundays the rights of those who work for us. (*Bishop H. C. Potter.*)

Ver. 14. **And the soldiers likewise.**—*The lawfulness of arms:*—The common argument, founded on this for the lawfulness of the military profession, seems unanswerable. It is true that war is contrary to the mild spirit of Christianity, and that the guilt of it must be always chargeable, at least on one side. But there are several professions for which there would be no use, were it not for human depravity and injustice; *e.g.*, there would be no use for magistrates or for civil or criminal law at all, were it not for the lawless and disobedient. So, though it is often a delicate point to settle when war becomes just or necessary, its justice and necessity in some cases are beyond dispute, and therefore the employment of the soldier must, generally speaking, be a lawful one. But, to look no farther than to the authority before us, when soldiers under concern about salvation and the path of duty applied to John for direction, would that intrepid teacher have hesitated a moment, if their profession had been unlawful, to tell them so, and to exhort them to quit it immediately, whatever might have been the consequence? Instead

of this, however, he tells them how to conduct themselves in it. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *Encouragement for soldiers:*—Notwithstanding the too general prevalence of impiety and immorality in the military life, there are many honourable exceptions. We read of the believing and humble centurion of Capernaum, who said that he was not worthy that Christ should come under his roof, and that if He would but speak the word his servant should be healed; which led our Lord to declare, that He had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. We read, too, of Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band, a devout man, who feared God with all his house, and gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always, and to whom Peter was sent, more fully to instruct him. There is something peculiarly interesting in almost every case in which gennine religion decidedly influences the mind and conduct of a soldier. These principles must be sincere, and of considerable strength, which enable him to overcome the varied temptations with which he is beset. The trials of his physical and mental courage have been severe, and his opportunities of observation have been extensive. The result of all this is the obvious, and, in the eye of the enlightened Christian, the very adorning and engaging, union of frankness with caution, of complaisance with faithfulness, of meekness with manliness, and of the knowledge of the world, from which, however, he is separated, with the knowledge of God, in which he continues to grow, and under the influence and in the comfort of which he is prepared, if it be the will of God, to live, and equally prepared, if it be the will of God, to die. Let no soldier be so infatuated as to imagine, that his profession will be sustained as a satisfactory excuse for his impiety, when he comes to stand before the judgment-seat of God: for whatever be the difficulties in his way, he is offered Divine aid in proportion to these difficulties, if he apply for it. Let no soldier imagine that, because he is a soldier, irreligion, or profane swearing, or violence, or intemperance, or licentiousness in him, can possibly be passed over, unless he exercise repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, unless he be actually reformed and converted. On the other hand, let no soldier who is in earnest about his salvation be discouraged. Let him be prepared to set at nought the profane and unhandsome sneers with which he may expect to meet. Let him study at once to live like a Christian, and to be exemplary in the duties of his profession, and then even those who affect to despise will inwardly respect him, and even in their own estimations appear small before him. (*Ibid.*) *Outrages by soldiers:*—The soldiers, so necessary as a class in all such civil constitutions as those of the East, receive advice of which the Zabtîehs, or Turkish soldier-police, of to-day stand in great need; especially in provinces more remote from the capital. The outrages they commit, in violence done to men and women; and the false accusations which they bring to ruin them, would scarcely be believed here; and indeed they are mostly too shocking to relate. The writer remembers a case which occurred in Cyprus while he was there, where the Zabtîeh had been too brutal and fiendish in his behaviour in the house of a newly-married couple. But not daring to resist him openly, the wife had managed to cajole him into drinking heavily, and when drunk the husband stabbed him to the heart. The soldier-policeman is an object of dread in every country village. His coming can scarcely be looked upon as anything but a calamity. In many cases—always, indeed, in actual service—it would be hard fare for him to be content with his wages, or rations. But the people with whom they are quartered, or whom they come to "protect," would doubtless be glad to give peaceably out of their deep poverty enough to support the soldiers, if they might thus be relieved of their violence and false accusations. (*Professor Isaac H. Hall.*) *Disastrous result of a false report:*—I have read that a foolish young English clerk—fond of practical jokes—once said to a friend, "Have you heard that E—— & Co., the bankers, have stopped payment?" He merely meant that the banking-house had, as usual, closed up for the night. But he amused himself by seeing how he had startled his friend. He did not stop to explain his real meaning. His friend mentioned the alarming report to another: the rumour spread. Next day there was a "run upon the bank," and Messrs. E—— & Co., were obliged to suspend payment. The silly youth did not mean to burn down the commercial credit of a prosperous house: he only meant to amuse himself by playing with fire. And a kindred mischief to his is perpetrated by every one who retails contemptible gossip, or gives birth to a scurrilous slander. "An abomination to the Lord is the false witness who speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." (*Dr. Cuyler.*) *Refusing to act unjustly:*—While Athens was governed by the thirty tyrants, Socrates, the

philosopher, was summoned to the senate-house, and ordered to go with some other persons, whom they named, to seize one Leon, a man of rank and fortune, whom they determined to put out of the way, that they might enjoy his estate. This commission Socrates positively refused. "I will not willingly," said he, "assist in an unjust act." Chericles sharply replied, "Dost thou think, Socrates, to talk in this high tone, and not to suffer?" "Far from it," replied he: "I expect to suffer a thousand ills, but not so great as to do unjustly." *Example of contentment*:—John Wesselus of Groningen, who was one of the most learned men in the fifteenth century, and was, on account of his extensive attainments, called "the light of the world," having been once introduced into the presence of the pope, was requested by that pontiff to ask for some favour for himself. "Then," said Wesselus, "I beg you to give me out of the Vatican Library a Greek and a Hebrew Bible." "You shall have them," said Sixtus; "but, foolish man, why don't you ask for a bishopric, or something of that sort?" Said Wesselus, "Because I do not want such things." *Cato and Marius Curius*:—Cato, a pattern of moderation, was very early taught the happy art of contentment, by the following circumstance:—Near his country seat was a cottage, formerly belonging to Marius Curius, who was thrice honoured with a triumph. Cato often walked thither, and reflecting on the smallness of the farm and the meanness of the dwelling, used to meditate on the peculiar virtues of the man, who, though he was the most illustrious character in Rome, had subdued the fiercest nations, and driven Pyrrhus out of Italy, cultivated this little spot of ground with his own hands, and, after three triumphs, retired to his own cottage. Here the ambassadors of the Samnites found him in the chimney-corner dressing turnips, and offered him a large present of gold; but he absolutely refused it, remarking, "A man who can be satisfied with such a supper, has no need of gold; and I think it more glorious to conquer the possessors of it, than to possess it myself." Full of these thoughts, Cato returned home; and taking a view of his own estates, his servants, and his manner of life, increased his labour, and retrenched his expenses. *The secret of contentment*:—An Italian bishop struggled through great difficulties, without repining or betraying the least impatience. One of his intimate friends, who highly admired the virtues which he thought it impossible to imitate, one day asked the prelate if he could communicate the secret of being always easy. "Yes," replied the old man; "I can teach you my secret with great facility; it consists in nothing more than making a right use of my eyes." His friend begged of him to explain himself. "Most willingly," replied the bishop. "In whatever state I am, I first of all look up to heaven, and remember that my principal business here is to get there; I then look down upon the earth, and call to mind how small a place I shall occupy in it when I die and am buried; I then look abroad into the world, and observe what multitudes there are who are in all respects more unhappy than myself. Thus I learn where true happiness is placed; where all our cares must end; and what little reason I have to repine or to complain." *Two sorts of blessings*:—"It is a great blessing to possess what one wishes," said some one to an ancient philosopher; to which the wise man immediately replied, "It is a greater blessing still, not to desire what one does not possess." *Contentment*:—Those who preach contentment to all, do but teach some how to dwell in misery; unless you will grant content desire, and chide her but for murmuring. Let not man so sleep in content, as to neglect the means of making himself more happy and blessed; nor yet, when the contrary of what he looked for comes, let him murmur at that providence which disposed it to cross his expectation. I like the man who is never content with what he does enjoy; but by a calm and fair course, has a mind still rising to a higher happiness. But I like not him who is so dissatisfied as to repine at anything that does befall him. Let him take the present patiently, joyfully, thankfully; but let him still be soberly in quest of better; and indeed it is impossible to find a life so happy here, as that we shall not find something we would add to it, something we would take away from it. The world itself is not a garden, wherein all the flowers of joy are growing; nor can one man enjoy the whole of those that are there. There is no absolute contentment here below; nor can we in reason think there should be; since whatsoever is created, was created tending to some end, and till it arrives at that end, it cannot be fully at rest. (*Owen Felltham.*) *Content with his position*:—Joe Martin, an Indian chief, residing in New Brunswick, was interrogated by a professional gentleman who held an important office under Government, whether he would accept the commission of a captain among the Indians, which, he observed, it was in his power to procure for him; to which the Indian made the following

reply:—"Now Joe Martin love God, pray to God; now Joe Martin humble; certain not good to make Indian proud; when Indian proud, him forget God: for this reason Joe Martin never must be captain!" He accordingly declined it. *Contentment:*—It is not so much the large stars shining on a dark night that makes the sky luminous, but the multitude of little ones, all doing their best in their separate places. There are comparatively few of the large ones—not enough by any means to light up the infinite reaches of space between us and them—and so here is the need of the little ones. Are you pining in your place for the honour of a large star? Be content; your mission is just as high a one as that of the largest orb that shines. Though not equal in size, you may yet be in brightness. Keep steadily to your appointed place, making all the light you can, and you are the largest star in the eyes of the great God who ruleth over all.

Ver. 15. **Whether he were the Christ or not.**—*The Baptist's attitude towards Christ:*—Observe here—1. How the extraordinariness of the Baptist's person, the earnestness of his preaching, the acceptableness of his doctrine, and the exemplariness of his conversation, drew all persons to an admiration of him; insomuch that they began to think within themselves, whether he were not the Messiah Himself. He plainly tells them he was not, but only His servant, His harbinger, and forerunner. 2. The high opinion which John had of Christ. "He is mightier than I"; *i.e.*, a person of greater authority, dignity, and excellency, than myself. 3. The humble and low estimation that the Baptist had of himself. "The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose": a proverbial speech, implying that he was unworthy to do the lowest offices, and meanest services for Christ. How well does humility of mind, a humble estimate and low opinion of themselves, become the messengers and ministers of Christ. 4. John does not only declare the dignity of Christ's person, but the excellency of His office. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." As if he had said, I only wash the body with water, but Christ cleanses the soul by the operation of His Holy Spirit, which is as fire in its effects, purifying the hearts of His people from sin, and consuming their lusts and corruptions; yet at the same time having fiery indignation, and flaming judgments, to destroy and burn up impenitent sinners like dry stubble. It is observable in Scripture, that Christ is represented by one and the same metaphor of fire, in a way of comfort to His children, and in a way of terror to His enemies; He is fire unto both. He sits in the hearts of His people as a refiner's fire; He is amongst His enemies as a consuming fire: a fire for His Church to take comfort in, a fire for His enemies to perish by. 5. The Baptist compares Christ to a husbandman, and the Jewish Church to a barn-floor; the office of a husbandman is to thresh, fan, and winnow His corn, separating it from the chaff, preserving the one and consuming the other. (1) The Church is Christ's floor. (2) This floor Christ will purge, and that thoroughly. (3) The Word of Christ is the fan in His hand, by and with which He will thoroughly purge His floor. The Church is compared to a floor, because of the mixture of good and bad in it, saints and sinners, hypocrites and sincere Christians, just as in a threshing-floor there is straw as well as grain, chaff as well as corn, tares as well as wheat, cockle and darnel as well as good seed. But Christ will purge His Church; purge it of its corruptions, without destroying its essence or existence, by the fan of His Holy Word, accompanied by the wing of discipline. (*W. Burkitt, M.A.*) *No true teacher can suffer himself to live upon mistaken impressions:*—The people mused whether John were the Christ or not. An unreal and self-seeking man would have turned this doubtfulness to his own account. This was John's temptation. Jesus was tempted in one direction and John in another; but in each case the temptation was direct and real. Every ministry must be tempted, as must every Christian. Have you ever been tempted to regard yourself as some great one? Have you not covered up your poor and withering name with the reputation of strong and brilliant men? Have you not received applause for originalities which you have but quoted from others? John's declaration concerning Christ is most remarkable. He says nothing about preaching the gospel or dying for the sins of the world, nor about the great evangelical mission; the declaration relates solely to baptism, and to the discrimination of character. But what a baptism! and what a discrimination! There can be no mistake about any man who has received the baptism of fire; the fire will either illuminate or consume him, so that he will be either a light shining afar, or a scorched and barren soul that has quenched the Spirit. Baptism by *water* can only be initial or symbolical; baptism by *fire* is the great testimony of God to the soul's

purification and acceptance. John points to two distinct uses of fire: Jesus will baptize with fire, and with fire unquenchable will He burn the chaff. This is precisely what the gospel does. It is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 16. **I indeed baptize you with water.**—*Significance of John's baptism*:—1. John's baptism was a carrying on of the office of the law. Neither repentance avails without grace, nor grace without repentance; for repentance must first condemn sin, that grace may blot it out. So then John, becoming a type of the law, baptized to repentance, Christ to grace. 2. John's baptism was higher than Jewish rites, but imperfect. Moses baptized, but with water, and before this, in the cloud and in the sea; but this was typically, as St. Paul also pronounces the sea a type of the water, the cloud a type of the Spirit, the manna a type of the bread of life, the drink a type of the heavenly draught. John also baptized, and he no longer Judaically, for he baptized not with water only, but to repentance; but not as yet altogether spiritually, for it is not added "with the Spirit." The perfection of Christ's Baptism, which John's lacked, is that it is with the Spirit. 3. John's baptism was preparatory and initiatory to the gospel. He baptized not with the Spirit, but with water; because, unable to remit sins, he washed the bodies of the baptized with water, but not their hearts with forgiveness. Why then did he baptize, since by baptism he did not free from sin, except that maintaining the order of his precursorial office, he, who by his birth had gone before His birth, should by baptizing also go before the Baptism of the Lord? And he who by preaching had been made the precursor of Christ, should by baptizing also be His precursor through the image of His Sacrament. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) *I indeed baptize you with water* :—The symbol must be interpreted by the circle of ideas in which John moved, and which he variously expressed. Its suggestive cause is as hard to determine as it is unimportant. The rite may have formal affinities with the lustrations of the Essenes or the ablutions of proselytes; but it has a material significance of its own. John placed it in a relation with confession of sin and repentance, that made it the symbol of certain spiritual realities—evil recognized and repudiated; good perceived and chosen. In this connection its use may have been suggested by such words as, "Wash you, make you clean," or, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened," &c. (Zech. xiii. 1). But his baptism was the symbol of another and no less significant fact; the baptized were not simply the penitent, but the expectant, men consecrated to a great hope. And so John was but true to the best genius of his people when he made his baptism represent, not simply an individual change, but a social fact—entrance into a society prepared for the kingdom which was at hand. The "baptism unto repentance" was also a baptism unto hope: as the first, it was the sign of a renounced past; as the second, it was the symbol of a new future. The Baptist's idea of this new future was embodied in the phrase, "the kingdom of heaven." He could indifferently say, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and, "After me cometh One mightier than I." He loved indeed to contrast his own meanness and the King's greatness. He was not worthy to bear His sandals, to loose His shoe's latchet. He was but the friend of the Bridegroom; the Bridegroom was to come. He only baptized with water, the mighty One who was coming would "baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire." (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*) *Humility the test of a great man*:—I believe the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility doubt of his own power, or hesitation of speaking his opinions; but a right understanding of the relation between what *he* can do and say, and the rest of the world's sayings and doings. All great men not only know their business, but usually know that they know it; and are not only right in their main opinions, but they usually know that they are right in them, only they do not think much of themselves on that account. Arnolfo knows he can build a good dome at Florence; Albert Dürer writes calmly to one who has found fault with his work, "It cannot be better done"; Sir Isaac Newton knows that he has worked out a problem or two that would have puzzled anybody else; only they do not expect their fellow-men, therefore, to fall down and worship them. They have a curious under-sense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not *in* them, but *through* them; that they could not do or be anything else than God made them—and they see something Divine and God-made in every other man they meet, and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful. (*John Ruskin.*) *Humility beautifies*:—A just and reasonable modesty does not only recommend

eloquence, but sets off every great talent which a man can be possessed of. It heightens all the virtues which it accompanies. Like the shades in paintings it raises and rounds every figure, and makes the colours more beautiful, though not so glaring as they would be without. (*Addison.*) *Adult and infant baptism*:—A river of baptism ought to be a river of death. You are baptized in the Jordan. How? Need we then care how? As antiquarians we would like to know how John the baptizer dealt with those who came to him: we would like to know whether they were dipped in the stream, or whether water was poured upon them from the stream. But now, ask your own conscientious affections whether the answer to this question, spiritually, is worth one sixpence to us, or, at any rate, of special importance? It is not. As antiquarians, it is very interesting to us, and we feel sure that if we knew the outward literal truth, we should get some suggestion from it. But we know at least this: the people that John baptized, and that disciples of Jesus baptized, were adults. That is clear enough. Well, then, if at that time adults were baptized, surely circumstances may occur again in which any rational person will allow that adults may again be baptized. The truth is, that it was not man that invented infant-baptism, but through the Lord God's providence at, as we think, the suggestion of His Spirit, that it arose. When people had been baptized, and children were born to them, that they never would let grow up into the heathen state in which they themselves had been when they were baptized, how natural that they should, by a water-rite, adapted from the rite with which they were familiar, hallow these children to the Lord God! What are we baptized for, by the Holy Spirit, into a new life, but that our old life may perish? "I wish my old life," a man may say, "to be taken from me by the Jordan and carried down to the Dead Sea as soon as possible. Oh, let me be utterly rid of it; let my God save me by the death of the old man and the resurrection of the new." All that is outward is of value only for its significance and its suggestiveness. (*T. T. Lynch.*) **One mightier than I cometh.**—*Expectation*:—And what is the man who, having no expectations, is always casting back his thoughts into a retrospect? Almost universally a melancholy man. And what is the man who sees nothing but the present? A drudge in his work, and a sensualist in his pleasures. But what is the man who throws himself into that which is beyond him? At least, an energetic man, and, if he be a Christian, a happy one. Have you never observed that every one's character is determined by what he is living up to? Why is the Mahommedan an idle and self-indulgent man? Because he lives up to a corporeal, and indolent, and sensuous heaven. Why is the Brahmin a man of apathy? Because, after all his transmigrations, he has nothing to expect—according to his creed—but annihilation, absolute annihilation. Why does the believer grow holy and loving, but because he is always realizing in his mind the heaven of holiness and love to which he is going? Certainly, expectation is a duty. But God has done with this faculty of expectation, what He has done with all the natural powers and habits of the human mind—He has sanctified it, and elevated it. And this is the way God has done it—He has thrown into it first, truth, then affection, and then great delight, so He has made it hope. What is it? Expectation with desire. It is quite certain that God intended that man should be ruled by hope. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Observe, at once, the mind was sent off into the future for its comfort. It was the same with Abraham—he had nothing, he was to have everything. The Jews lived by their prophecies. Nor less, but rather more, it is the key of the New Testament. What the Messiah of Bethlehem was under the former dispensation, Christ made the Holy Ghost to His disciples. Wait, wait till you receive the promises. And now what is the aim, the consolation, the theme, the life of the whole Church, but the coming back of her dear Lord? But what I wish you to notice in this long line of expectation is, that the next thing in the succession is always greater and better than that which preceded it. David's reign was one appointed in the prospective; but David's reign was only the shadow of the higher empire of Christ. Zion's power and beauty were predicted; but chiefly as the type of the Church of the gospel. The gospel itself was infinitely greater than all its foreshowing; Jesus was a greater prophet than Moses. And we have Christ's own warrant to say that the Holy Ghost was a larger gift to the Church than even His own personal presence—more pervasive, more effective. And then higher and higher still, in ranges where the mind loses itself in floods of glory, the swelling tide rolls on and never stops. If you could read it so, brethren, whenever anything happy comes to you—an answered prayer, a gift of God—you may always hear it—saying, "I am only a pledge of something

else; there is something better than I am behind." "One mightier than I cometh." Why it should have pleased God to place everything in such a scale of ever-ascending grandeur and goodness, we can only faintly glimpse. But, assuredly, it is always exalting Him in His unapproachable height, while it is always humbling us in our sense of ignorance and preparation. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) **The latchet of whose shoes.**—*Loosing the shoe-latchet*:—I. NO FORM OF HOLY SERVICE IS TO BE LIGHTLY SET BY. 1. Little works for Christ, little shoe-bearings and latchet-loosings, often have more of the child's spirit in them than greater works. Outside, in the streets, a man's companion will do him a kindness, and the action performed is friendly; but for filial acts you must look inside the house. There the child does not lend money to its father, or negotiate business, yet in his little acts there is more sonship. Who is it that comes to meet father when the day is over? and what is the action which often indicates childhood's love? See the little child come tottering forward with father's slippers, and run away with his boots as he puts them off. The service is little, but it is loving and filial, and has more of filial affection in it than the servants bringing in the meal, or preparing the bed, or any other more essential service. It gives the little one great pleasure, and expresses his love. So also in little acts for Jesus. 2. In little acts for Christ it is always to be remembered that the little things are as necessary to be done as the greater acts. If Christ's feet be not washed, if His sandals be not unloosed, He may suffer and His feet may be lamed, so that a journey may be shortened, and many villages may miss the blessing of His presence. So with other minor things. We remember the old story of the losing of the battle through the missing of a single nail in a horse-shoe, and peradventure up to this moment the Church may have lost her battle for Christ, because some minor work which ought to have been done for Jesus has been neglected. Many a cart comes to grief through inattention to the linch-pin. A very small matter turns an arrow aside from the target. Human destiny often turns upon a hinge so small as to be invisible. Never say within yourself, "This is trivial." Nothing is trivial for the Lord. Never say, "But this surely might be omitted without much loss." How knowest thou? If it be thy duty, He who allotted thee thy task knew what He did. Do not thou in any measure neglect any portion of His orders, for in all His commands there is consummate wisdom, and on thy part it will be wisdom to obey them, even to the jots and tittles. 3. Little things for Christ are often the best tests of the truth of our religion. Obedience in little things has much to do with the character of a servant. In small things lie the crucibles and the touchstones. The Goldsmiths' Hall mark is a small affair, but you know true silver by it. 4. Mark also with regard to little works, that very often there is about them a degree of personal fellowship with Christ which is not seen in greater work. The smallest act of service done for Christ has an importance all its own. 5. God accepts our worship in little things. He cares no less for the turtledove offering than for the sacrifice of bullocks and rams. II. OUR OWN UNWORTHINESS. We are sure to feel this when we come practically into contact with any real Christian service. Let a man begin earnestly to work for the Lord Jesus, and he will soon find out that he is unworthy of the meanest place in the employ of one so gracious. 1. When we recollect what we used to be. 2. When we recollect what we are. 3. Have we not to confess, in looking upon what we have done for Christ, that we have far too much eye to self in our conduct? 4. Because, when we have gone to the lowest, Jesus always goes lower down than we have done. III. THIS OUGHT TO STIMULATE, NOT DISCOURAGE US. Since I do so badly when I do my best, I will always do my utmost. Since it comes to so little when the most is done, I will at least do the most. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Latchet*:—The sandals were of hard leather, and were fastened on with straps; the leather of which was doubtless then, as now, the skin of the camel or hyena. (*E. Stapfer, D.D.*) **He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.**—*The promise of a baptism of fire*:—When John the Baptist was going round Judæa, shaking the hearts of the people with a call to repent, they said, "Surely this must be the Messiah for whom we have waited so long." "No," said the strong-spoken man, "I am not; the Christ but One mightier than I cometh; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." This last expression might have conveyed some idea of material burning to any people but Jews; but in their minds it would awaken other thoughts. It would recall the scene when their father Abraham asked Him who promised that he should inherit the land, "Lord, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" The answer came thus: he was standing

under the open sky at night, watching by chosen sacrifices, when, "Behold a smoking furnace," &c. (Gen. xv. 17). It would recall the fire which Moses saw in the bush; the fire which came in the day of Israel's deliverance, as a light on their way; the fire which descended on the Tabernacle; which shone in the Shekinah; which touched the lips of Isaiah; which flamed in the visions of Ezekiel; and which was again promised to Zion, not only in her public, but in her family, shrines, when "the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon all her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." In the promise of a baptism of fire they would at once recognize the approach of new manifestations of the power and presence of God; for that was ever the purport of this appearance in "the days of the right hand of the Most High." (*W. Arthur, M.A.*) *The baptism of the Spirit*:—I. NATURE OF THE BAPTISM PROMISED. John's baptism was introductory and transitional; Christ's was to be spiritual, quickening, and searching. Apparent mixture of metaphors. "Baptism means *cleansing*, and fire means *warmth*. How can warmth cleanse? No heart is pure that is not passionate, no virtue safe that is not enthusiastic. And such an enthusiastic virtue (and much more) Christ came to introduce." The baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire comes upon all—either for sanctification or destruction, according to the way in which it is received. II. THE NEED OF SUCH A BAPTISM. 1. It was needed in the time of John. What was wanted was a moral power that should at once (1) Enlighten; (2) Convince; (3) Convert; (4) Inspire with well-founded hope. 2. Such a baptism is needed now. (1) In the Church; (2) In the world. III. THE ONLY SOURCE WHENCE SUCH A BAPTISM COULD COME. 1. From heaven. 2. Through Christ. IV. THE BAPTISM BESTOWED. On the day of Pentecost there was the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The world received a new life. There was also the baptism of fire in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of Rome. Every genuine revival a baptism of the Holy Ghost. Every time of sore national distress or humiliation a baptism of fire. V. A PERSONAL QUESTION. Have we been baptized by the Spirit? Such a baptism is—1. Needful. 2. Possible. Test: Are we bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit? (Gal. v. 22–23.) VI. A PRESSING DUTY. To pray for the baptism of the Spirit, on ourselves, on the whole Church of God, and on the world. VII. A WORD OF WARNING. There will be a baptism of fire for individuals and nations that despise the warnings of the Spirit. (*E. W. Wilson.*) *The Spirit's Baptism*:—Baptism of the Spirit. (1) Of truth, to enlighten us; (2) of power, to renew; (3) of grace, to comfort; (4) of love, to unite. (*W. H. Van Doren, D.D.*) *Inward fire*:—For us to be baptized with the Holy Ghost is to be baptized with fire. The existence within us of false tendency and proclivity makes it a flame. Once let it fall on us, and straightway there is turmoil; straightway some hot work begins. Here is a man wholly at ease and quiet in a pleasant paradise—though it be a fool's paradise of self-content and free self-gratification; but a breath from on high stirs in him at last, a breath of higher impulse and inspiration; and now a struggle sets in, in which the soul sways to and fro, and burnings of remorse and repentance are suffered, with daily self-reprovings and self-crucifixions. The man is no longer at peace with himself, but in a great heat of controversy; no longer a tranquil universe, but a troubled conjunction of antagonisms. His life becomes, as the Scripture represents it, "a battle," "a warfare." A fire of discontent is kindled within him; there rages in him the flame of a conflict between the Spirit and the flesh. When Christ began of old to baptize with the Holy Ghost, it was a baptism of fire. And even so is it still. The stirring within man of the better self, of the Spirit from above, is invariably more or less with "confused noise and garments rolled in blood." Our God, when He touches us, is a "consuming fire." Not *out of* Christ, as we have it explained sometimes, but *in* Christ; for from the God in Christ proceeds the Spirit; and where the Spirit breathes in human breasts there is burning. (*S. A. Tipple.*) *Fire purifies everything*:—Louis XIV. had granted a pardon to a nobleman who had committed some very great crime. M. Voisin, the Chancellor, ran to him in his closet, and exclaimed, "Sire, you cannot pardon a person in the situation of M——." "I have promised him," replied the King, who was ever impatient of contradiction; "go and fetch the great seal." "But, sire ——." "Pray, sir, do as I order you." The Chancellor returns with the seals; Louis applies them himself to the instrument containing the pardon, and gives them again to the Chancellor. "They are polluted now, sire," exclaims the intrepid and excellent magistrate, pushing them from him on the table; "I cannot take them again." "What an impracticable man!" cries the monarch, and throws the pardon into the fire. "I will now, sire, take them again,"

said the Chancellor; "the fire, you know, purifies everything." (*Baxendale's Anecdotes.*) *John's baptism inferior to Christ's*:—The inferiority of the baptism of John to Christian baptism is declared by the holy Baptist himself. This difference (water . . . Holy Ghost) he alleges as the proof of his own inferiority to his Lord, and as resulting from it. This difference our Lord also inculcated (Acts i. 11), when He instituted His own baptism. The baptism of John was preparatory, the Baptism of Christ perfective; the baptism of John invited to repentance, the Baptism of Christ gave grace upon repentance; the baptism of John stood on the confines of the promised land, was allowed to see it, led men to the borders of it, guided them to it, but itself brought them not into it; higher than the law, as he whose baptism it was, was greater than any born of the sons of men, yet less also than the least in the kingdom of heaven; greater than the baptisms of the law, as being nearer to the Redeemer, but yet restrained within the precursorial office, still a shadow of the good things to come, not the reality itself, though brought so near to the Sun of Righteousness as all but to be kindled with His beams, as all but to convey that which could only be conveyed by Him in whom alone, as being God as well as man, we could be reborn as sons of God; who alone shed His precious blood for the sins of the whole world, and in baptism washes and cleanses His Church with it. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*)

Ver. 17. **Whose fan is in His hand.**—*Christ's floor and fan*:—I. THE THRESHING-FLOOR MAY BE PROPERLY REGARDED AS THE CHURCH, INTO WHICH ALL PROFESSORS ARE GATHERED; or, even in a wider sense still, it may include all those who, though they have made no public profession of faith in Christ, yet secretly hold some theory of Christianity which they deem sufficient for themselves; or, even a step further, it may and does include those who respect Christ and build their own schemes of salvation. Indeed it includes every man who says, "By this creed, or by this philosophy, or by this life, I will abide the issue of eternity." Thus we see how wide this threshing-floor is, and that in fact, while it is true that Christ came not to condemn the world, but to save it, the very salvation that He brings and so freely offers to all condemns and blows away the rejected as chaff. II. THE FAN IN HIS HAND MAY SUGGEST TO US THE INSTRUMENT BY WHICH HE PURGES HIS FLOOR, SEPARATING THE CHAFF FROM THE WHEAT. Christ had no sooner come and entered upon His public ministry than He began to "purge His floor." 1. His Word acts as a fan. Many of the multitudes that followed Jesus took offence at His words, as witness John ii. 60. Many who approach the floor of Christ are swept away before they fairly come by His words; one cannot bear salvation by grace, another is blown away by the new birth, another by this and by that doctrine. 2. But there are others who are not blown away by the Word. When you hear them talk you wonder at their severe and unflinching orthodoxy. For such Christ has another fan. It is one that tests the character: the new birth. Many a chaffy professor of orthodoxy is blown away by this; for even if they do not recognize it themselves, others see how surely they are separated. 3. Still this is brought to another trial. Many say "Oh, yes; I know even the day and the hour of my regeneration." Well! if it is so, the fruits of your new birth will be seen in a new life. Salvation means separation from sin. The demand for a holy life oftentimes proves too much for the chaffy professor who can relate a glowing experience, and he is swept from the floor and heaped up with the rest of the chaff. 4. Again, the Master comes with the fan of affliction, and tries His wheat, as He did Job. There is much meaning in the words, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." III. THUS IT IS THAT THIS PURGING PROCESS IS GOING ON ALL THE TIME, AND CONSTANTLY WE FIND THE CHAFF BLOWN AWAY. How many drop out of our churches, and go we know not where! But still much chaff remains among the wheat, and doubtless will remain until He come again, and then the floor will be thoroughly purged; the hail of that day will sweep away every refuge of lies, every hypocrite's cloak will be rent off, every self-deceived one will be undeceived, and the sheep shall be separated from the goats, the chaff from the wheat. "The wheat will He gather into His garner," &c. Who shall abide the day of His coming? (*G. F. Pentecost, D.D.*) *Judaism and Christianity*:—What were the characteristics of the revolution which Christianity wrought in the world? I. IT WAS DESTRUCTIVE. It proclaimed war against the principles opposed to it. There are certain times in history when a great shock is necessary, and those are the greatest men who can see this and boldly risk the danger. There are times when it is too late to expect that the world can be saved by the instillation of good, times when the chaff is so multitudinous and so rotten

that the wheat is in a double danger, the danger of being lost, the danger of being corrupted. The only thing then is to burn up the chaff at once with a fire which will not touch the wheat. Christ saw that the time had come, that the whole world of Jews and heathens was so choked up with chaff that a slow process would be ruin. He seized the moment, He accepted its dangers, and He sent forth ideas which flew along like flame, consuming, destroying, but also assimilating. II. But if Christianity was destructive as a revolution IT WAS ALSO PRESERVATIVE. If Christ sent forth ideas which consumed the chaff, He sent them forth also to gather the wheat into the garner. No noble feeling, or true thought, either in Judaism, or heathenism, perished. They were taken up and woven into the new fabric, *e.g.*, Roman law, culture, architecture—religion. III. Its third element was A CIVILIZING POWER. Neither Greek science nor Roman culture had power to spread beyond themselves. It was of the first importance that some civilizing influence should arise which should permit of free development—which should save the world from the dilemma of being made altogether in the Roman pattern, or of remaining in barbarism. This was the work of Christianity, and it was done by its ministers, in the first place, not as apostles of culture, but as persons who spoke to the common wants of the spirit of man. The missionary spirit was the product of love to Christ. The civilization of the barbarians was the product of the missionary spirit. We also have our revolutions. That which is true about the great movements of the world is not without its personal interest to us, nor without its analogies in our life. The inner revolutions also, if it is towards God, is (1) destructive; (2) preservative; (3) civilizing, or sanctifying to the whole man. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *Christ's winnowing fan:*—Christ did not go out of His way to choose His followers; the call itself was the fan He bore in His hand. That call imposed upon men the necessity of making a great resolution, of sacrificing a good deal. On the other hand, what did it offer? What equivalent could be expected by those who made the sacrifice? The call, which had acted as a test upon some directly by requiring from them an effort which they were not prepared to make, would winnow away others more gradually as soon as it was understood to offer no prospects which could tempt a worldly mind. In this way, without excluding any, Christ suffered the unworthy to exclude themselves. He kept them aloof by offering them nothing which they could find attractive. And all those who found Christ's call attractive were such as were worthy to receive it. Such a winnowing of men as He accomplished is not unique in its kind. Every high-minded leader who gathers followers round him for any great purpose, when he calls to self-sacrifice and has no worldly rewards to offer, does something similar. And, therefore, in tracing the history of many other movements which have agitated great numbers, we are often reminded of those parables of Christ that begin, "The kingdom of heaven is like——." The quality which carries a man through the ordeal is faith. Such then, is the new test, and it will be found the only one which could answer Christ's purpose. Every other good quality which we may wish to make the test of a man implies either too little or too much. (*Ecce Homo.*) *The autumn-fire:*—A hidden fire burns perpetually upon the hearth of the world. Scientific men call it by the hard name of *eremacausis*, which means quiet, or slow burning. We see its effects in the fading of leaves, in the rusting of iron, and in the mantling of the rosy blush upon the cheek of youth. Every tree is a burning bush. In autumn this great conflagration becomes especially manifest. Every blade of grass in the fields and every leaf in the woodlands is cast into the great oven of nature; and the bright colours of their fading are literally the flames of their consuming. By this autumn-fire God every year purges the floor of nature. All effete substances that have served their purpose in the old form are burnt up, and only what has the promise of life and usefulness passes scathless through the ordeal. The straw and the chaff are consumed, and the wheat remains. As God thus purges His floor in nature, so He does in grace. We have a striking example of the effect of this autumn-fire in the removal of the effete things of the Levitical institution. The Mosaic dispensation had become dead ripe. Jesus came in the autumn of the world, when all things had grown ripe and old, and all growth had closed. He came to gather in the harvest of all previous dispensations. He came to cast fire upon the earth, to burn up the chaff of withered and effete institutions. His was a fiery baptism, which thoroughly purged His floor—which consumed the stubble and the withered foliage of the old growth that had served its purpose in the religious culture of a former age, and prepared them for being worked up into the new developments of the springtime of grace. The baptism of John was a process of

purification: but it was only a baptism of water. Water can only remove superficial impurities; it cannot take away what is ingrained; it can cleanse surface and accidental or temporary stains, but it cannot change the nature of anything. And so the baptism of John could produce ceremonial purity, but it could not cleanse the sinful heart, or transform the erring and polluted mind. The baptism of Jesus, on the other hand, was a baptism of fire, and fire penetrates every substance submitted to its action, and changes it into its own nature. The fire of life in nature burns up all its decay and prepares it for new growth. And so in the fulness of time Jesus passed like an autumn fire over all the dead products of human attainment, thoroughly purging His floor. He caused, by the same fire of grace, to grow in spring freshness and beauty that fruit which is unto holiness, and whose end is everlasting life. But not once only in the end of the world did Jesus come to purge His floor with this sacred fire. He is coming continually, and His fire of purification is unquenchable. In each of these partial and temporary consumings He anticipates and foreshadows what He will do in the great and final judgment. In each human heart this sacred autumn fire of purification is burning as a vestal flame. To each human being the apostolic precept is uttered, "Quench not the Spirit," put not out the heavenly fire. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *Christ's fan*:—A fan is a certain instrument which the husbandman uses to cleanse, or purge his corn from the chaff, evil seeds, and all filth whatsoever. Now John Baptist alludes to such an instrument as this. 1. By Christ's fan is meant His Word, His holy gospel, especially the doctrine thereof; it is by this He cleanses and purges His floor. "Now you are clean through the word I have spoken unto you." 2. The dispensation of God's providence: for this was also a fan in Christ's hand, by which He fanned away those unbelieving Jews, and so purged His floor; I mean, the time was now come that their national, legal, and external church-state must be pulled down and dissolved, the dispensation was changed, the priesthood changed, and right of Church membership changed. So that unless they receive Christ, believe in Christ, and are found gracious persons, fit wheat for Christ's spiritual garner or gospel Church (which is built up of lively stones), as chaff the gospel dispensation like a fan purges them out. 3. Christ hath also another fan in His hand, viz., the fan of Church discipline. And many persons falling into sin, are purged like chaff out of His floor thereby. (1) Sometimes some evil and corrupt persons, who get among God's people (or into His Church) and pass awhile for wheat, *i.e.*, for gracious persons, yet in time God suffers them to fall into one temptation or another, by which means they are fanned away. The holy Jesus by His wise providence, making a discovery of them, and their evil tempers and dispositions. (2) Others, whom Christ would have purged out of His Church, may be suffered to such in some evil, corrupt, and dangerous principle, or errors in fundamentals, like that of "Hymeneus and Alexander" (1 Tim. i. 20); whose errors being discovered are purged out. (3) Also many fall into notorious and scandalous sins, and are purged out by this fan. Also (4) some who are chaff, or unsound Christians, may be suffered to take up undue offences against the Church, or Churches to whom they do belong, and by giving way to temptation, they may become unreconcilable, magnifying their own wisdom and self-conceitedness, so by a secret hand of God be discovered and purged out. 4. Jesus Christ hath also another fan in His hand to purge His floor, or cleanse His wheat from the chaff, filth, and defilement of sin, namely the Holy Spirit; and by this means He cleanses and purifies, in a gracious manner, the souls of His own people: "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11). What filthy creatures were those Corinthians, before the Lord Jesus by His Spirit had purged and sanctified them. Faith, of the operation of God, is a most excellent grace; it is by faith in the blood of Christ that we come to be purged from the guilt of sin; faith applying His merits and righteousness unto the soul in justification; and such is the nature thereof, that it makes holy the hearts and lives of all such persons in whom it is by the Spirit wrought or infused in sanctification; "And hath put no difference between them and us, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts xv. 9). Yea, it cleanseth them "from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that they may perfect holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1). But let me tell you that the Spirit and grace of Christ, in this respect, is as a fan, and rather to cleanse the saints, by purging out the chaff of corruption, which naturally is in their hearts and lives, than to purge hypocrites and false professors out of the Church, and to that I principally refer here. 5. Moreover, Christ hath the fan of

persecution, or the sufferings of the cross, and all other afflictions which He brings upon His people, which He uses to purge and purify their souls, and His Churches too. And from hence afflictions are compared to a refiner's fire: "He shall sit as a refiner's fire, and purifier of silver." He, that is, the Messiah, *i.e.*, our Lord Jesus Christ; this His work, viz., to purge His people, who in this place are compared to silver and gold, that is refined; as in my text they are likened unto wheat. In this He is compared to a refiner, and hath His furnace; in the other to a husbandman, and so hath His fan. Both these texts allude to the same thing, and doing the same work, namely, to sever and separate the clean from the unclean, the gold from the dross, the chaff from the wheat. (*Benjamin Keach.*) *The fan of separation:*—Scripture abounds with comparisons drawn from the various occupations of the husbandman, *e.g.*, threshing and winnowing (Isa. xxi. 10; Jer. xv. 7). The visible Church may be considered as Christ's floor here. On this floor, or in the visible Church, there is a mixture of wheat and chaff —of really believing and holy people, with hypocrites and ungodly persons. A separation, however, will be made between them. Christ is omniscient to discriminate character; and omnipotent to put His will into execution. He distinguishes and separates characters—(1) by the doctrines of His Word; (2) by the dispensations of His providence; (3) by the convictions of His Spirit. By these means, a considerable distinction and discovery of character is made even now, and it will be completed at the Judgment. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *Only Christ can use the fan:*—How well it fits Him, and He it! Could Satan's clutches snatch the fan, what work would he make! He would winnow in a tempest, yea, in a whirlwind, and blow the best away. Had man the fan in his hand, especially in distracted times, out goes for chaff all opposite to the opinions of his party. But the fan is in so good a hand it cannot be mended. Only His hand who knows hearts is proper for that employment. (*Thomas Fuller.*) *The design of the gospel is to separate the good from the bad:*—I. 'Tis supposed in the text, that good and evil are really different in kind, absolutely and intrinsically, essentially and in the nature of things. This appears in the similitude under which good and bad men are here represented, of wheat and chaff; which are not mere external arbitrary denominations, but things in their whole nature and kind really and essentially different. The whole foundation of religion, and of God's governing the world at all, as a moral governor, relies entirely upon this principle—that every man is, as to his moral character, what his own behaviour and practice makes him, really and intrinsically, and by as certain and determinate a distinction; as wheat and chaff are, by their real and proper natures, different from each other. II. A distinct declaration, that the great design of God, as in every dispensation of religion in general, so in the gospel more particularly, is to separate the evil from the good by proper trials; and that this design will be effectually accomplished by Christ—in the present life partly, and to certain degrees; in the future life perfectly, totally, and finally. By temptations, therefore, of all kinds, is the sincerity of men's virtue distinguished in the present life. III. From hence (I say) arises one obvious and general inference, of great extent and of the highest importance—that whatever doctrine in religion has any tendency to persuade men, or make them imagine that they can be in any degree the better for their profession of the gospel of Christ, any otherwise than as their knowledge of the gospel of Christ makes them to be better and more virtuous men: that is, in the language of my text, whatever tends to persuade men that chaff may pass for wheat, while it continues to be only chaff, is a direct mockery of God, and deceit upon themselves. "Little children," says the apostle, "let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous." (*S. Clarke, D.D.*)

Vers. 18, 20. **He shut up John in prison.**—*Herod Antipas:*—The view here given of the character, conduct, and history of Herod Antipas is full of matter for awful reflection and serious admonition. 1. The mysteriousness of the ways of Providence. That a man so worthless should be permitted to cut short the labours and the life of so holy and useful a character, and that, too, in order to gratify the revenge of an abandoned adulteress, and to reward the vain exhibition of a giddy damsel, must, no doubt, at first appear strange. Yet the anger of God overtook the persecutors before they left this world; and as for the holy sufferer, his work was done; and it was easy for his Lord to recompense to him his temporal sorrows a hundredfold in the world of glory. 2. The danger of power without grace. It is common to wish for power, and to envy those in whose hands it is; but when it is

held without principle, it is fraught with peril, not only to those over whom it is exercised, but to those by whom it is possessed. They are generally borne away by the temptations which it presents to the gratification of caprice, luxury, covetousness, oppression, revenge, and every evil passion; and however prosperous their career may seem for a season, their end is generally destruction, and their memory is abhorred. 3. What is sin in the meanest is also sin in the highest. The judgment of God is impartial, and in every case He will render to each according to his deeds. 4. An awful commentary on human depravity. 5. The dreadful consequences which often result from the violation of the seventh commandment, and from intemperance. 6. We should learn to take reproof in good part. Well had it been for Herod if he had submitted to John's rebuke and acted on it. 7. Sin, when pointed out, must be renounced. This man reverenced John, and yet lived and died in sin. Let us not do as he did. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *John's rebuke of Herod*:—The life of John the Baptist divides itself into three distinct periods. Of the first, we are told that he was in the deserts until his showing unto Israel. This period lasted thirty years. The second is a shorter one. It comprises the few months of his public ministry. In the third we are to consider him as the tenant of a *compelled* solitude, in the dungeon of a capricious tyrant. A rare man, one of God's heroic ones, a true conqueror; one whose life and motives it is hard to understand without feeling warmly and enthusiastically about them. One of the very highest characters, rightly understood, of all the Bible. In the verse which is to serve us for our guidance on this subject there are two branches which will afford us fruit of contemplation. I. THE TRUTHFULNESS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. "Herod being *reproved* by John for Herodias." There are three things we remark in this truthfulness of John. 1. Its straightforwardness. 2. Its unconsciousness. 3. Its unselfishness. II. THE APPARENT FAILURE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. "Shut up John in prison." The first thought which suggests itself is that a magnificent career is cut short too soon. At the very outset of ripe and experienced manhood the whole thing ends in failure. John's day of active usefulness is over. The crowds that listened to his voice, we hear of them no more. Herod heard John gladly, did much good by reason of his influence. What was all that worth? The prophet comes to himself in a dungeon, and wakes to the conviction, that his influence had told much in the way of commanding attention, and even winning reverence, but very little in the way of gaining souls—the bitterest, the most crushing discovery in the whole circle of ministerial experience. All this was seeming failure. And this, brethren, is the picture of almost all human life. In the *isolation* of John's dying hour there appears failure again. The martyr of truth dies privately in Herod's dungeon. We have no record of his last words. There were no crowds to look on. We cannot describe how he received his sentence. Was he calm? Was he agitated? Did he bless his murderer? Did he give utterance to any deep reflections on human life? All that is shrouded in silence. He bowed his head, and the sharp stroke fell flashing down. We know that, we know no more—apparently a noble life abortive. And now—III., let us ask the question—WAS ALL THIS INDEED FAILURE? No, it was sublimest victory. John's work was no failure. He left behind him no sect to which he had given his name, but his disciples passed into the service of Christ, and were absorbed in the Christian Church. Words from John had made impressions, and men forgot in after years *where* the impressions first came from, but the day of judgment will not forget. John laid the foundations of a temple, and others built upon it. He laid it in struggle, in martyrdom. It was covered up like the rough masonry below ground, but when we look round on the vast Christian Church, we are looking at the superstructure of John's toil. There is a lesson for us all in that, if we will learn it. Work, true work, done honestly and manfully for Christ, *never* can be a failure. We are treading upon a bridge of martyrs. The suffering was theirs—the victory is ours. IV. In conclusion, we make three remarks. 1. Let young and ardent minds, under the first impressions of religion, beware how they pledge themselves by any open profession to more than they can perform. 2. We get from this subject the doctrine of a resurrection. John's life was hardness, his end was agony. Be content to feel that this world is not your home. Homeless upon earth; try more and more to make your home in heaven, above with Christ. 3. Devotedness to Christ is our only blessedness. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *John Baptist's imprisonment*:—Josephus gives some interesting particulars respecting the imprisonment and murder of the Baptist, which are not supplied in the gospel history. Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, was at that time tetrarch of

Galilee and Perœa, and had married the daughter of Aretas, an Arabian king, whose territories abutted on his own. When he was at Rome, however, he stayed at the house of his half-brother Philip, whose wife Herodias he conceived a passion for. Antipas made known his passion, and Herodias readily enough consented to leave Philip and go with him. The daughter of Aretas was divorced, and Herodias duly installed in her place. John the Baptist had the courage to denounce this infamous marriage; and by and by Herod Antipas, under pretence that he feared John's popularity with the multitude might lead to disturbances, apprehended and imprisoned him. John was sent to Machærus, or M'Khaur, on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, where Herod had both a city and fortress. The site and ruins of Machærus were identified by Canon Tristram in his visit to the Land of Moab in 1872. It was from this spot, then, that John sent two of his disciples to Christ to ask, "Art Thou He that should come?" And it was here that Salome, the daughter of Herodias, danced before Antipas, and won for her infamous mother the head of John the Baptist. (*Biblical Things Not Generally Known.*) *John like Elijah:*—As the first Elijah reproved King Ahab for the murder of Naboth and the seizure of his vineyard, so the second Elijah rebuked King Herod for his lust. (*W. Bull.*) *Reproving a king:*—Dr. Hickington, chaplain to Charles II., used to preach at the king's vices. This the king took to himself; and so, one day, he said, "Doctor, you and I ought to be better friends; give up being so sharp on me, and see if I don't mend on your hand." "Well, well," quoth the doctor, "I'll make it up with your Majesty on these terms: as you mend, I'll mend." *The king reproved:*—It is said that Henry the Great of France took much pleasure in conversing with an honest and religious man of low situation in life, who used great freedom with his Majesty. One day he said to the king, "Sire, I always take your part when I hear any man speaking evil of you; I know that you excel in justice and generosity, and that many worthy things have been done by you. But you have one vice for which God will condemn you, if you do not repent—I mean the unlawful love of women." The king, it is said, was too magnanimous to resent this reproof, but he long felt it like an arrow in his bosom; and sometimes said that the most eloquent discourses of the doctors of the Sorbonne had never made such an impression on his soul as this honest reproof from his humble friend. *Excommunicating a prince:*—William IX., Duke of Aquitaine and Earl of Poictiers, was a violent and dissolute prince, and often indulged himself in improper behaviour at the expense of religion. Though he had contracted a very suitable marriage, and one with which he was satisfied for some time, he parted from his wife without reason, to marry another who pleased him better. The Bishop of Poictiers, by name Peter, could not brook so great a scandal; and having employed all other means in vain, he thought it his duty to excommunicate the duke. As he began to pronounce the anathema, William furiously advanced, sword in hand, saying, "Thou art dead if thou proceedest." The bishop, as if afraid, required a few moments to consider what was most expedient. The duke granted it, and the bishop courageously finished the rest of the formula of excommunication. After which, extending his neck, "Now, strike," said he, "I am quite ready." The astonishment which this intrepid conduct produced in the duke disarmed his fury, and saying, ironically, "I don't like you well enough to send you to heaven," he contented himself with banishing him. *Moral courage:*—Dr. Harris, the minister of Hanwell, during the Civil Wars, frequently had military officers quartered at his house. A party of them, being unmindful of the reverence due to the holy name of God, indulged themselves in swearing. The doctor noticed this, and on the following Sunday preached from these words—"Above all things, my brethren, swear not." This so enraged the soldiers, who judged the sermon was intended for them, that they swore they would shoot him if he preached on the subject again. He was not, however, to be intimidated; and, on the following Sunday, he not only preached from the same text, but inveighed in still stronger terms against the vice of swearing. As he was preaching a soldier levelled his carabine at him; but he went on to the conclusion of his sermon, without the slightest fear or hesitation.

Ver. 21. **Jesus also being baptized.**—*Meeting of Jesus with John:*—The people, I read, "mused," wondering if John were the expected Messiah. John, too, mused, we may be sure. "Words! words! words!" at the end of each long sultry day, as he laid him down in some rocky cave what time the sun sank suddenly and the stars hung like balls of fire in the purple sky, and the cry of

the wild beast was heard as he stole forth to drink at the fords of the Jordan. "I can baptize them with water. I can tell them to repent. Poor forlorn sheep upon the mountains—where shall they find their shepherd? I am the voice crying in the wilderness—where is the Divine Prophet? I baptize with water—who will give them the fiery baptism of the soul? Who will help them to seek, and nerve them to act?" And then came One on a certain still morn, early, it may be, before the heat of the day, with only a few zealous stragglers about, waiting for baptism, and John met Him by the Jordan river. Needless to explain. Soul met soul. John knew his Master as surely as did frail Peter when he cried out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man"; or doubting Thomas when, heart-struck, he murmered, "My Lord, and my God!" "I have need," were John's first words—yea, we all have need face to face with Jesus—"I have need to be baptized of Thee." And then came the first words of Christ's ministry, they struck the keynote of the gospel, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." The heart of Christianity lies there; Christ the Companion of man, the Example of man. The Saviour, because the revelator of a Divine union between God and man, a spiritual life in man. And on the morrow the Baptist saw Him walking by the river, and pointing Him out, exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God!" &c. Message to the Ages! Call to every Pilgrim of the night! Be of good cheer, thy help is nigh. God in Christ is your Saviour, because Christ in human nature means Christ in you, the Divine power revealed in every man, as he is able to receive and use it. Let that vision remain with us. Blessed gleam of the morning light! Behold Jesus going down into the Jordan to be baptized, one with us, never more to be separated from us—Great Elder Brother, dear Friend! Close to us in the waters of purification, close to us in the burden and heat of the day, close to us in the shadow of our Gethsemane, close to us in the Calvary of our pain, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Christ and John*:—The relation between Jesus and John resembles two stars following each other at a short distance, both passing through similar circumstances. The announcement of the appearing of the one follows close upon that of the appearing of the other. It is the same with their two births. This relation repeats itself in the commencement of their respective ministries; and lastly, in the catastrophes which terminate their lives. And yet, in the whole course of the career of these two, there was but one personal meeting—at the baptism of Jesus. After this moment, when one of these stars rapidly crossed the orbit of the other, they separated, each to follow the path that was marked out for him. (*F. Godet, D.D.*) *Jesus baptized*:—I. 1. The preaching of John the Baptist was the sign that the active ministry of the Messiah was now to begin. The Incarnate Word had been hidden among men. His presence must now be manifested and His kingdom set up. 2. His first act in passing from His hidden to His active life, is to identify Himself with that sinning race in whose likeness He had come. 3. This humiliation was temporary and voluntary—"Suffer it to be so now," *i.e.*, "for the present time"; "for thus it becometh us"—not "it is necessary"—"to fulfil all righteousness." 4. Notice how He who in His boyhood "must be about His Father's business," in His manhood must "fulfil all righteousness." II. 1. There is a deep sense in which this undergoing the baptism of John was a fulfilling all righteousness. It was a revelation that man's nature needs not merely improvement but renewal. Baptism represents the death of the old man and the resurrection of the new. 2. It is that He who thus humiliated Himself for us may fulfil all righteousness in us that we pray, "By Thy baptism, . . . good Lord, deliver us." (*Canon Vernon Hutton, M.A.*) *The significance of Christ's baptism*:—One purpose of His baptism our Lord Himself mentions, in order to satisfy the scruples of the reluctant Baptist; "Suffer now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." The first and obvious sense of this is, that since the baptism of John was of God, it became Him, as being born in the people to whom God had given it, to submit Himself to it as the ordinance of God. But then, other grounds might be included in this, as involved in the character and person of Him who thus submitted Himself. The words may have been left, on purpose, undefined, in order to comprehend the more. "He added not," says St. Jerome, "the righteousness of the law, or of nature, that we might understand both." The righteousness fulfilled was in Him humility surpassing all thought, in that while God He received the baptism of the sinners whose nature He had taken; in Him it was love, which is the fulfilling of the law, in that He received that which He needed not, that they

who need it might the more gladly receive it; and so it may be also that He was baptized, not only to give an example of obedience, or healthfully to shame those who to their destruction would have disdained it, but in it to fulfil all righteousness by cleansing the sinful nature in the likeness whereof He had come, and to impart to it as a whole the righteousness which He should afterwards communicate, one by one, to those who came to the baptism which He had thus consecrated. And again, all righteousness may thereby have been fulfilled in it, in that an everlasting righteousness was thereby brought in, and the element consecrated whereby the justifying efficacy of His meritorious Cross and Passion were to be conveyed to all believers. The one sense will not exclude the other; as of all our blessed Saviour's actions and words, it is to be believed that they have a manifold depth and meaning, of which each application brings out but one portion; these gifts are a "precious stone," "whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth." (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) *Christ submitting to baptism:*—In presenting Himself for baptism, Jesus had to make, as others did (Matt. iii. 6; Mark i. 7), His confession of sins. Of what sins, if not of those of His people and of the world in general? He placed before John a striking picture of them, not with that pride and scorn with which the Jews spoke of the sins of the heathen, and the Pharisees of the sins of the publicans, but with the humble and compassionate tones of an Isaiah (chap. lxiii.), a Daniel (chap. ix.), or a Nehemiah (chap. ix.), when they confessed the miseries of their people, as if the burden were their own. He could not have gone down into the water after such an act of communion with our misery, unless resolved to give Himself up entirely to the work of putting an end to the reign of sin. He did not content Himself with making a vow. He prayed, the text tells us; He besought God for all that He needed for the accomplishment of this great task, to take away the sin of the world. He asked for wisdom, for spiritual strength, and particularly for the solution of the mystery which family records, the Scriptures, and His own holiness had created about His person. We can understand how John, after hearing Him confess and pray thus, should say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (*F. Godet, D.D.*) *Christ's baptism gives virtue to ours:*—His last action, or rather passion, was His baptizing with blood; His first was His baptization with water: both of them wash the world from their sins. Yea, this latter did not only wash the souls of men, but washeth that very water by which we are washed; from hence is that made both clean and holy, and can both cleanse and hallow us. (*Bishop Hall.*) *The scene of Christ's baptism:*—A river that had never been navigable, flowing into a sea that had never known a port? A river almost equal in length to our own Thames, but with no great city gathered upon its banks, and winding through no grand or picturesque scenery. Such was the river of God, of which the Hebrew psalmist sung; the sacred river of Old Testament story, upon which Lot, the wandering emigrant, once lifted up his eyes; which Jacob, returning from exile, crossed with his staff, and over which had passed the descendants of the patriarch's twelve sons—a mighty nation, emancipated, and brought from afar, to inherit the land. Since then, along its shores, the tide of many a momentous battle had rolled; its waters had washed the leper clean; and among its pink oleanders and yellow marigolds, prophets had lingered in meditation, or listened at midnight to messages from heaven that made their skin creep. It was while standing on its brink that Elijah, the chief of an illustrious line, had been swept up in the chariot of the whirlwind; and by the sound of its waves, David, the prince of kings, had both thundered in victorious fight, and wept in misery. But now, at last, there is a new thing—a surprising thing. At one of the upper fords of this ancient river, the Redeemer of the world appears: not working marvellous works, or drawing crowds around Him by the magic of His gracious words, but meekly applying to receive at the hands of the reforming preacher of the day, who had been pronouncing the nation morally unclean, and calling it to repentance—a most humiliating rite; a rite which was understood to express the recipient's conviction of sin, and his need of purification. (*N. R. Wood.*) *The baptism of Christ:*—There is one thing for us to remember, in conclusion: namely, that the baptism which St. John preached, but which he hesitated to administer to the spotless and holy Jesus, had its meaning most fully expressed only when it became administered to Him; for what was it intended to set forth? The nation's conscious burthen of sin! And who, of all the multitudes that flocked to be baptized, felt that burthen as Christ did? Some there were, doubtless, among the throng, who mourned truly and deeply their transgressions and the transgressions of the time; devout men, like the greyhaired Simeon, who had long

been dissatisfied with themselves and with the existing state of things; but not one, even of the most profoundly stirred and quickened of these, felt the ugliness and horror of their sins, and of Israel's corruption, as He felt it. He not only confessed and repented *with* the people, but *for* them; suffering in His righteous soul what they ought to have suffered, and did not, nay, could not; offering to God what they ought to have offered, and failed to offer, nay, were unable to offer—an adequate feeling of sin, an adequate sorrow and atonement for it. They truly confessed and repented only in Him; in Him was presented the perfect confession and repentance, of which, at their very best, they fell far short. (*Ibid.*) *John's baptism reached its fullest expression in Christ's submission to it:*—See the mother, in the midst of a group of little ones, mingling her tears with theirs, at the father's grave. They feel that they have lost something precious; but it is she alone who feels, as she stands bowed among them, how much they have lost. They all kneel together on the sod, and the eyes of all are alike swimming with grief: but what is their impression of the bereavement they have sustained, in comparison with hers? What is their anguish for themselves, compared with her anguish for the fatherless ones? Weep as the children may, the full bitterness of their loss is borne, not by the children, but by the mother who weeps with them. So when Christ joined with the multitude in their baptism of contrition, to none of them were their sins half so burdensome and oppressive as they were to Him; none of them endured, under their deepest convictions, the half of that which He endured for them. The meaning of St. John's baptism reached its fullest expression in *His* submission to it, upon whom there was laid the iniquity of all; who, being at once the sinless one and the loving one, saw sins and sinners with God's eyes, and felt, in reference to them, with God's heart. (*Ibid.*) *The baptism of Jesus:*—The cry of John the Baptist was: Repent; and his baptism was that of repentance. What, then, was the meaning of our Lord's baptism? It could not signify that He repented. It was a symbolical act followed by that of which it was the symbol—the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Learn—I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM. That to which our Lord submitted cannot be considered indifferent by any of His disciples. II. ORDINANCES OF GOD'S APPOINTING, REVERENTLY AND INTELLIGENTLY SUBMITTED TO, ARE OFTEN THE CHANNELS OF BLESSING. "Being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened," &c. Rites unintelligently or superstitiously performed often hide the truth and lead into dangerous error; but when understood as symbolizing or declaring a living truth they are often important aids in teaching truth, and in stimulating to the acquiring of spiritual blessing. (*D. Longwill.*) *The baptism of Christ:*—It was—I. THE PROCLAMATION OF HIS HUMAN RELATIONSHIP TO MAN AND TO GOD. II. By this act He bound together in submission to His Father's WILL THE OLD AND NEW DISPENSATIONS, AND RECOGNIZED HIMSELF AS THE CENTRAL POINT OF HISTORY. III. IT CONSECRATED HIM KING OF THE THEOCRATIC KINGDOM, AND PROCLAIMED TO ALL MEN THAT HIS ORGANIZATION OF THAT KINGDOM HAD BEGUN. IV. HOW DOES CHRIST'S BAPTISM SPEAK TO US? We have rites of consecration, but these are not the parallels in our lives to this moment in the life of Jesus. There are hours of consecration in our lives of which none know but God and ourselves. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *The inauguration:*—Christ's example shows that obedience to the Divine Spirit of the time ever brings fuller disclosures and attestations of the Divine blessing. The heavens are opened to every obedient man, and the Spirit of God descends on the last as on the first. John's baptism had gone no further than repentance; but Christ, standing with the dove resting upon Him, showed that there was a baptism unto holiness. By John's baptism men were put into a right relation to the past: but as they followed Christ they were put into a right relation to the future; from the negative condition of repentance they passed to the affirmative attitude of holiness. This is the culmination of human history. We have come through man, servant, prophet, messenger, up to *Son*. The very nomenclature is pregnant with sublime moral significance. We pass from "made," to "begotten," from "upright" to "beloved," from the "us" of the creating Trinity to the "my" of the benignant Father, from the "very good" of the first Adam to the "well-pleased" of the second. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The inauguration of Christ:*—The baptism of Christ was, first of all, the public announcement and inauguration of Christ to His work. John the Baptist had come "to bear witness of the Light," and now his work was nearly done. One last act remained to be done, the solemn setting apart of the Christ to His redeeming work. The baptism closed our Lord's private life and began His public ministry. He who had gone down into the water known to men as "the Son of Mary," came up thence declared to be "the Son of God."

The baptism, with the opened heavens, and the Spirit descending like a dove, and abiding on Jesus, and the witness borne by the voice of God Himself, was the sublime inauguration of the Saviour of the world to His great mission. From that hour John's prophetic work was done. It expired, to use Davison's beautiful image, as Old Testament prophecy had expired, with "the gospel upon its tongue." (*G. S. Barrett, B.A.*) *The people were baptized*:—There are many of every sort of people—as we may read—saved in the gospel, but of Pharisees we find none but one, namely, Nicodemus; no sort of men are further from the kingdom of God than proud justiciars. For as a vessel full of one liquor is not capable of another, so the soul which is filled with a vain conceit of her own righteousness, is not capable of the grace of Christ. Grace entereth not into such a soul, because it is full, neither doth grace find any place to dwell therein. There is no place for grace to enter in, where merit hath possession: what thou attributest to merits, is wanting to grace. I will none of that merit which excludes grace. (*Bishop Cowper.*) *The Baptism of Christ*:—1. He would hereby honour the ministry of man, in that He submits Himself unto it, and seeketh to it with much pains and labour. 2. As He was baptized, not by an angel or prince, but by a homely man that lived like an hermit in an austere manner of life for diet and clothing; so must not we account baser of the sacraments for the meanness of the man, if a lawful minister, seeing Christ refused not the sacrament at John's hands; neither must we from the meanest minister, seeing the least in the kingdom of God is greater than John. 3. Christ was content to wash in a common water, in the flood Jordan; He feared no infection from it, though Naaman the leper were washed there; though the Pharisees and hypocrites washed there: yet He takes no exception, contracts no uncleanness; so the wickedness of another communicant doth not prejudice him that is rightly prepared, though he communicate with him in the sacrament, yet not in his sin. Although He undertook not the sacrament as a sacrament of regeneration, or as a symbol of new life, yet He did—(1) As it was a sacrament of Christian society (1 Cor. xii. 13), for as by it the faithful are set into His body, so would He by it be set into the body of the saints, and take on Him the common mark and privilege of His members; even as we see kings and princes, by whom all hold their freedom, will sometimes be made free, and so receive a public testimony of association from their people; and lo, here our Prince in the colours of a common soldier. (2) As baptism is a symbol of affliction, so He would undertake it; so (Mark x. 38) Christ calls His cross and death by the name of baptism. (3) Christ would be baptized, not to wash Himself, but us; not to put off sin as we, but to put on our sin, that so our sin in Him might be washed away, that He might sanctify this sacrament. Again, this is for our instruction, to note the excellency and dignity of this sacrament, and what esteem we ought to have it in; the Lord comes to the servant a tedious journey to seek it; yet many of us, when it is brought to us, turn our backs upon it. What price set they upon it who flee forth of the Church when this sacrament is to be administered? Shall Christ that needed it not, come to it, and shall we that need it run from it? This I will add to what I have elsewhere largely delivered, that whosoever do not present themselves with due reverence and meditation, but run out carelessly and profanely when baptism is administered, they be far from Christ's example, and little comfort can they have of their baptism, but may well fear, lest those mysteries and benefits offered and sealed to a member of the congregation belong not to them; for if they did they would own them, and not run contemptuously from them; as good never baptized, as never meditate on it. But, were thyself to take no good by the sacrament, in calling to mind thine own covenant made in baptism, with the fruit in thyself, yet good order requires thy presence. 1. Because the ordinance belongs not only to the infants' parents and sureties, but to the whole congregation, as the entering of a free man into a corporation is by the whole. 2. God looks it should be graced, and not scorned by turning thy back upon it. Were it not a most irreverent contempt to run out from the Word? and is it not also to run from the seal? especially the blessed Trinity being met to such a purpose, to seal such benefits to a member of that congregation? 3. Thy presence is requisite to help the infant by prayer, to join with the congregation in prayer and in praise for the ingraffing of a member into Christ's body. But what law or ordinance was there for baptism, to which Christ must be subjected? It was decreed by the whole Trinity. 1. That Christ should be initiated by this ceremony, wherein also He must manifest Himself the Author of all purity and cleanness. 2. John had preached it, and showed the necessity of it by Divine

authority. 3. He would not only subject Himself to His Father's ordination, but also for our sakes, the virtue of whose baptism depends upon His, as also give us help by His example, and therefore would Himself do that which He commanded others to do. 4. Christ as Mediator, and in our stead, was to be made our righteousness (1 Cor. i. 30); three ways: (1) In being made an offering for us, by which He was to abolish our sin and curse, and by His most perfect obedience satisfy the whole law for us. (2) By applying that righteousness purchased by His blood, which else we could never have had benefit by. (3) By appointing and sanctifying means and instruments for that application, called the ministry of the Spirit, whereof one branch is the laver of water in the Word. And thus, as in our stead, He stood in the general, bound by the will and ordinance of God, in Himself to sanctify baptism for us. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *The baptism of Christ*:—I. St. Matthew gives us THE REASON WHY THIS BAPTISM TOOK PLACE. "Suffer it to be so now," He said to John, "for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He was anxious to obey every Divine law, to conform to every Divine institution, to work out and complete a righteousness extensive as the Divine commands. And this answer exhibits the Saviour to us in two characters, each illustrating the propriety of His baptism. 1. He stands here as the Representative of His people. Now they are an unclean people. We argue from His appearing in their form, that He was the Representative of His sinful people; and then we argue from His being their Representative, that it became Him to be baptized. 2. He was also their Head; standing in the relation to them of a Leader or Chief. The Captain of our salvation puts on Himself the garb in which He arrays His soldiers. The Commander submits first to the oath that He enjoins on His followers. II. Let us look now at HIS BAPTISM ITSELF. 1. The first circumstance that strikes us in it, is His simple obedience to the Divine law. It bids you obey the Divine law, not scan it. It bids you do the will of God, not criticise it. The will of God must be done, and every command of God obeyed. 2. And notice the humility manifested here, the amazing condescension of Christ. He was now coming forth among men to make known His high pretensions. And how does He appear? Working miracles and doing wonders? Bursting forth like the sun in his brightness, "glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength"? No; "He cometh from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him." We can hardly form one faint idea of the extent of this degradation. Not indeed a sinner, but appearing as one, assuming a character He had bidden angels and archangels loathe. The manger, the stable, the carpenter's hut and the carpenter's toil—they were all as nothing; no word of His had poured contempt on any one of them: but to be the thing He had branded; to come forth into sight as though He were the character He abhorred; verily, brethren, this was the infinite abasement of an infinite God. 3. And mark also the devotion the Saviour manifested on this occasion. III. We come now to our third subject—THE WONDERFUL EVENT WHICH ATTENDED THE SCENE OF HUMILIATION WE HAVE BEEN CONTEMPLATING. "It came to pass," says the evangelist, "that Jesus also being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." 1. Observe here the greatness of Christ; His dignity. And it is a remarkable fact that throughout His life, whenever we see Him signally abased, we generally see His Father putting on Him signal honour. He is born in a manger, but a star in the heavens proclaims His advent, and over Him are ringing the songs of angels. 2. We see here also the Messiahship of Christ. First comes the voice of prophecy, marking out the future Messiah as one on whom the Spirit of the Lord was to descend and rest; one who, at His entrance on His office, was to be anointed with the spirit, just as earthly monarchs and priests were anointed with the holy oil. Besides, in all this there was a special reference to John himself. 3. But this event establishes another point. While it proves the reality of our Lord's Messiahship, it declares His qualifications for the discharge of this office. The Spirit descended on Him in Jordan to qualify Him for what we may call the moral part of His great work; to enable Him to reach the mind of man, and influence and rule it. He Himself tells us so. Led by the Spirit He had received, He first goes into the wilderness to have His own faith and obedience put to the test; and when He had been taught there by His own experience, what this Spirit could do for the suffering and tempted, He begins His public ministry at Nazareth by declaring the qualifications bestowed on Him for the discharge of His office. "The Spirit of the Lord," He says, "is upon Me, because He hath

anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised." And this Spirit abode on Him. St. Matthew informs us that the dove "rested," as well as descended on Him; and St. Luke speaks of Him as going up from the river into the wilderness, "full of the Holy Ghost." His blessed gifts are made over to Him, placed at His disposal; and for this purpose, that He may communicate them to whomsoever He will. 4. We are taught also here the high estimation in which the anointed Saviour is held by His Father; the complacency and delight with which He regards Him. From a review of this history we learn, first, the importance which God attaches to His own ordinances, the honour He puts on them. We see here also the insufficiency of ordinances. Baptism, though administered by a prophet and received by Christ, was powerless; or if it had any efficacy, that efficacy was limited; it evidently left much undone. It could not touch the soul of Jesus; it did not qualify Him for His mediatorial work. To accomplish these ends, the Holy Ghost comes down from on high, rests and abides on Him. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) **And praying.** *Christ praying*:—To most, if not to all of us, the fact that our Saviour prayed is in itself a wonder. This does not, however, seem to have struck the gospel-writers. Prayers of Christ precious, as showing how completely human He became, living like ourselves, a life of dependence, of communion, and of submission. I. THE OCCASION ON WHICH THE SAVIOUR IS HERE SAID TO HAVE PRAYED. As undergone by Christ, the rite of baptism would seem to have had a twofold meaning. 1. It was intended to be symbolic of His entire oneness with the race He came to save. 2. It was intended to be emblematic of His complete consecration to the salvation of the race to which He came. II. THE REASONS WHICH LED HIM TO PRAY. 1. We are not to suppose that Christ's praying on this occasion (*a*) arose from any doubt in His mind as to the propriety of the work on which He was entering; (*b*) sprang out of any misgiving as to His own appointment to it; (*c*) was due to any uncertainty as to His personal fitness for it. No, but—2. Bearing in mind the meaning of the baptism with which His prayer was associated, we may imagine that His prayer on this occasion would spring—(*a*) from His pure passion for the glorification of the Father; (*b*) from His intense longing for the salvation of the world; (*c*) from His vivid anticipation of the difficulties which lay before Him; (*d*) from His keen prevision of the sorrows that awaited Him. III. THE RESPONSE WHICH CAME TO OUR SAVIOUR'S PRAYER. 1. There was a special communication of the Divine Spirit. 2. There was a special assurance of the Divine complacency. Practical lesson: PRAYER A PREPARATION FOR SERVICE. (*B. Wilkinson, F.G.S.*) For the first, He was now baptized, and in regard of that He prayed, and teacheth us—1. In that He first was baptized, and then prayed, that we must be first cleansed and sanctified, and then pray: men must lift pure hands with pure hearts in every place (Isa. 1. 16). In receiving the sacrament a holy heart knows that he hath to do with God, and lifteth itself above sensible elements; it labours to approve itself to God, and looks not at men, but at God and His covenant, and renews itself with faith, repentance, and invocation. 2. In that Christ goeth to God for a blessing upon the sacrament received, we learn that all the grace, holiness, and efficacy of any sacrament is to be obtained, continued and increased by the means of prayer. For the second, Christ prayed in respect of that He was to do. 1. He was now to be declared that great Prophet of His Church (Deut. xviii. 18). And the whole ministry of the New Testament was now to be delivered and consecrated in Him, and therefore undertaking this great work, He goeth to His Father for blessing and success in it. 2. He was now in a solemn manner by sundry testimonies from heaven to be set apart for the work of redemption, and the salvation of man being lost: a ministry which men and angels were all too weak for; and no marvel, if He pray to His Father for sufficient strength and grace to undergo the same. 3. He knew that the heavens were to be opened, and therefore He will be in prayer, to show the power of prayer, that it pierceth the heavens, and entereth the presence of God, and prevaileth for a blessing. 4. The Spirit was to descend upon Him, and therefore He would be in prayer to teach us that the prayers of God's children are of that force that they bring down the Holy Ghost with all graces upon earth. 5. That faithful prayer doth cause God to give some evident testimony upon those with whom He is well pleased. 6. That whatever we take in hand, we must reverently undertake it with prayer, but especially two things above others. (1) The part of God's holy worship. (2) The duties of our callings. 2. Such is our weakness, as when we do anything the best we can, we

had need to pray to do it better, and for pardon that we have done it no better: which if it be true in external things and duties, wherein we are better acquainted; much more in spiritual, wherein our ability is much less. 3. We never receive so much favour from God, but we still stand in need to crave more; nor never so little, but that we have much to be thankful for. This doctrine serves to reprove such as content themselves with the work of God's worship; that come to the word and sacraments, but beg not a blessing of God beforehand; whereas Christ Himself contented not Himself with the outward means, but prayed for a blessing. And this is the very cause why men find so little taste, strength, and power in these ordinances, because God's blessing goes not with the means; and therefore it is sundered from His own ordinances, because it is not asked. Is it any marvel, that when men come carelessly, carnally, and profanely, without reverence and religion to the exercises of religion, that they go away as brutishly as they come; and the longer they thus profane God's holy things, the more senseless and incurable they grow by them, more hardened and hopeless. What good hath many a man gotten by customable coming to the word and sacraments many years together? for their knowledge, babes may pose them in principles; for their conscience, we may as soon prevail with children of three years old, to sit reverently and attentively, as some of three or fourscore, who in the morning are so sleepy, as it were fitter they were at home in their beds, or take order to bring their beds with them: and for their profitableness in their places, or reformation of anything in public, or in their private families, or their own person, God nor man can see no such thing. Now would I ask these men as old as they be, how often they can remember they have humbled themselves before God, that He would bless the Word unto them, and them to understand it, and make conscience of it, to reform their ways, to comfort their consciences? Alas, dead men! this is a strange motion to them; and now we conclude,no blessing asked, none obtained, but a curse accompanied them further to harden them: whereas humble and feeling prayer would have opened the heavens and fetched down the Spirit to have accompanied the ordinance; and so some testimony would have been seen, that God had been better pleased with them and their work. 3. It is a notable fence against sin: for, as the more sin prevails, the less can a man pray; for the more he prays, the less is he overtaken with sin. When the true man is assaulted, if he cry for help, the thief runs away; and so doth sin (a thief which ever doggeth and besetteth us to rob us and steal away grace) if we can cry mightily to God. 4. Acquaint thyself with God; for the times come when nothing will stand by thee but His help; and therefore use prayer, to be familiarly acquainted with Him: know Him now in the time of thy prayer, that He may know thee in the day of thy distress. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *Conduct without prayer*:—He knoweth truly how to live well, who knoweth how to pray well. But best actions without prayer, which obtain grace to them, are like bodies without spirits: yea, as the body without breathing cannot live to do any work competent to a natural life: so the soul, without prayer, can do no work that truly is spiritual. (*Bishop Cowper.*) **The heaven was opened.**—Now it followeth, that we speak of those three admirable events, which followed the prayer of Christ. 1. The sensible opening of the heavens. 2. The visible descending of the Holy Ghost. 3. The audible voice of God the Father, witnessing to many both eye and ear-witnesses the solemn instalment and induction of Christ into His office and work of mediation and ministry. Wherein we must know, that as there never was in all the world so high and excellent an office as Christ's was (for the greatest of kings, and the high priest, who yet were with great state and observation anointed and deputed to their offices, were but shadows of this), even so God would have Christ entered into it with such magnificence and glory as never man was, nor creature is capable of. At the coronation of a prince, with what glory, pomp, and sumptuousness, even to admiration, is he brought forth with his nobles and subjects! But all this is but earthly glory, from earthly men to an earthly king. But now at the coronation of the Prince of Peace, God sets Himself from heaven to honour it; and for this purpose He doth more familiarly, and yet more gloriously reveal Himself unto all mankind, than He had ever before done from the creation of the world; and never was any ceremony in all the world so honoured as this baptism of Christ was. The ancient sacrifices of God's institution were honoured by manifest signs of His gracious presence, as by the fire which came from heaven continually to consume them: the Ark was honoured with special signs of His glorious presence, sitting between the cherubims, answering by oracle and voice unto cases propounded: the Temple itself at Jerusalem, at Solomon's prayer and dedication, was filled with the

glory of God, manifested in that cloud that filled the House of the Lord (1 Kings viii. 10), and this cloud still watched over the Tabernacle (Exodus xl. 34). But these were all but shadows to this, wherein the Lord did not cloud and vail His presence, or reveal His presence in some sign; but the Divine Majesty manifested itself distinctly, as we may say, in person, yea, in the distinction of all the three Persons, the Father testifying His delight in His dear Son, the Son standing in Jordan, and receiving His Father's testimony; and the Holy Ghost descending in the visible shape of a dove. It seemeth therefore to be true, that the heaven was sensibly divided and rent in twain, even as the earth was when Korah and his company were swallowed up. Now the reasons why the heavens were opened were sundry. 1. To manifest the truth and certainty of the other signs which followed, that seeing the heavens opened, they might not conceive that either the dove or the voice came from any other place. 2. To show that howsoever Christ stood there as a weak man, and in similitude of sinful flesh, yet He was the Lord from heaven heavenly, of whom was verified (John iii. 31) "He that is come from heaven is above all." 3. That as His person, so likewise His doctrine was Divine and heavenly (ver. 34). He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: and this was the special work of His doctoral office, to reveal the will of His Father. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared Him" (John i. 18). The power also and grace, whereby He wrought miracles, was not from Beelzebub, but from heaven. 4. To show that His office, into which He was now entered, was and is to open heaven again for us, who by sin had shut it against ourselves; He hath made our way unto the throne of grace. And thus this second Adam standeth in opposition with the first; He shut us out of paradise, a token that we were shut out of heaven: but this lets us into the paradise of God again. The heavens are opened by His passion, not by His baptism (Heb. x. 19). They are opened by His death as by a common cause, which must be specially and singularly applied, and that is by baptism: therefore it is said, "We are baptised into His death" (Rom. vi. 3, 4), that is, to have benefit by His death. Note hence, that Christ by fulfilling all righteousness, hath set heaven open unto us, and consequently the justification of a sinner is not only by the obedience of His passion, but also by His active obedience in fulfilling the law. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*)

Like a dove upon Him.—*The dove-like descent of the Spirit on Christ*:—Hence then, we may observe, that the religion of Jesus consists in a dove-like temper. This observation we will endeavour to illustrate. That we may proceed with safety, we will give no indulgence to imagination, but will strictly follow the allusions which we find in Scripture. 1. The dove is an emblem of purity. In the law of Moses this was reckoned a clean bird, and it was selected for an offering in the ceremony of purification. His precepts, His doctrines, His example teach us to be holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners. 2. Christ directs His disciples to be harmless as doves. The same meek and inoffensive spirit which was in Him must also be in us. 3. The dove, in the book of Canticles, is an emblem of cheerfulness and joy. "Lo, the winter is past and gone, the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come; the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." The dove-like temper of the gospel is sweet, serene, and pleasant. 4. Doves are distinguished by their mutual fidelity and love. To this social and affectionate property there are frequent allusions in Scripture. The bridegroom, in the book of Canticles, calls the bride by this, among other endearing names: "O my dove, let me see thy face, and hear thy voice, for thy voice is sweet, and thy face is comely." People in affliction are described as "mourning like doves" who have lost their companions. Mutual love is the temper of the gospel. 5. The dove is a defenceless bird. Hence she is described as "dwelling in the clefts of the rocks, and in the secret places of the stairs"; and as "flying to her windows" in times of danger. In this view she is an emblem of Christian faith and humility. True believers, sensible of their weakness, and of the dangers which attend them, trust not in themselves, but in the power and grace of their Saviour. 6. The excellent glory, which descended like a dove and rested on Jesus, might be intended to represent the beauties of His Church, adorned and dignified by the graces of His Spirit. The dove, which is a beautiful bird, is a natural emblem of the virtuous and good works which distinguish the Christian character. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet ye shall be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." 7. The dove, which is a fruitful bird, is, by Isaiah, made an emblem of the increase of the Church in her happy and prosperous periods. Then converts shall fly unto God's altar, "as doves to their windows." (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*)

The Spirit likened to a dove:—1. Our subject suggests to us that the Spirit of Christ usually comes to the soul in a mild and gentle manner. His operations are as His fruits, dove-like, sweet, and kind. The benevolent and friendly nature of the dispensation which Christ was about to introduce, was intimated in the manner of the Spirit's descent. The law, which was a ministration of death and condemnation, was delivered to the people with circumstances of terror and amazement. As His manner of teaching, so the doctrines which He taught were kind and gracious. 2. Our subject farther teaches us, that they only are led by the Spirit of God, who are of a dove-like temper. It is absurd then to impute to an uncommon influence of the Spirit any error of conduct, excess of passion, extravagance of zeal, or bitterness of censure; for the Spirit comes like the dove. 3. Our subject reminds us of our obligation to adorn with good works our Christian character, and to recommend to the choice of others the religion which we profess. We should resemble the dove, whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. The beauty of religion much depends on our maintaining the more amiable and engaging virtues; such as charity, peaceableness, humility, and meekness. 4. Our subject teaches us our obligation to labour for the increase of Christ's Church—not only to enter into it ourselves, but also to encourage others to come and join themselves to it. (*Ibid.*) *In semblance of a dove*:—I. The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape LIKE A DOVE. 1. The dove was a bird of purity. You know it was used by the poor in sacrifices, and therefore was considered clean. 2. The Holy Spirit is like a dove because it is a harmless creature. The dove never hurts the tiniest bird with which it comes into contact. The Holy Spirit is not compared to the eagle, nor to the hawk, nor to the vulture—birds of prey; but to the dove—a harmless creature. 3. The Holy Ghost is like a dove because the dove is such a gentle creature. His influences are most benign. 4. The Holy Spirit is like the dove, too, because the dove has very keen eyesight. In the Book of Canticles we read, "Thou hast dove's eyes." Doves are remarkable for great keenness of vision. The Holy Spirit "searcheth all things." 5. The Holy Spirit is like the dove because the dove was an emblem of peace and of spring. The dove brought the olive leaf back in her mouth, indicating to Noah that the waters had subsided, and that the deluge of wrath would soon be gone. The dove, too, is mentioned in the Canticles as being a herald of spring: "The time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land." And whenever the Holy Spirit comes to a man's heart, there is a sign that that heart will be at peace with God. 6. The Holy Ghost, lastly, is like a dove because the dove was given to mourning. "I did mourn as a dove," says Isaiah. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities"—takes our infirmities upon Himself. His work is of a loving nature. II. Secondly, we have THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST. Much is taught in the connection of the text concerning the mission of Christ, while our text itself gives the chief elements of His character. First of all, we have something concerning His mission. It was divinely ordained, for God sent the Holy Spirit to testify to the world that He was commissioned by Him to undertake man's redemption. We have here the purpose of His mission. Heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended. It was the purpose of Christ to open heaven. The first Adam closed heaven against us. But the character of Christ was developed by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Jesus did not achieve His work by virtue of the divinity that was in Him only, but by virtue of the Spirit's graces upon Him. The dove was harmless. Christ said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." The dove was given to mourning. Jesus was "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." The dove was innocent. Jesus Christ was purity personified. "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" said He. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and in an emphatic sense, the dove was emblematic of Him. III. IT IS SO ALSO WITH A CHRISTIAN. There is no true character which is not built up by the influence of the Holy Spirit. The dove is defenceless. It has nothing to protect it except the rocks, and when pursued its only refuge is to fly thither. The Christian has nothing to protect himself against the wiles of the devil and the allurements of the world, except "the Rock of Ages." The dove keeps to its own company. It is delighted when it is with its fellows. So the Christian feels at home when he gets among characters of like nature. The dove mourns in the absence of its mate; and the character which the Holy Spirit gives to us is such as to make us mourn when our Lord Jesus is away, so that we have no rest if we be separated from Him. You cannot have this character except by the personal application of the Holy Spirit

to your heart. (*T. Gamble.*) *The Holy Spirit descending like a dove*:—I. First, as the brooding of the Spirit of God upon the face of the deep produced order and life in the beginning, so does He impart new life to the soul, and open the eyes of the understanding, that we may behold the wonders of God's law. II. Again: In the fact that the Holy Ghost descended upon the Lord Jesus in the form of a dove, we are reminded that quietness is often essential to many of the operations of grace. "A very restless person will never be very godly, and a very godly one will never be very restless. 'Be still, and know that I am God.'" III. Another point suggested by the text is, that as the dove is an appropriate emblem of love, so the soul which is influenced by the blessed Spirit will abound in love to God, and love to His people. The steeple of an old village church was to be pulled down, in order to prepare the way for some modern improvements, and a long rope was fastened near the top of it, that it might be kept from crushing the building in its fall. Soon everything was ready, and the master-carpenter shouted aloud to the men to pull. As the old steeple began to tremble, and sway from side to side, a beautiful white dove was observed to fly round and round, not daring to go in at its accustomed place, and yet evidently unwilling to depart. She seemed to be aware that a great calamity was about to happen, while a hundred voices shouted, "See that dove!" "Poor thing!" the head carpenter observed, "she must have young ones up in the steeple." Again the workmen gave a vigorous tug at the rope, and the old steeple reeled and tottered. The distress of the poor dove became so great, that every one felt sorry for her, and not a word was spoken. The bird hovered a moment on her wings, and at the instant that the creaking timbers began to topple over, she darted into the steeple and was hid from view. When the rubbish was cleared away, she was found lying between her two young ones—all three crushed to death! The devoted bird was willing to die with and for them, but she could not save them. There was a spectacle of devoted love—love even unto death! IV. I remark, in the fourth place, that the descent of the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, should remind us that gentleness is a distinguishing mark of Christian character in which most of us have very much to learn. Audubon, the ornithologist, relates this incident in his autobiography: "A man, who was once a pirate, assured me that several times, while at certain wells dug in the burning, shelly sands, the soft and melancholy notes of the doves awoke in his heart feelings which had long slumbered, melting his heart to repentance. So deeply was he moved by them—the only soothing sounds he had ever heard during his life of horrors—that through them he was induced to escape from his vessel, abandon his turbulent companions, and return to a family deploring his absence, and he now lives in peace in the midst of his friends." "I beseech you by the gentleness of Christ," was St. Paul's exhortation to the Christians of Corinth (2 Cor. x. 1); and, "Gentleness," he assures the Galatians (v. 22), is one of the prominent fruits of the Spirit. Henry Martyn, whose temper was naturally not the gentlest, wrote in his journal, "I walked into the village where the boat stopped for the night, and found the worshippers of Cali by the sound of their drums and cymbals. I did not speak to them on account of their being Bangalees; but being invited to walk in by the Brahmins, I went within the railings, and asked a few questions about the idol. The Brahmin, who spoke bad Hindostanee, disputed with great heat, and his tongue ran faster than I could follow, and the people shouted applause. I continued to ask my questions, without making any remarks upon the answers. . . . The man grew quite mild, and said it was "good words," and asked me seriously, at last, was idol-worship true or false? I felt it a matter of thankfulness that I could make known the truth of God, though but a stammerer; and this I also learned, that the power of gentleness is irresistible. Once more: the dove has always been the type of purity, and the Holy Spirit is the purifier of the heart. When He gains an entrance into it, sin and uncleanness must depart. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *The Holy Spirit like a dove*:—So here the Spirit would appear in the shape of a dove, to note—1. What kind of Spirit Christ's was. 2. What kind of gifts they were which were collated and bestowed upon Him: and—3. What was the fruit of those gifts. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *The Divine Spirit in the ministry*:—Note, as Christ was set apart both by the ministry of man, and by the Spirit, by the visible appearance of which God would manifest that He was fitted thereunto; so in all those that are set apart by man to the ministry, must be an apparent descending of the Spirit. though not in visible shape, yet in evident gifts and graces. (*Ibid.*) *The Spirit of God like unto Himself*:—The Spirit of God is everywhere like to Himself, both in the head and members, as the same juice is in the root and branches, in the tree

and fruits. Look what were the fruits of the Spirit in Christ, the same also are in the members (Gal. v. 23). (*Ibid.*) *The Divine Trinity engaged in redemption*:—Here, then, for our further comfort, we have to consider how the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity concur together to work the great work of our redemption; for here is the Father designing, ordaining, proclaiming; here is the Son accepting, and the Holy Ghost anointing. (*Bishop Cowper.*) *The Holy Ghost as dove*:—The Spirit that descended on Jesus like a dove was to become, and became, when breathed abroad by Him, a consuming fire (ver. 16). Why, in its descent upon Him, was it the gentle brooding of a dove? May we not answer with a word, that in Him it encountered no sinful force, no mass of evil passion or unworthy disposition, to contend with; but only beautiful germs to develope, only rights, sympathies, and aspirations to encourage, and direct, and intensify? Yes; it found in Him only that which was accordant and congenial; the Holy Child to be expanded into the Holy Man; nothing contrary to it, the withstanding of which would have struck out a flame; nothing to burn against and burn up, in order to His perfecting; no false will or affections to be resisted by and to resist, until it was conquered. The Spirit from above just lighted and spread its wings, and sat brooding upon the Divine simplicity of the whole-hearted Nazarene. True, He had to endure in Himself a fiery baptism, as the result of the descent upon Him from above. But it was through His contact, thus Spirit-charged, with the bad element surrounding Him, that He suffered what He suffered; not through the contact of the Spirit with any bad element in Him. It met with nothing in Him to cause a painful flame; touching which it had to become a purging devouring fire. It abode upon Him like a dove brooding over its nest. (*S. A. Tipple.*) **Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased.**—*The voice from heaven*:—I. THE PERSON WHOSE VOICE IT WAS IS GOD THE FATHER; for He saith, "Thou art My beloved Son." Every testimony receives validity and authority from the testator, therefore this must needs be sound and good. God had given testimony to Christ by many famous men, even all the prophets, and now lately by John Baptist, who was greater than a prophet, that Christ was greater than he; yea, more, had given testimony of Him by a multitude of heavenly angels (Luke i. 30 and 13). But, not content with all this, He gives from heaven His own testimony of Him. 1. To strike us with reverence in receiving this testimony, which hath this privilege above other parts of Scripture, that it was uttered by God's own mouth, not by men or angels. 2. To confirm us in the truth of the testimony, proceeding from Him who is *prima veritas*, truth itself (not only true) in His essence, and much more in His words and works, who cannot be deceived, nor deceive us. 3. To show the necessity of believing this testimony, being the first and only principle in Christian religion, without which foundation laid can be no religion nor salvation, as we see in the Jews and Turks. That we might more firmly believe in the Son of God for life, God's own mouth testifieth so honourably of Him. 4. That such a glorious commendation of this testimony might stir up our best attention and affections in the unfolding of it, we have here the word of a King which was never stained, and that not uttered by any herald or a lord chancellor, but from His own mouth, which carrieth more weight with it. If God speak, woe to him that hears not. II. THE PLACE WHENCE—FROM HEAVEN. For these reasons: 1. For more authority to the person of Christ, whom God from heaven doth honour. And if God thus honour Him, how ought we to honour Him? (2 Pet. i. 17.) He received of God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, "This is My beloved Son"; which was verified not only in the time of His Transfiguration, but here also. 2. Because the testimony contains the sum of the whole gospel, to declare that the doctrine of the gospel, which Christ delivered to the world, was from heaven, because God from heaven so testifieth it to be. Wherein it differs from the doctrine of the Law, which, although God renewed from heaven in the tables of stone, yet was it written in the heart of man by nature. So was not the gospel. But as after the Fall it was immediately delivered by God to Adam in the promise, so here by the same voice from heaven confirmed to be Divine and heavenly. 3. In respect of us, that we should more carefully attend to the testimony itself proceeding from the excellent glory, and that from the mouth of the God of glory sitting in His chair of estate, seeing the word of a King in that place is more regarded. The contempt of the Law given upon Mount Sinai, in the hand of angels, was required at their hands; how shall they then escape that despise Him that speaketh from heaven? (Heb. ii. 2, 3.) The Law being transgressed, the gospel from heaven moderateth and pardoneth a man; but the gospel from heaven being despised, what can plead for him? 4. To show the extent of the gospel, that

it is to be preached, and binds to the faith of it all the people under heaven. And herein it was not to be inferior to the Law, which God would have acknowledged His own by uttering it from heaven, and that not before He had sent Moses down, lest it should have been thought to be His, although it was so loud and piercing, as it could not possibly be but Divine, not human. III. THE MANNER OF THE TESTIMONY—BY AN AUDIBLE AND SENSIBLE VOICE. How the Father uttereth this voice it is needless to inquire, seeing we know that He who made the tongue can either speak without a tongue or by secret inspiration and revelation, as to Isaiah (2 Kings xx. 4), or frame a tongue and organs of voice at His pleasure, to utter and make known His will and good pleasure to His creatures, or speak by creatures, as angels in human shape, or other creatures—sensible, as Balaam's ass; or insensible, as the bush of fire. It is much more material to inquire into the end and use of it, which was to make the Son of God known unto the world, that the faith of men might be fixed on Him for salvation. 1. Hence, note, in that the Lord from heaven teacheth by voice His wonderful care, that will not suffer us to want any means to help us in the knowledge of the means of salvation. He had taught them and us before, by the sense of sight, seeing the heavens opened, and the Spirit visibly descending; and now He teacheth the ear by a voice, for He knows our dulness, security, slowness of heart to believe, and applies Himself every way to help us. He setteth out His glory by His works and creatures; He addeth His Word confirmed by many powerful miracles; to his audible Word He hath annexed His visible Word, the sacraments; He hath set up a constant ministry in His Church, and every way fitted it to the edification of His people, as so He may now say, What could I do more for thee, O Israel? Is God thus careful of our profiting every way? Then how damnable and excuseless shall the carelessness of the most be in the matter of their salvation! In which regard it had been good for many a man that God had never made His will known to him, that he never had heard the Word, or received the sacraments, for all but tend to his deeper condemnation, because of his neglect and formal use. When our Saviour said of Judas, "It had been good for him he had never been born," did not He in effect say the same, It had been good for him he had never been a disciple of Christ, never had heard Christ, or preached Christ, because the more excellent means he had, the greater was his sin and judgment? Again, hereby God cleareth His righteous judgment in the just damnation of the wicked and unbelievers. O Israel, thy destruction is of thyself. Say not, What can I remedy it, if God will not save me? Nay, what can God do more than He hath done? He hath given thee strong and excellent means, and preached the gospel from heaven by His own mouth, and sent it to all nations under heaven in their own language in an audible and intelligible voice. If thou wilt now wilfully refuse the means, thy blood be upon thy own head; that which will die, let it die. Thou art in the sea of thy sins, ready to be drowned, good help is offered, but thou refusest it, and must die in thy sin. Thy case is that of Jerusalem: "How often would I have gathered thee, and thou wouldst not!" 2. Note, that it is God's pleasure that we should be taught the matter of salvation by voice, and attend to that. Here was a visible opening of the heavens, a glorious presence of the Spirit in the shape of a dove resting on Christ; but when the Lord will have Christ published and proclaimed the Messiah, this must be done by voice. "Thou heardest a voice, but sawest no image, therefore take heed to thyself, and corrupt not thyself by any image" (Deut. iv. 12, 14). 1. Herein His mercy hath appointed a familiar and fit instruction, meet for our weakness, not coming to His Church in His own Majesty. 2. Herein He advanced our nature, teaching us great mysteries by such as ourselves, sanctifying the tongues of men, and not angels. 3. Herein He magnifies His power, who by so weak means worketh salvation. Earthen vessels are used, that the power may be seen to be of God (2 Cor. iv. 7). The voice of men by God's power conquers the world. 4. Hereby He tries our obedience, whether we will yield to a weak voice, whereas He might force us by power. Reasons: If God look on us in ourselves, and in the common mass, we are so covered over with sin, as He must needs pronounce of us as once He did of mankind, "It repenteth Me that I have made man." He must needs bring the curse of the Law on our necks. But looking on us through Christ, He changeth His voice, that as when we behold a thing through a red, or green, or coloured glass, everything looks as the colour of the glass. So God beholding us through Christ, we receive the dye and tincture of His blood and obedience, and so are justified and accounted innocent and pure. And thus, as it is said of the Church (Ezek. xvi. 14), we recover our former beauty, which is made perfect through His beauty. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) **Thirty years of age.**—*Years of silence and*

preparation:—In the humble home at Nazareth Jesus spent thirty years; most marvellous in this, that nothing marvellous is recorded of them. Goodness was so perfect, duty so evenly performed, the lustre of holiness so mild and steady, that brothers and sisters and rude Nazarene neighbours came to take all this as a matter of course, saw in it nothing superhuman; and when at last the disguise was laid aside, and the prophet-king of Israel, the promised Messiah, stood unveiled, they could still only stupidly ask, "Is not this Jesus, the carpenter?" Imagination may strive to withdraw the veil which inspiration has left drawn over these thirty years—the precious episode of the visit to Jerusalem. For some minds the attempt will have an irresistible fascination, to others it will be utterly distasteful; and neither may judge the other. But faith and love should never lose sight of the lessons which speak in the very silence of those years. Ten times as much of life as our Lord Jesus occupied in public ministry He spent in private life, preaching no sermon, initiating no public movement, working no miracle. The Divine ideal of perfect holiness in childhood, youth, and manhood was realized during thirty years in a life of obscure privacy, mechanical toil, and home affection and duty. (*E. R. Conder, D.D.*) Thirty years of preparation, and about three years of work! how contrary to our notions of a wise economy of the working powers of a human life! There may possibly be a reference to the age at which, according to the law, the Levites were to enter upon their ministrations; but when we consider the short time during which the actual ministry lasted, we may certainly draw the conclusion that in order to do a great work in a short time long and patient preparation is necessary; and that they who would be useful ministers of the Church of Christ should grudge no time and no amount of labour to fit themselves for the great work committed to them. (*Bishop Harvey Goodwin.*) The author of the "New Phœdo" considers thirty years of age the epoch for the departure of youth; by which he does not, of course, intend to signify incipient decay, our frames being as young as they were five years before, while the mind has been ripening; by youth he means the growing and progressive season, the departure of it being visible only inasmuch as we have become, as it were, fixed and stationary. The qualities that peculiarly belong to youth, its quick, throbbing fancies, its exuberance of energy and feeling, cease, by his reckoning, to be our distinctions at thirty. Maynard, in the play, speaks of himself as almost thirty—"warning thirty." "Warning thirty?" repeats his companion, half-mockingly, half-inquiringly. The other explains, "'Tis half the journey, Tom. Depend on't, after thirty, 'tis time to count the milestones." At the age of thirty, according to Lord Lytton, the characters of most men pass through a revolution; we have reduced to the sober test of reality the visions of youth; we no longer chase frivolities or hope for chimeras; and we may now come with better success than Rasselas to the Choice of Life. Ever to be noted is the pregnant fact that when our Lord began to be about thirty years of age, then began His work in earnest, His ministry in public. To many that age is the signal for selfish indulgence in regrets. To Him it struck the hour of hard work—work that should cease but in death. (*F. Jacox.*) *The achievements of youth*:—Almost everything that is great has been done by youth. For life in general there is but one decree. Youth is a blunder; manhood a struggle; old age a regret. Do not suppose that I hold that youth is genius; all that is genius, when young, is Divine. Why, the greatest captains of ancient and modern times both conquered Italy at five-and-twenty! Youth, extreme youth, overthrew the Persian empire. Don John of Austria won Lepanto at twenty-five—the greatest battle of modern times. Had it not been for the jealousy of Philip, the next year he would have been Emperor of Mauritania. Gaston de Foix was only twenty-two when he stood a victor on the plain of Ravenna. Every one remembers Condé and Rocroy at the same age. Gustavus Adolphus died at thirty-eight. Look at his captains: that wonderful Duke of Weimar, only thirty-six when he died; Banier himself, after all his miracles, died at forty-five. Cortes was little more than thirty when he gazed upon the golden cupolas of Mexico. When Maurice of Saxony died at thirty-two all Europe acknowledged the loss of the greatest captain and the profoundest statesman of the age. Then there is Nelson, Clive—but these are warriors, and perhaps you may think there are greater things than war. I do not; I worship the Lord of hosts. But take the most illustrious achievements of civil prudence. Innocent III., the greatest of the Popes, was the despot of Christendom at thirty-seven. John de Medici was a cardinal at fifteen, and, Guicciardini tells us, baffled with his statecraft Ferdinand of Arragon himself; he was Pope as Leo X. at thirty-seven. Luther robbed even him of his richest province at thirty-five. Take Ignatius

Loyola and John Wesley; they worked with young brains. Ignatius was only thirty when he made his pilgrimage and wrote the "Spiritual Exercises." Pascal wrote a great work at sixteen, the greatest of Frenchmen, and died at thirty-seven. Ah, that fatal thirty-seven! Was it experience that guided the pencil of Raphael when he painted the palaces of Rome? He died at thirty-seven. Richelieu was Secretary of State at thirty-one. Then there were Bolingbroke and Pitt, both Ministers before other men leave cricket. Grotius was in great practice at seventeen, and Attorney-General at twenty-four. And Acquaviva—Acquaviva was general of the Jesuits, ruled every Cabinet in Europe, and colonized America before he was thirty-seven. What a career! It is needless to multiply instances. The history of heroes is the history of youth. (*Lord Beaconsfield.*)

Vers. 23, 38. **Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.**—*Genealogies:*—As we glance through the list of names given in these chapters (Matt. i. and Luke iii.), we see that few could claim a higher descent than could the carpenter Joseph and the gentle woman to whom he was espoused. They were both lineally descended from the ancient kings of the proud tribe of Judah—from Solomon and David—and, going further back, from the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—from Shem, from Seth, from Adam. Their family tree in one place covered a space of 2,000 years; in another of more than 4,000 years. Yet they were poor, humble, unrecognized. In the lapse of time there are fluctuations and undulations. While some families have their flows, others have their ebbs. While some rise in wealth and consequent honour, others glide into poverty and insignificance. The old stock wears out, the new tree takes its place. The world, constituted as it is, recognizes lineage only when it is accompanied by wealth. By itself it is a voice from the past, and nothing more. Could we read the history of men's lives, and trace their descent, we should have plenty of examples of this. We see it in our own times. Examples crowd on us without difficulty. It is not long since the gallant son of an emperor died as a simple soldier in the British uniform. It is asserted that the last scion of a kingly race, sprung from the warrior Cid, eked out a miserable existence—neglected, half-starved—in London, where he died a few years ago. The descendants of one of the most remarkable men of the sixteenth century are a poor peasant family in a Midland County to-day—decent folk enough, but certainly "unhonoured and unsung." Such was the case with the gentle Mary of Nazareth. Some people boast of their patrician birth. The boasting, at least, confers no merit upon them. If Mary wished, she might with reason have boasted too. Though a peasant, she sprang from kings; though poor, her ancestors were wealthy; though humble, one of her forefathers was the wisest of men. But her claim to honour came not from the past—it was reflected back from the future. It was not due to the long line of an unbroken pedigree, but from Him she was to bear. . . . With the exception of the two of our Lord, there are no genealogies in the New Testament, whereas there are several in the Old Testament. Moreover, St. Paul, himself descended from Jacob's youngest son, wrote this counsel to Timothy, "Neither give heed to endless genealogies," and to Titus, "Avoid foolish question and genealogies . . . for they are unprofitable and vain." Is there no significance in this? Family records were scrupulously guarded under Judaism; they were ignored, even condemned, under Christianity. Why so? Because Christianity's principle sweeps away all walls of partition, blots out all records, tears down all red lines which may separate man from man. Christianity teaches that each and every man, whoever he be, is a brother; and each and every woman a sister. Christianity abrogates and denounces whatever tends to pride, or assumption, or superciliousness, or self-conceit. It teaches that in God's sight, prince and beggar, patrician and peasant, are on the same level. It teaches gentleness and thoughtfulness and politeness towards all. It teaches that the highest claim to descent is to be a true child of God; the highest society, true membership with Christ; the highest inheritance, that which we have if we only keep it—the kingdom of heaven. (*C. E. Drought, M.A.*) *The genealogies in Matthew and Luke:*—In the first Gospel the genealogy of Jesus is placed at the very beginning of the narrative. This is easily explained. From the point of view indicated by theocratic forms, scriptural antecedents, and, if we may so express it, Jewish etiquette, the Messiah was to be a descendant of David and Abraham (Matt. i. 1.) This relationship was the *sine quâ non* of His civil status. It is not so easy to understand why Luke thought he must give the genealogy of Jesus, and why he places it just here, between the baptism and the

temptation. Perhaps, if we bear in mind the obscurity in which, to the Greeks, the origin of mankind was hidden, and the absurd fables current among them about *autochthonic* nations, we shall see how interesting any document would be to them, which, following the track of actual names, went back to the first father of the race. Luke's intention would thus be very nearly the same as Paul's, when he said at Athens (Acts xvii. 26), "God hath made of one blood the whole human race." But from a strictly religious point of view, this genealogy possessed still greater importance. In carrying it back not only, as Matthew does, as far as Abraham, but even to Adam, Luke lays the foundation of that universality of redemption which is to be one of the characteristic features of the picture he is about to draw. In this way he places in close and indissoluble connection the imperfect image created in Adam which reappears in every man, and his perfect image realized in Christ which is to be reproduced in all men. But why does Luke place this document *here?* Because now Jesus enters personally on the scene to commence His proper work. With the baptism, the obscurity in which He has lived until now passes away; He now appears detached from the circle of persons who have hitherto surrounded Him and acted as His patrons—viz., His parents and the forerunner. He henceforth becomes the *He* (ver. 23), the principal personage of the narrative. This is the moment which very properly appears to the author most suitable for giving His genealogy. The genealogy of Moses, in the Exodus, is placed in the same way, not at the opening of his biography, but at the moment when he appears on the stage of history, when he presents himself before Pharaoh. In crossing the threshold of this new era, the sacred historian casts a general glance over the period which thus reaches its close, and sums it up in this document, which might be called the mortuary register of the earlier humanity. There is, further, a difference of form between the two genealogies. Matthew comes down, while Luke ascends the stream of generations. Perhaps this difference of method depends on the difference of religious position between the Jews and the Greeks. The Jew, finding the basis of his thought in a revelation, proceeds synthetically from cause to effect; the Greek, possessing nothing beyond the fact, analyzes it, that he may proceed from effect to cause. But this difference depends more probably still on another circumstance. Every official genealogical register must present the descending form; for individuals are only inscribed in it as they are born. The ascending form of genealogy can only be that of a private instrument, drawn up from the public document with a view to the particular individual whose name serves as the starting-point of the whole list. It follows that in Matthew we have the exact copy of the official register; while Luke gives us a document extracted from the public records, and compiled with a view to the person with whom the genealogy commences. (*F. Godet, D.D.*) *The double genealogies of Christ as the Son of David:*—The general facts are these—1. The genealogy in St. Matthew descends from Abraham to Jesus, in accordance with his object in writing mainly for the Jews; whereas St. Luke's ascends from Jesus to Adam, and to God, in accordance with his object in writing for the world in general. 2. The generations are introduced in St. Matthew by the word "begat"; in St. Luke by the genitive with the ellipse of "son." 3. Between David and Zerubbabel St. Matthew gives only fifteen names, but St. Luke twenty-one; and they are all different except that of Shealtiel (Salathiel). 4. Between Zerubbabel and Joseph St. Matthew gives only nine generations, but St. Luke seventeen; and all the names are different. The difficulty as to the number of the generations is not serious. It is a matter of daily experience that the number of generations in one line often increases far more rapidly than that in another. Moreover the discrepancies in these two lists may all be accounted for by noticing that Matthew adopts the common Jewish plan of an arbitrary numerical division into tesseradecads. When this system was adopted, whole generations were freely omitted, for the sake of preserving the symmetry, provided that the *fact* of the succession remained undoubted (cf. Ezra vii. 1–5 with 1 Chron. vi. 3–15). The difficulty as to the dissimilarity of names will of course only affect the two steps of the genealogies at which they begin to diverge, before they again coalesce in the names of Shealtiel and of Joseph. A single adoption, and a single levirate marriage, account for the apparent discrepancies. St. Matthew gives the legal descent through a line of kings descended from Solomon—the *jus successionis;* St. Luke the natural descent—the *jus sanguinis.* St. Matthew's is a royal, St. Luke's a natural pedigree. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Our Lord's descent:*—1. These verses completely establish that essential point in the evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus, viz., His descent

from David, Judah, and Abraham. Let this confirm our faith in His Divine mission; let us give our careful attention and firm adherence to the exact and particular doctrines which He teaches; and show a ready obedience to the precepts which He enjoins. 2. Among the ancestors of our Lord, there are found persons of various descriptions and characters. (1) Though His line frequently runs through the elder brother, it also often runs through a younger brother of the family, which shows that God follows His own sovereign will, and in the course of His providence often makes the first last and the last first, putting down the great and exalting those of low degree. (2) In this genealogy, too, are found some who were originally Gentiles, and strangers to the covenants of promise, as Rahab and Ruth; a circumstance which gave early proof that in Jesus Christ there was to be neither Greek nor Jew, and that the blessings of His salvation were to be proposed to every nation under heaven. (3) In His pedigree there are found some individuals who were of abandoned character, and yet He was not thereby disgraced. (4) It shows that grace does not run through families, but is the special gift of God to individuals. (5) Our Lord's condescension in accepting such a descent. 3. A glance at these generations which have passed away, naturally suggests a variety of reflections—plaintive, humble, and instructive. (1) All must die. (2) The sad consequences of sin. (3) The vanity of the world. Some few of these obtained celebrity, but how little it avails them now! Of how many the memory, and even the name, has utterly perished! How miserable are they who have no name but that which is written in the earth, and no portion but for this life! Let us seek to gain a more substantial honour. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *A binding corner-stone*:—See what a binding corner-stone the Lord Jesus is, knitting together not man to man only, Gentiles with Jews, but man with God also; and that not by a personal union only, which He hath perfected in Himself, but by a spiritual union also by which He unites all the members of His mystical body in a blessed peace and fellowship with God; and this hath He now begun, and shall perfect in the end. (*Bishop Cowper.*) *From Christ according to the Spirit*:—Then our instruction is, that though neither our names nor our fathers, be in the catalogue of Christ's progenitors; yet if we be in the roll of His children and brethren, we shall have comfort sufficient: though He be not come of us according to the flesh, if we be come from Him, according to the Spirit, as His sons and daughters by regeneration, we shall be blessed in Him, even as they were. (*Ibid.*) *The genealogical table*:—A mournful yet instructive study. Take a few of the reflections arising from such a study. 1. Every individual life belongs to the great whole—the solemn ever-rolling stream of human being. No man liveth unto himself; we transmit power, weakness, even depravity. 2. Though the individual dies, the race moves on; no one being is essential to the continuance of the world; the greatest dies, yet the world hardly misses the service of his industrious hand; the most eloquent ceases his speech, yet the roar in the living air is none the less. 3. How few men of surpassing reputation there have ever been, considering the innumerable hosts of human generations; how few of these names do we know anything about—only one here and there, as David, Abraham, Enoch; but of the mass, who knows anything? 4. Yet there may be great usefulness where there is no renown; our names will perish when we cease to live, yet within the limits of our day, how much good may we do! 5. Even though a great succession may seem to be interrupted, or to have died out, it may revive again. In this table we come to very low points, yet how the life rises, how the glory returns! "Cast down, but not destroyed." It is often thus with the spiritual seed of the Messiah, yet there has ever been a seed to serve Him, and a remnant to uphold the honour of His name. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The genealogy of Christ*:—We learn: I. GOD'S FIDELITY TO HIS PROMISE. II. THE ETERNAL NEVER WORKS HURRIEDLY. III. THE HUMAN RACE IS VERY CLOSELY INTERRELATED. IV. THE UNIVERSALITY OF DEATH. V. THE ALL-INCLUSIVENESS OF CHRIST'S MISSION. VI. CHRIST THE APEX OF THIS PYRAMID AND THE CROWN AND GLORY OF THE RACE. (*J. Ossian Davies.*) *Sacred and secular Jewish names*:—The following possible explanation of the divergencies between the two genealogies of our Lord is deserving of consideration. The Jews, like other nations, gave more than one name to each individual. The life of a Jew was essentially twofold: he was a member of a civil state, and he was at the same time a member of a theocracy; his life was both political and religious. This distinction seems to have been preserved in the giving of names. Traces of the double name are found throughout the course of Scripture history. It is highly probable that the sacred name imposed at birth would be entered in a different list from the common name by which a man was

known in his civil relationships. The conclusion to which we are brought is that we have before us two such registers, one drawn from public, and the other from private sources; or, as is conjectured above, one from a civil genealogy, the other from writings laid up in the Temple. In support of this view, we may note that in the genealogy in Luke—the evangelist whose opening chapters show a close familiarity with the interior of the Temple, and what took place there—the names appear to have a sacred character. Even an English reader may remark at a glance the different aspect of the two lists. That in Luke contains, with striking frequency, the familiar names of distinguished patriarchs, prophets, and priests, and thus confirms the impression that his genealogy, rather than that of a Matthew, is of a purely religious character. This hypothesis receives a remarkable confirmation by a comparison of the dates of the two lists with the dates of the first building, the destruction, and the second building of the Temple. What, then, is the relation between the two genealogies before Solomon's time, when there was no Temple? and during the lives of Salathiel and Zorobabel, who flourished at the time of the Babylonish captivity, when again, for seventy years, there was no Temple? It is precisely at these periods that only one list exists. The divergence in Luke's genealogy from that of Matthew is exactly coincident with the periods during which the Temple was standing. What explanation of this striking fact can be more natural than that at the point where the two genealogies unite there was but one list to refer to, and that the absence of entries in the sacred register required it to be supplemented by a reference to the state chronicles? (*Biblical things not generally known.*) Luke carefully guards against the notion of this being the real descent, by introducing the words "as was supposed"; it was the legal descent, Joseph being legally the Lord's father; and from Joseph as the supposed father, St. Luke carries up the pedigree to the commencement of all things, that is, the creation of the man. Matthew brings down the descent from Abraham; Luke carries it up to Adam and so to God; and as the descent from Abraham was the most important for those children of Abraham who were looking for the fulfilment of the promises made to their forefathers, so the possibility of ascending to Adam and to God was the most important fact for the race of mankind at large, who had all fallen in Adam, and all looked for redemption through Christ. Dry as the long list of names in Luke may seem, it may truly be said that no passage of Scripture contains more of the essence of the gospel; Jesus is the true second Adam, because He is linked with the first; Jesus and Adam are the two heads of the human race, and they are both of them sons of God, Adam by creation, Jesus Christ by eternal generation; and so it may be said that the genealogical chain, by which Luke linked the first Adam and the second Adam together, is that chain upon which the redemption of mankind and all human hopes depend. (*Bishop Harvey Goodwin.*) *Why have we Joseph's genealogy, not Mary's?*—If Joseph's genealogy, as presented in either of the Gospels, determines our Lord's birth as the lineal descendant of David, and the legal heir to the throne, his genealogy is all-important; while that of Mary, as it would not, according to Hebrew law, have decided the question of descent, would have been invalid as a document. "*Familia matris non familia*" is an ancient maxim among the Jews, and it has Divine sanction (see Numb. i. 26). The law that descent is reckoned on the father's side only, "*Filius sequitur patrem*"—a law recognized by all civilized nations—is not contradicted by the one or two exceptional instances in which the name of a woman's ancestor was adopted by her husband and transmitted to her offspring (Numb. xxxii. 41; comp. 1 Chron. ii. 21–23; Ezra ii. 61). A descent of this kind was not counted a true descent in any case in which the genealogy was sought (see Ezra ii. 62), and gave no legal claim. Joseph is distinctly honoured, in the Scripture, with the recognition of his *legal* parentage of Jesus. (*G. W. Butler, D.D.*) *The Divine root of the human pedigree*:—The pedigree of our Lord, as given by the Evangelist of the Gentiles, ends with a wonderful leap, a leap from earth to heaven. Noah was the son of Lamech, &c., &c. Enos was the son of Seth, Seth was the son of Adam, Adam was the son of—God. There is no bolder word in Scripture, none that strikes us with a deeper surprise and awe. Most of us have, doubtless, wondered at times why, when space was so valuable, Luke should have inserted in his Gospel "this barren list of names." But the pedigree is of immense value, if for nothing else, yet for this, that it connects the second Adam with the first, that it places a son of God at either end of the list; that it makes us out to be the children of God both by nature and by grace, by birth and by second birth. For, of course, if Adam was the son of God, we are all the children of God, since we are all children of Adam; there is a Divine

element in our nature as well as a human element, a capacity for life and holiness as well as a liability to sin and death. In the light of our text—I. EVEN THE MOST PERPLEXING FACTS OF OUR INWARD EXPERIENCE GROW A LITTLE MORE CLEAR TO US. Double or divided nature of which every man is conscious. In worst of men something good; something bad even in best. That which is good we derive from God, our true Father, the sole source and fountain of good; that which is evil in us we inherit not from Adam only, but from all our earthly parents. II. SO DOES THE DEEPEST TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BECOME CLEARER TO US: the philosophy which underlies the teaching of our Lord and of the two greatest of His interpreters, St. Paul and St. John. That teaching may be briefly summed up thus: Christ is the Eternal Word by whom all things were created, by whom therefore Adam, or man, was created. Hence Christ is, as St. Paul calls Him, the Head of every man. It is in Him that we live and move and have our being. Then, too, we begin to understand all those difficult and perplexing passages in the writings of St. Paul, which declare our essential oneness with Christ. The second Adam was before the first Adam, and called Him into being. Hence *He* could die for all. Hence He lives for all, and we all live in and by Him. In short, all the sentences of the New Testament, which have sounded most mystical and obscure, and which may have seemed too good to be literally true, become true and plain to us so soon as we understand that Adam was the son of God, and that Adam was made by Him without whom nothing was made, and apart from whom nothing can subsist. III. THE PRACTICAL OUTCOME OF THESE THOUGHTS IS MOST WELCOME AND MOST PRECIOUS to as many of us as love life and desire to see good. For, however weak and sinful we may be, we have not, as we sometimes fear, to persuade God to enter into a fatherly relation to us, and to begin to love us. He *is* our Father; He *does* love us. Nor have we, as we still oftener fear, to ask Him to redeem us from the yoke and tyranny of our sins. He *has* redeemed both us and all men, once for all, by the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Maker, our Head, and therefore our Representative. We have only to recognize existing and accomplished facts. We have only to believe that He is our Father, has been our Father ever since we had any being, and can never cease to be our Father. We have only to accept the salvation He has wrought, and which stands waiting for us and urging itself upon us. There need be, there can be, no change in God, or in the Son of God; it is *we* in whom a change is wanted. They are, they have done, they are doing, all that we can desire them to be or do. And so soon as we know that, and believe it, we shall become all that we desire to be, and receive all that we long to enjoy. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The two genealogies of Jesus Christ:*—And yet in these very genealogies of Jesus Christ there are hinted profound truths well worthy of our most serious consideration. Let us rapidly glance at some of them. I. And, first, THE FACT THAT THERE IS ANY GENEALOGY AT ALL IS SIGNIFICANT. For it is conceivable that the Son of God might have descended into the world an unborn Gabriel, or a full-grown, unmothered Adam. The Word has indeed become flesh, bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh. II. Again, observe THE PEDIGREE ITSELF. How many and striking its vicissitudes! How thrilling some of its names! How momentous some of the events it recalls! Glance for a moment at some of these peculiarities. For example, how profound the obscurity and hinted shame which rested over Bethlehem's manger, as suggested by the evangelist's comment: "Being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph." How homely His descent, as indicated by the fact that eighteen of His immediate ancestors are unknown except by name! How illustrious His descent, as indicated in such names as Zerubbabel, Josiah, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, Solomon, David, Boaz, Jacob, Abraham, Noah, Enoch, Seth, Adam! What dark scenes in Hebrew history are recalled by such names as Jehoiachin, Amon, Manasseh, Ahaz, Jehoram, Rehoboam, Bathsheba, Tamar! How thrilling the vicissitudes of David's line, as vibrating in the stories of Rehoboam, Joash, Esther, the Maccabees, the Virgin Mary! Verily, the genealogy of Jesus Christ is a book of startling providences. And it is a significant fact that, since the birth of the Divine Man, the Davidic pedigree has been hopelessly lost, so that none but Jesus of Bethlehem can claim from the Hebrew genealogical tables to be David's promised Son, and so David's Lord, even Jehovah's very Christ. But Jesus Christ was not only the Son of David and the Son of Abraham, He was also the Son of Adam—even that seed of the woman who, as had been foretold by the gates of Eden, would crush the serpent's head. Thus, the genealogy of Jesus Christ includes all extremes and all vicissitudes, so that he is in very truth the Son of man. And not only is He the Son of man, He is also the Son of God. III. Lastly,

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE OLDEST IN THE WORLD. Men think it a great thing to have an ancient lineage. But here is a lineage which is older than that of William of Normandy, or Romulus, or Priam, or Nimrod, or Adam. Verily, His goings forth have been from of old—from the days of eternity. Verily, here is the Ancient of Days. Ah! the true heraldry is the device of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; the true shield is the crimson escutcheon of the Cross. Dost thou, O friend, belong to the lineage of Jesus Christ? If so, thy name has already been entered in the heavenly register, even the Lamb's roll of life. Live, then, worthily of thy sonship. (*G. D. Boardman.*) *Thoughts:*—I. THERE IS MUCH IN GOOD LINEAGE. Virtues and vices are borne along on the current of blood from generation to generation. Such is the energy of moral qualities that they may be modified but rarely eradicated by transmission from parent to child. As surely as the blood of the racer tells in its fleet-footed offspring, the virtues and vices of David are felt down the line of his generation. II. SIN HAS TAINTED THE BLOOD OF THE BEST RACES OF MEN, and frequently makes itself manifest. All have sinned and have come short of the glory of God. There is no exception. III. GOD'S GRACE CAN FLOW THROUGH VERY CROOKED HUMAN CHANNELS. Men who are spiritually dwarfed and ill-shaped can be made, in God's providence, to help along very strait principles and policies. God makes manifest His great wisdom and power by the vastness of the results He works out through weak human instrumentalities. What could be meaner and more cruel than the murder of Uriah by David? Yet God made the wife of this murdered man the channel through which the blood of Abraham flowed into the veins of Joseph. IV. NO MAN STANDS ALONE. We are all parts of a vast organism. Asa and Jothan and Solomon each saw the life which he lived from his birth to his grave; but this was not the most important part of his life. That which followed his death, that which he lived in his descendants, was more far-reaching and wrought still greater results. (*American Homiletic Review.*)

CHAPTER IV.

VER. 1. **And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.**—*The temptation of Christ:*—How is the temptation of Christ to be understood? As a history, a parable, a myth, or an undesigned, though not accidental, compound of the three? Let us begin—1. With what ought to be a self-evident proposition. As Jesus was a moral being, whose nature had to develop under the limitations necessary to humanity, we must conceive Him as a subject of moral probation. He could not escape exposure to its perils. But again—2. We must here conceive the temptable as the tempted. In the person and life of Jesus there was no seeming, A real humanity cannot escape with a fictitious temptation. Though our narrative may be termed by pre-eminence The Temptation, it was not simply then, but always, that Jesus was tempted. The devil left Him only "for a season"; returned personified now as Peter, now as Judas, and again as the Jews; met Him amid the solitude and agony of Gethsemane, in the clamour, mockery, and desertion of the cross. But—3. How could Jesus be "tempted in all things, like as we are, yet without sin"? Is not temptation evil? We must consider—I. HOW THE TEMPTED COULD BE THE SINLESS CHRIST. And—1. What is temptation? Seduction to evil. It stands distinguished from trial thus: trial tests, seeks to discover the man's moral qualities or character; temptation persuades to evil, deludes, that it may ruin. God tries; Satan tempts. 2. The forms of temptation. It may be either sensuous, imaginative, or rational; perhaps it is never so powerful as when its forces approach the mind together, and at once through the senses, the imagination, and the reason. 3. The sources of temptation. It may proceed either (1) from self, or (2) from without self. If the first, the nature must be bad, but not of necessity radically bad; if the second it may be innocent, but must be capable of sinning. If now the temptation comes from without, three things are possible—it may speak either—1. To still fluid evil desires and make them crystallize into evil action; or—2. To innocence, and change it into guilt; or—3. Supply it with the opportunity of rising into holiness. Illustrations: of (1) Macbeth; of (2) Hubert, in "King John"; of (3)

Isabella, in "Measure for Measure," the play that so well expounds its own saying—

> "'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
> Another thing to fall."

Isabella, lovely as pure, most womanly in her unconscious strength, stainless among the stained, loving her doomed brother too well to sin for him, triumphs over his tears and entreaties, the wiles and threats of the Deputy, and emerges from her great temptation chaster, more beautiful in the blossom of her perfect womanhood, than she had been before. 4. We are now in a position to consider the temptation of Christ in relation to His sinlessness. Temptation implies (1) ability in the tempted to sin or not sin. Jesus had, to speak with the schoolmen, the *posse non peccare*, not the *non posse peccare*. Had He possessed the latter, He had been intemptable. (2) Evil must be presented to the tempted in a manner disguised, plausible, attractive. (3) The tempter must be sinful, the tempted may be innocent. Our discussion conducts, then, to but one conclusion; temptation was not only possible to the sinlessness, but necessary to the holiness, of Christ. II. THE PLACE WHERE THE TEMPTATION HAPPENED IS NOT WITHOUT SIGNIFICANCE. Into which wilderness Jesus was led we do not know—whether the wild and lonely solitudes watched by the mountains where Moses and Elijah struggled in prayer and conquered in faith, or the steep rock by the side of the Jordan overlooking the Dead Sea, which later tradition has made the arena of this fell conflict. Enough, the place was a desert, waste, barren, shelterless, overhead the hot sun, underfoot the burning sand or blistering rock. No outbranching trees made a cool restful shade; no spring upbursting with a song of gladness came to relieve the thirst; no flowers bloomed, pleasing the eye with colour, and the nostril with fragrance; all was drear desert. Two things may be here noted—the desolation, and the solitude. The desolation must have deepened the shadows on His spirit, increased the burden that made Him almost faint at the opening of His way. And He was in solitude—alone there, without the comfort of a human presence, the fellowship of a kindred soul. Yet the loneliness was a sublime necessity. In His supreme moments society was impossible to Him. Out of loneliness He issued to begin His work; into loneliness He passed to end it. The moments that made His work Divinest were His own and His Father's. III. BUT MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN THE SCENE OF THE TEMPTATION IS THE PLACE WHERE IT STANDS IN THE HISTORY OF THE LIFE AND MIND OF JESUS. Just after the baptism and before the ministry; just after the long silence and before the brief yet eternal speech; just after the years of privacy, and before the few but glorious months of publicity. We must study the temptation through the consciousness of Jesus. The temptation and the assumption by Jesus of the Messianic character and office are essentially related. The one supplies the other with the condition and occasion of its existence. When He was driven into the wilderness three points must have stood out from the tumult of thought and feeling pre-eminent. 1. The relation of the supernatural to the natural in Himself; or, on the other side, His relation to God as His ideal human Son. 2. The relation of God to the supernatural in His person, and the official in His mission; and 3. The nature of the kingdom He had come to found, and the agencies by which it was to live and extend. And these precisely were the issues that emerged in His several temptations. They thus stood rooted in the then consciousness of Christ, and related in the most essential way to His spirit. (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*) *The temptation of the King*:—You may expect me to begin with warning you not to think of the temptation as Dante and the men in the Middle Ages thought of it, or as Luther and the men at the time of the Reformation thought of it, or as Milton and the Puritans thought of it. I shall do no such thing. I believe they all thought of it imperfectly; that they impaired the beauty of the clear, sharply-chiselled marble, by colouring born from their own fancy and the fancy of their times. But they have shown with what intense reality this record has come to them in the most terrible moments of their existence. If they have seen it through a mist, it has not created the mist; it has done more than all other lights to dispel the mist. We may learn something from each teacher which the other could not tell us. Their mistakes may warn us of those into which we are likely to fall. If God gives us grace to enter heart and hand into the conflict which He has appointed for us and our time, we shall read this passage of St. Luke more simply than those read it who have gone before us. 1. He was led by the SPIRIT. That is the characteristic of the acts of the Son in all we read from this

time onwards. He has been baptized with His Father's Spirit. He is guided by that Spirit whithersoever He goes. He does not choose for Himself whether He shall be in the city or the wilderness. Here is the secret of His power. 2. The wilderness into which He went, says Rénan ["Life of Jesus"], "WAS HAUNTED, ACCORDING TO POPULAR BELIEF, BY DEMONS." We surely do not want the authority of a learned man to endorse so very probable a statement. No doubt popular belief filled Jewish deserts, as it fills all deserts, with demons. The curious fact is, that this being the case, the evangelists, who are supposed to have been the victims of all popular beliefs, do not suggest the thought of demons in this desert. They say much of demons elsewhere. That which they speak of here is far more serious and awful. 3. Being forty days tempted of THE DEVIL. The difference is all-important. We are not in the region of dark forms which haunt particular spots. We have been brought into the spiritual region. 4. "IN THOSE DAYS HE DID EAT NOTHING," &c. Another exhaustion of outward circumstances. Hunger may be the tempter's instrument quite as much as food. Is there no gospel in the announcement that the anguish of hungry men has been felt by the Son of Man—the King of Men? 5. "And the devil said unto Him, IF THOU BE THE SON OF GOD," &c. Now we begin to perceive the principle of the temptation, its real force. A stone may serve as the instrument of solicitation; the natural craving for food may be all that is spoken to; but this is the speech: "If Thou be the Son of God." "The words at Thy baptism cannot be true, if Thou art not able to exercise this power for the relief of Thy own necessities." He must do something of Himself and for Himself. What is His name worth otherwise? 6. His name is worth this: "IT IS WRITTEN, MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE," &c., *i.e.*, "I claim the words because they are written of man." He can depend upon the Word of God. 7. A KING IDEALLY, PERHAPS. But actually is the world His? Is it His Father's? "And the devil taketh Him up into an high mountain," &c. How was He taken to the mountain? Did He see with His eyes or only with His mind? I know these questions occur to us all. They have occurred to me. And I can only find this answer to them: I am reading of a temptation presented by a spirit to a spirit. If Christ saw all those kingdoms with His bodily eye, still it must have been His spirit which took in the prospect. The devil is reported to have said something which seems most plausible. All appearances in that time confirmed his words. The most religious men in times since have thought that he spoke truly. They have said that the kingdoms of this world and all the glory of them are his. I want to know if there is One whom I can trust who declared that they were not his, who would not do him service. I read these word: 8. "GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN," &c. Did One in human flesh indeed say, "Adversary, get thee behind Me. All these things are the Creator's, not thine." Then is not this a gospel to us all? 9. "AND HE BROUGHT HIM TO JERUSALEM, AND SET HIM ON A PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE," &c. I need not discuss the question how He was brought to Jerusalem, how He was set on a pinnacle of the temple. I should say the temptation was the most real that could be. He was actually tempted to try whether God would bear Him up, if He cast Himself down. He was actually tempted by a text of Scripture to give that proof of His Sonship and of His Father's faithfulness. Whatever were His circumstances, that thought was presented to His spirit by the evil spirit. And so we know that He was tempted like as we are. Every man hears, at some time or other, a voice whispering to him, "Go out of the place in which you are put. Do something extraordinary. Do something wrong. See whether God will not help you. Can you not depend upon His promise that He will?" Is Scripture false? I accept this story. I believe that voice is the voice of the tempter. And therefore I want to know if the argument from Scripture has been answered, and how we may treat that and like arguments. 10. Hear and consider this: "AND JESUS ANSWERING, SAID, THOU SHALT NOT TEMPT THE LORD THY GOD." The Son of God once more claims the right to obey a commandment—the right to trust and to depend. Once more He claims that right for us. We may abide where we are placed, for our Father has placed us there. If He were not the Lord our God we might make experiments on that which He would do for us supposing we broke His law. Because He is we may submit to it and rejoice in it. 11. We are told that "THE DEVIL DEPARTED FROM HIM FOR A SEASON." Such seasons of rest, of freedom from doubt, of joyful confidence, are, I suppose, vouchsafed to the soldiers of Christ after periods of terrible conflict, as they were to the chief Captain. But the inward battle was to prepare Him, as well as them, for battles in the world. The enemy in the wilderness must be encountered there. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *The temptation of Christ*:—If we would understand this

narrative, and profit by it, we must accept it as the record of a spiritual conflict of the most intense severity. The baptism, with its accompanying sign, brings Jesus for the first time under the full burden of His life's work, as the Messiah. This is the key to the temptation. The question is, How did Jesus Himself understand His Messiahship at the time of the temptation and afterwards? Evidently, in His view, it involved these two things at least—Power, and suffering. Here, in the wilderness, there is opened out to Him, for the first time, in full perspective, the thorny path of suffering, closed by the ignominious death of the cross; and, along with this, the consciousness of power infinitely vaster than was ever wielded by mortal man either before Him or since. The ideal of Messiahship is set before Him; will He shrink from it, or will He embrace it? Will He try to pare it down to something easier and less exacting, or will He accept and embrace it in all its rugged severity; never employing the superhuman power which is involved in it, to smooth His path, to mitigate a single pang, or to diminish by one atom the load of suffering imposed upon Him? Yes; the ideal of Messiahship, the perfect pattern of Messiahship, how to realize it? how to embody it in noble action, and yet more noble suffering? —*that* is the question of the wilderness; *that* is the key to the temptation; *that* has to be debated and resolved upon *there*, and then pursued, firmly and fixedly, in spite of all the tempter's assaults, until He can say upon the cross, "It is finished"; "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." (*D. J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Temptation assails even the holiest*:—Temptation does not cease as we rise in the scale of moral elevation. Even Jesus, the highest, the holiest, the Messiah, was tempted; as truly as the vilest drunkard or profligate amongst ourselves is tempted, though in a very different way. Temptation never ceases, but it alters its form. As we rise in the moral scale by victory over it, it rises also, becomes more refined, takes a subtler and (if we may say so) a nobler form; so that to know what a man's temptations are, is to know what the man himself is. We may be known by our wishes, our hopes, our fears; and we may be known also by our temptations. To fall short of the ideal of the Messiahship was the Messiah's temptation. It was sin in its most refined and subtle form of shortcoming, failure, missing the mark. With Him it was no question of transgression; He was far above that; it was missing the ideal, nothing more, nothing worse, a mere trifle, we might think; yet to Jesus Himself this to us seeming trifle was agony. And is there not an ideal for every one of us? Is it not in us to *be* something, which we are not yet; to fill our place in the world, however small it be, in a higher, better, nobler way than we have yet learned to fill it? (*Ibid.*) *Lessons from the temptaton*:—I. THE HOLIEST NATURES ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM TEMPTATION. II. TIMES OF GLADNESS AND SPIRITUAL ELEVATION MAY BE FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY BY SEASONS OF CONFLICT AND TRIAL. III. OUR RELATION TO GOD DOES NOT DEPEND UPON THE CHANGES OF OUR SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES. IV. SOLITUDE IS NO SAFEGUARD AGAINST TEMPTATION. (*Homiletic Magazine.*) *Our Saviour's temptation*:—I. The first reflection which this great fact excites in my mind is, that I HAVE A SAVIOUR WHOSE LIFE IS BOUND TO MINE BY SYMPATHY IN TEMPTATION, as well as in sorrow, and all the kind affections of the heart. Even His holiness did not escape trial. It attained its perfection through trial. The path of human virtue must always lie through many temptations; and even then it is not left without its great Exemplar and Guide. In the desert I have a Companion, and it is my Master. His example could not instruct me how to overcome temptation, unless He also had struggled with it; for the conquest necessarily supposes the struggle. There is no victory without warfare. II. I am next led to inquire BY WHAT MEANS OUR SAVIOUR TRIUMPHED OVER HIS TEMPTATION, that so I may learn how to triumph also, in the evil time, over the evil one. I find that He triumphed by the power of religious principle, by the force of piety, by bringing the most holy of all holy thoughts, that of obedience to God, in direct opposition to every solicitation of sense, and every suggestion of self-interest. On every side from which He was assailed, this was His ready and sure defence. Then temptation took another shape. Jesus was placed on a pinnacle of the temple, and was urged to cast Himself down, on the specious plea, perverted from Scripture, that God would send angelic aid to His own Son, to prevent His suffering any harm. Thy duty is obedience, and not display. The trials which God appoints, He will give thee His aid to bear, and His grace will be sufficient for thee; but how canst thou look for His aid in trials which thou hast rashly invited, and the issue of which thou hast dared, not for His glory but for thine own? One earnest, trusting, patient thought of God, would have saved many a man from destruction, who once thought himself quite safe, and was thought so, too, by the world, and yet, in the encounter with temptation, has miserably

perished. Why was he not safe? Because he placed his safety in himself, and not in God, and only discovered his mistake when it was too late—perhaps not even then, but went down to ruin darkly. Why does not the thought of God come in the straits of temptation? Because it is not a familiar thought; because we do not make God our friend, and admit Him into the daily counsels of our bosom. (*F. W. P. Greenwood.*) *From heights to depths*:—From the Jordan of glorification to the wilderness of temptation. This is the way of God; as with Christ, so with the Christian; and moreover—1. An old, and yet an ever new way. 2. A hard, and yet a good way. 3. A dark, and yet a light way. 4. A lonesome, and yet a blessed way. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *Christ an example in temptation*:—For, as commentators on Aristotle observe that his rule many times lies hid and is wrapped up in the example which he gives, so we need scarce any other rules for behaviour when we are tempted, than those which we may find in this story of our Saviour's combat with our enemy. And our Saviour may seem to bespeak His brethren, even all Christians, as Abimelech doth his soldiers: "What you have seen me do, make haste, and do likewise" (Judges ix. 48). (*A. Farindon, D.D.*) *Temptation renders virtue possible*:—"Take away this combat with our spiritual enemy, and virtue is but a bare naked name, is nothing." If there were no possibility of being evil, we could not be good. What were my faith, if there were no doubt to assault it? What were my hope, if there were no scruple to stagger it? What were my charity, if there were no injuries to dull it? Then goodness is fairest when it shines through a cloud; and it is difficulty which sets the crown upon virtue's head. Our Saviour was made glorious by His temptations and sufferings; so must we [be] by ours. (*Ibid.*) *The temptation of Christ in the wilderness*:—The first thing that strikes us here is that Jesus was not master of His own movements. An unerring voice, which He knew to be from heaven, sent Him into the lonely wilderness—the place where no society or communion could disturb the law of development of His character—in order to be tempted in that solitude. He could not have gone thither Himself, aware of the trial before Him, without tempting God. The next thing which arrests our attention and, at first, our wonder, is that He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. What a fearful and solemn glimpse is here given to us of the moral agencies of the universe. Good and evil, infinite good and absolute evil, good and evil in personal substance, with that intense antipathy to one another that souls of the largest grasp and depth must feel, are in restless action around a human soul. And if such parties were concerned in the temptation something of importance must have depended on the result. But in what form, it may be asked, did this tempter place himself in the way of Jesus? Did he keep to his spiritual incorporeal nature, or take a body, and become visible to eyes of flesh? Was the temptation transacted before the mind of Christ, or was its sphere more outward, concerned with bodily phenomena and human language? In the first place, the agency of Satan elsewhere, in the New Testament, is that of a spiritual being, and, so far as I am aware, corporeal form is never ascribed to him. In the second place, suppose the Saviour to be carried to an exceeding high mountain, yet the spherical form of the earth would allow the eye to take in but a very minute portion of the kingdoms of the world and of their glory. We must, then, either dilute the narrative, as many do, by understanding these expressions in a hyperbolical sense of the little tract of country around Palestine, or must resort to a second miracle, in order to conceive of the broad earth spread outward and upward before our Lord's eye. What need, then, of the high mountain, and why might not the same sight be obtained without leaving the wilderness? In the third place, it is noteworthy that the narrative makes no mention of the return of Jesus from the temple and from the mountain, just as if, in some sense, He had gone there while He remained in the desert in another. And, in the fourth place, if the temptation was addressed to the bodily senses of the Lord, it loses its insidious character, and becomes easier to be resisted. I am constrained, therefore, to believe that the transaction was a spiritual one, a conflict between light and darkness in the region of the mind, in which a real tempter assailed Christ, not through His eyes and ears, but directly through His feelings and imagination. After the same manner, the prophets of the Old Testament passed through events in vision, of which they speak as we should speak of realities. Thus Jeremiah must have been in prophetic vision when he took the linen girdle to Euphrates to hide it there and went again in quest of it, as also when he took the cup of wrath from God's hand and gave it to the nations to drink. So, too, Ezekiel was transported from Chaldea to Jerusalem in

that remarkable vision, the narrative of which occupies the chapters of his prophecies from the eighth to the eleventh. Hosea, again, it is commonly believed, narrates only a symbolical vision, where he speaks of himself as marrying an adulteress at the command of God. The martyr Stephen, also full of the Holy Ghost, saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, not in bodily shape, but in a form presented to the mind's eye, and yet expressive of a great reality. If, now, the Scriptures allow us to interpret the events of the temptation in this way, we can see that greater strength is thereby given to the suggestions of Satan than if they had been addressed to the bodily organs. The power over the mind of a highly endowed being through the imagination, may indefinitely exceed that which is exerted through the sight. Multitudes have been seduced by that faculty, which paints absent or distant objects in colours of its own, whom no beauty or pleasantness lying in objects of sight could have led into sin. The world of imagination is more fascinating to their elevated mind than this outward world with all its shows and riches. The phantom, which has something heavenly in it, cheats and betrays them, while they turn aside from the obvious snares of visible things. But we pass on from this point, to a more important and indeed to an essential remark, that the temptations were intended not for Jesus in His nature as a man, but for Jesus in His official station as the Messiah. God was not putting it to the test, whether a certain good man or good prophet would yield to evil or conquer it, but whether Jesus was qualified for His office—whether He would remain true to the spiritual idea of the Messiah, or would fall below it under temptation. Nor was the tempter in this case anxious simply to lead a good man into sin, but he was striking at the root of salvation; his aim was to undermine the principles of the kingdom of heaven. This thought is the key to the story of the temptation. It explains why the temptation occurred when it did, at the commencement of Christ's public work, and shows the greatness of the crisis. The question whether Jesus would be made to adopt the worldly idea of the Messiah's kingdom was one of life and death for mankind. And again, had Christ followed the suggestions of the tempter, He could not have taken on Him the work of our salvation. The form of a servant, which He freely assumed, involved subjection to all the physical laws which control our race, and the endurance of all sufferings which the Father should lay upon Him. But if, by His inherent power, He had now relieved His own hunger, He would have escaped from the form of a servant, and even from subjection to the Divine will; and, on the same principle, He never could have been obedient to death—even the death of the cross. But to the sophistry of the tempter Christ had a ready reply. "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," that is, "I may not, because entitled to His protection, appeal to it against the laws of His providence, to rescue me from dangers into which I have entered unbidden." As thus viewed, our Lord's reply is given in the same spirit with His former one during the first temptation. He subjected Himself freely to physical law, and His Messiahship depended on His self-chosen humiliation. His choice of means, however, for securing His kingdom would in the end amount to a choice between two kingdoms, the one, severely spiritual, introduced by moral and religious forces only, the other becoming worldly by its alliance with the world of outward influence and temporal glory. The instinctive shrinking from harm and difficulty, which belongs to us all, would lead Him to choose the worldly way of doing good, would prejudice His mind in favour of the easier and quicker method. But He held on to His spiritual conception of His office, kept His obedience, and triumphed. Satan approached Christ in the belief that He was capable of taking false views of His office, through which He might be led into sin. Another remark which we desire to make is, that the narrative, as interpreted, shows the subtlety and insinuating character of the temptation. The acts to which Christ was solicited were not sins, so much as misjudgments in regard to the means to be used for gaining the highest and noblest ends. And these misjudgments would consist, not in the use of means plainly and boldly sinful, but of such as involved a departure from the true idea of the Messiah's earthly mission. But it is more important to remark, that the narrative is too refined and too full of a somewhat hidden, but consummate wisdom, to grow out of the imaginings of the early Church. It is no rude picture of assaults which might befall a holy man in solitude, but an intellectual and moral struggle, which put it to the proof whether Christ would be true to the spiritual idea of the Messiah. It involves a conception of the Messiah's kingdom which the early Church did not entertain until some time after the death of our Lord; how then could it be elaborated by crude Galilean disciples of Christ,

whose views were full of that earthly mixture which the narrative condemns? (*T. D. Woolsey, D.D.*) *Christ's temptation a help to us*:—For as He hath taught us both by His word and ensample to prepare ourselves to the battle, and bestir ourselves like those who fight under His colours; so, in the next place, there is a kind of influence and virtue derived from His combat, which falls as oil upon us, to supple our joints, and strengthen our sinews, and make each faculty of our souls active and cheerful in this exercise. (*A. Farindon, D.D.*) **Full of the Holy Ghost.**—*The back strengthened for the load*:—It was in the prospect of His temptation that the Lord Jesus received this fulness of the Holy Spirit. This presents a new aspect of the bestowment of the Spirit. He was not only filled with the Holy Ghost, but it was in the very crisis of need He was so anointed. The back will be strengthened for the load, the heart nerved for the blow. I fear we all deplorably fail to realize this, and so impoverish ourselves of the Spirit. It was upon the Lord Jesus being thus filled with the Holy Spirit that He was tempted. "Comfort ye, comfort ye," my fellow-believers, from that. It is when a child of God is fullest of grace; when he has been declared to be a "son," even a "beloved son" of God; when he has made a public profession of Christianity, that he is most of all exposed to temptation. (*A. B. Grosart, D.D.*) **Returned from Jordan.**—*Baptism does not exempt from temptation*:—The temptation of the Lord having followed His baptism, tells us not to trust to baptism for escape from temptation. (*Ibid.*) *Spiritual favour a time of trial*:—That our entering upon a special service for God or receiving a special favour from God, are two solemn seasons which Satan makes use of for temptation. Though this may seem strange, yet the harshness of such a providence on God's part, and the boldness of the attempt on Satan's part, may be much taken off by the consideration of the reasons hereof. 1. On Satan's part. It is no great wonder to see such an undertaking, when we consider his fury and malice. The more we receive from God, and the more we are to do for Him, the more doth he malign us. So much the more as God is good, by so much is his eye evil. 2. There are in such cases as these several advantages, which, through our weakness and imperfection, we are too apt to give him; and for these he lieth at the catch. (1) Security. We are apt to grow proud, careless, and confident, after or upon such employments and favours; even as men are apt to sleep or surfeit upon a full meal, or to forget themselves when they are advanced to honour. Enjoyments beget confidence; confidence brings forth carelessness; carelessness makes God withdraw, and gives opportunity to Satan to work unseen. And thus, as armies after victory, growing secure, are oft surprised; so are we oft after our spiritual advancements thrown down. (2) Discouragement and tergiversation is another thing the devil watcheth for. By his assaults he represents the duty difficult, tedious, dangerous, or impossible, on purpose to discourage us, and to make us fall back. (3) The fall or miscarriage of the saints at such times is of more than ordinary disadvantage, not only to others—for if they can be prevailed with to lay aside their work, or to neglect the improvement of their favours, others are deprived of the benefit and help that might be expected from them—but also to themselves. A prevailing temptation doth more than ordinarily prejudice them at such times. 3. As we have seen the reason of Satan's keenness in taking those opportunities, so may we consider the reasons of God's permission, which are these:—(1) Temptations at such seasons are permitted for more eminent trial of the upright. (2) For an increase of diligence, humility, and watchfulness. (3) For a plentiful furniture of experience. Temptation is the shop of experience. (*R. Gilpin.*) *Temptation after privilege*:—After high favours showed to God's children, come shrewd pinches, as after warm, growing, comfortable weather in the spring come many cold pinching frosts: what a sudden change is this! Is this He, of whom erewhile the Lord said, "This is My Son," and doth He now send, and set his slave upon Him to vex and bait Him? (*D. Dyke.*) *Temptation after baptism*:—The history of our Lord's temptation ought never to be contemplated apart from that of His baptism. We shall miss much of its significance, if we dissociate it, even in thought, from the solemn recognition of the Son by the Father, the salutation of Him from heaven, and the full consciousness of His Divine nature into which He was thus brought. The Church of old did not shrink from calling her Lord's baptism His second nativity. In that baptism He received His heavenly armour, and now He goes forth to prove it, and try of what temper it is. Having been baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, He shall now be baptized with the fire of temptation; even as there is another baptism, the baptism of blood, in store for Him: for the gifts of God are not for the Captain of our salvation, any more

than for His followers, the pledge of exemption from a conflict, but rather powers with which He is furnished, and, as it were, inaugurated thereunto. With regard to the temptation: it is quite impossible to exaggerate the importance of the victory then gained by the second Adam, or the bearing which it had, and still has, on the work of our redemption. The entire history, moral and spiritual, of the world revolves around two persons, Adam and Christ. To Adam was given a position to maintain; he did not maintain it, and the lot of the world for ages was decided. All is again at issue. Again we are represented by a Champion, by *One* who is in the place of *all*, whose standing shall be the standing of many, and whose fall, if that fall had been conceivable, would have been the fall of many, yea of all. Once already Satan had thought to nip the kingdom of heaven in the bud, and had nearly succeeded. If it had not been for a new and unlooked-for interposition of God, for the promise of the Seed of the woman, he would have done it. He will now prove if he cannot more effectually crush it, and for ever; for, should Christ fail, there was none behind, the last stake would have been played—and lost. (*Archbishop Trench.*) *Washed and not soiled:*—Then, when He was washed, did the devil attempt to soil Him. (*A. Farindon, D.D.*) *Satan's malice:*—His malice is so great that he is never at rest. He watcheth every good thing in its bud, to nip it; in its blossom, to blast it; in its fruit, to spoil it. (*Ibid.*) *The power of habit to resist temptation:*—What we are surely possessed of, we can hardly lose. And such a possession, such an inheritance, is true piety, when we are once rooted and built up, and established in it. It is a treasure which no chance can rob us of, no thief take from us. A habit well confirmed is an object the devil is afraid of. Oh, the power of an uninterrupted obedience, of a continued course in the duties of holiness! It is able to puzzle the great sophister, the great god of this world. (*Ibid.*) **Was led by the Spirit.**—*Led by the Spirit:*—We are to consider the leader. He was led by the Spirit. 1. That the state of a man regenerate by baptism is not a standing still. We must not only have a mortifying and reviving, but a quickening and stirring spirit (1 Cor. xv. 45). 2. As there must be a stirring, so this stirring must not be such, as when a man is left to his own voluntary or natural motion; we must go according as we are led. For having given ourselves to God, we are no longer to be at our own disposition or direction. (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *The Divine leading a security in temptation:*—The Children of Israel made no scruple to pitch their tents within the borders of their enemies if the pillar of cloud did remove before them; so wheresoever the grace of God doth carry a man, God's glory being his undoubted end (without all vain delusions, and carnal reservations) he may be bold to venture. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Tempting the Tempter:*—Have you seen little children dare one another which should go deepest into the mire? But he is more childish that ventures further and further, even to the brim of transgression, and bids the devil catch him if he can. I will but look and like, says the wanton, where the object pleaseth me; I keep company with some licentious persons, says an easy nature, but for no hurt, because I would not offend our friendship. I will but hend my body in the house of Rimmon, when my master bends his, says Naaman; I will but peep in to see the fashion of the mass, holding fast the former profession of my faith. Beloved, I do not like it when a man's conscience takes in these small leaks; it is odds you will fill faster and faster, and sink to the bottom of iniquity. (*Ibid.*) *Led by the Divine Spirit:*—The grounds upon which I will insist are these. 1. We must be led by the Spirit before we can work anything which is good. 2. I will unfold how we are led by initiating or preventing grace, when we are first made partakers to taste of the hopes of a better life. 3. I will show how we are led by preparatory grace, which goes before the complete act of our regeneration. 4. With what great and mighty power the Spirit doth lead us in converting grace. 5. How we are led by subsequent grace and sanctification, which co-operates and assists us after our conversion. (*Ibid.*) *Temptations not to be sought:*—In that the evangelists do not say that Christ cast Himself upon a temptation, neither did go to undertake it till He was led to it, we note, that whatever may be the advantage of a temptation by the Spirit's ordering of it, or what security from danger we may promise to ourselves upon that account, yet must we not run upon temptations; though we must submit when we are fairly led into them. The reasons of this truth are these:—1. There is so much of the nature of evil in temptations that they are to be avoided if possible. 2. To run upon them would be a dangerous tempting of God; that is, making a bold and presumptuous trial, without call, whether He will put forth His power to rescue us or not. When do men run uncalled and unwarrantably upon temptation? (1) When men engage

themselves in sin and apparent wickedness, in the works of the flesh. For it can never be imagined that the holy God should ever by His Spirit call any to such things as His soul abhors. (2) When men run upon the visible and apparent occasions and causes of sin. This is like a man's going to the pest-house. (3) When men unnecessarily, without the conduct either of command or urging an unavoidable providence, do put themselves, though not upon visible and certain opportunities, yet upon dangerous and hazardous occasions and snares. (4) Those run upon temptation, that adventure apparently beyond their strength, and put themselves upon actions good or harmless, disproportionably to their abilities. (5) They are also guilty that design an adventure unto the utmost bounds of lawful liberty. (6) Those also may be reckoned in the number of such as rush upon their danger, who go abroad without their weapons, and forget in the midst of daily dangers the means of preservation. (*R. Gilpin.*) *Led by the Spirit*:—The devil was the instrument of the temptation, but God ordained it. (*G. S. Barrett.*) *The Divine purpose in the temptation*:—It was the last act of His moral education; it gave Him an insight into all the ways in which His Messianic work could possibly be marred. If, from the very first step in His arduous career, Jesus kept the path marked out for Him by God's will without deviation, change, or hesitancy, this bold front and steadfast perseverance are certainly due to His experience of the temptation. All the wrong courses possible to Him were thenceforth known; all the rocks had been observed; and it was the enemy himself who had rendered Him this service. It was for this reason that God apparently delivered Him for a brief time into his power. This is just what Matthew's narrative expresses so forcibly: "He was led up by the Spirit to be tempted." When He left this school, Jesus distinctly understood that, as respects His person, no act of His ministry was to have any tendency to lift it out of His human condition; that, as to His work, it was to be in no way assimilated to the action of the powers of this world; and that, in the employment of Divine power, filial liberty was never to become caprice, not even under a pretext of blind trust in the help of God. And this programme was carried out. His material wants were supplied by the gifts of charity (chap. viii. 3), not by miracles; His mode of life was nothing else than a perpetual humiliation—a prolongation, so to speak, of His Incarnation. When labouring to establish His kingdom, He unhesitatingly refused the aid of human power—as, *e.g.*, when the multitude wished to make Him a King (John vi. 15); and His ministry assumed the character of an exclusively spiritual conquest. He abstained, lastly, from every miracle which had not for its immediate design the revelation of moral perfection, that is to say, of the glory of His Father (Luke xi. 29). These supreme rules of the Messianic activity were all learned in that school of trial through which God caused Him to pass in the desert. (*F. Godet, D.D.*) **Into the wilderness.**—*The danger of solitude*:—As a deer that is struck knows by instinct what a danger it is to be single, and therefore will herd himself if he can; so do not separate yourself from the face of men upon temptation, that is the way to betray your soul, but unite your force against the tempter by mixing yourself with good men. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Christ's a lonely life*:—But I reduce all to this head. The solitude of the wilderness did best befit Him in this work, because He began, continued, and ended the work of the Mediatorship by Himself, and by no other assistance. (*Ibid.*) *Humility*:—Much better it is to be humble with Christ in a barren desert, than to be proud with Adam in a delicious paradise. (*Ibid.*) *Man sociable*:—God hath made man a sociable creature, if the contagion of the world doth not make him unsociable. (*Ibid.*) *Solitude favourable to temptation*:—Solitude affords a great advantage to Satan in the matter of temptation. This advantage ariseth from solitude two ways: 1. First, As it doth deprive us of help. They can mutually help one another when they fall; they can mutually heat and warm one another; they can also strengthen one another's hands to prevail against an adversary. 2. Secondly, Solitude increaseth melancholy, fills the soul with dismal apprehensions; and withal doth so spoil and alter the temper of it that it is not only ready to take any disadvantageous impression, but it doth also dispose it to leaven and sour those very considerations that should support, and to put a bad construction on things that never were intended for its hurt. (*R. Gilpin.*) *Spiritual victory in spite of disadvantage*:—Here we have an image of the conflicts betwixt Ishmael and Amalek, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. God, to gain the greater glory to Himself, gives all the advantages that may be to the enemies of His Church. How unequal was the combat and contention betwixt Luther a poor monk, and the Pope, and so many

legions of his creatures? They had the sword of most magistrates to sway at their pleasure, great power, and great authority, yet Luther took the prey out of their teeth, as poor David overthrew the great Goliath. (*D. Dyke.*) *Christ in the wilderness*:—What a contrast between that gracious, noble Form and the scene in which it is set! The Bible delights in contrasts. On Calvary, *e.g.*, it shows us the cross, and One hanging on it, the very incarnation of beauty and patient love and gentleness—the perfect Man, the perfect God—and there all around Him surge the angry crowds full of hate and wickedness and every corruption. So here we behold that same Holy Being standing in the midst of the picture of desolation—oh, how desolate that desert even in the light of the noonday!—how much more desolate at night, when the imagination filled it with its own fears and mysteries and terrors! But more horrid than the darkness, more terrible than wild beasts, than any earthly terror, is the dark presence of Satan. There they stand alone together, the Son of God and the spirit of evil; and we know that they are to be the figures in some great transaction. What was the mighty event? It was the greatest event that has ever occurred on earth except the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of our Lord. It was to be the greatest battle ever fought on the earth—the battle between Satan, the personification of hate and vileness and all that is repulsive, and the incarnation of purity and holiness. (*F. C. Ewer, D.D.*) *Retirement preparatory to action*:—It has been said that Christ by His example sanctioned the eremitical life, the retirement into the deserts of the old hermits, to spend their lives in contemplation. To some extent only is this true. Christ sanctioned retirement, but He made retirement from the world preparatory to active mission work in the world. Where the old hermits misread His teaching was in this, that they retired to the deserts and did not leave the deserts again—they made that a *cul-de-sac* which should have been a passage. The example of our Lord seems to us in this age of high pressure to be of special importance. We look too much to the amount of work done, rather than to the quality of the work. This is the case in every branch of life, in every industry, in every profession; and it cannot be denied that in the present day the hurry of life is so great that men have not the patience to study and to appreciate good work; so long as it has a specious appearance of being good, it is sufficient. But in spiritual work, we must consider that the eye of God is on us, and that we are labouring for Him, not for men, and, by His retirement for prayer and fasting into the solitude of the desert, Christ puts into our hands the key to the door of all thorough and efficacious work in the spiritual sphere,—it must be well considered, well prayed over, and well prepared for. Every plant has its hidden life that precedes its visible and manifested life; the seed, or bulb, or tuber spends a time in accumulating to itself vital force or energy, during which period it appears to be dormant. Then, when it has taken the requisite time, it begins to grow, it throws up its leaves and flowers. The leaves and flowers are no spontaneous development out of the root, they have been long prepared for in the hidden life and apparent sleep of the seed or root underground. All life is initiated by a hiddeu period of incubation. And all healthy human activity has also its still unperceived phase of existence. Christ shows us that it is the same in the spiritual life. The forty days and nights—I may say the whole of the hidden life at Nazareth—was the seed germinating, and the three years' ministry was the manifestation of the life. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *Scene of the temptation*:—The scene of the temptation was *the wilderness*. What wilderness we are not told; and all which it imports us to note is that it *was* a wilderness, in which this encounter of the good and the evil, each in its highest representative, took place. There could have been no fitter scene, none indeed so fit. The waste and desert places of the earth are, so to speak, the characters which sin has visibly impressed on the outward creation; its signs and its symbols there; the echoes in the outward world of the desolation and wasteness which sin has wrought in the inner life of man. Out of a true feeling of this, men have ever conceived of the wilderness as the haunt of evil spirits. In the old Persian religion, Ahriman and his evil spirits inhabit the steppes and wastes of Turan, to the north of the happy Iran, which stands under the dominion of Ormuzd; exactly as with the Egyptians, the evil Typhon is the lord of the Libyan sand-wastes, and Osiris of the fertile Egypt. This sense of the wilderness as the haunt of evil spirits, one which the Scripture more or less allows (Isa. xiii. 21, xxxiv. 14; Matt. xii. 43; Rev. xviii. 2), would of itself give a certain fitness to that as the place of the Lord's encounter with Satan; but only in its antagonism to paradise do we recognize a still higher fitness in the appointment of the place. The garden and the desert are the two most

opposite poles of natural life; in them we have the highest harmonies and the deepest discords of nature. Adam, when worsted in the conflict, was expelled from the garden, and the ground became cursed for his sake. Its desert places represent to us what the whole of it might justly have been on account of sin. Christ takes up the conflict exactly where Adam left it, and, inheriting all the consequences of his defeat, in the desert does battle with the foe; and, conquering him there, wins back the garden for that whole race, whose champion and representative He was. (*Archbishop Trench.*) *The world a wilderness*:—"The earth a wilderness!" you will say. "Oh, but it is full of scenes of beauty; has it not its running streams, and flowery leas, and wooded slopes, and leaning lawns? How glorious its sunsets! How fair its gardens, all filled with fragrant flowers!" Yes, the earth has its beauties, but they are not the true, the essential beauties. Go you to Quarantania: there you shall find also a certain beauty—the beauty of wild sublimity—the mountain peak, the trenchant rock, the dark ravine with its rugged sides; yet it is a howling wilderness. Quarantania has a certain beauty, and so has earth. But compare the desert, stern, barren, desolate, with the fair gardens of Italy, and great as is the gulf between these, it is not so vast as the gulf between this world that we call so fair and the Golden Jerusalem, of which we are citizens. All that is most bright and glorious *here* is dull and harsh and pale compared with what God is keeping for us there. Is not the earth filled with mountains of disappointments? with snares, sufferings, griefs, ingratitudes? Oh! the wilderness of this world. What a contrast with the paradise of God! (*F. C. Ewer, D.D.*) *The forty days in the wilderness*:—We make a mistake when we think that those forty days were all days of temptation and sorrow. They must have been, on the contrary, days, at first, of peaceful rest, of intense joy. Alone with God, driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, the Saviour dwelt in the peaceful thought of His union with His Father. The words spoken at the baptism, the fulness of the Spirit's power within Him had filled His human heart with serene ecstasy. He went into the wilderness to realize it all more fully. It was then in this spiritual rest and joy that we may reverently conceive the beginning of the wilderness life was passed. As such, it was the first pure poetry of the perfect union which was to arise between the heart of man and the Spirit of God; the springtime of the new life; the first clear music which ever flowed from the harmony of a human spirit with the life of the universe. But now we meet the question, "How did this become test, temptation?" To understand this we must recall the two grand ideas in His mind: 1. That He was at one with the Father—that gave Him His perfect joy. 2. That He was the destined Redeemer of the race. To the first peaceful days had now succeeded days when desire to begin His redemptive work filled His soul. And the voice in His own soul was echoed by the cry of the Jewish people for their Messiah. He was urged, then, by two calls, one within, and one without. But—and here is the point at which suffering and test entered—these two voices directly contradicted one another. As soon as Christ turned to the world with the greeting of His love, He heard coming from the world an answering greeting of welcome, but the ideas which lay beneath it were in radical opposition to His own. The vision of an omnipotent king and an external kingdom was presented to His Spirit as the ideal of the Jewish people. It came rudely into contact with the vision in His own heart of a king made perfect by suffering, of a kingdom hidden at first in the hearts of men. It is not difficult to see the depth and manifoldness of the tests which arose from the clashing of these two opposed conceptions. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *The solitary place*:—No: we must be led into some secret and solitary place, there to fast and pray, to fit and prepare ourselves for the work which we have to do, there to taste how sweet the Word of God is, to ruminate and chaw upon it as it were and digest it, to fasten it to our very soul and make it a part of us, and by daily meditation so to profit that all the mysteries of faith and precepts of holiness may be, as vessels are in a well-ordered family, ready at hand to be used upon any occasion. (*A. Farindon, D.D.*)

Vers. 2–4. **Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in these days He did eat nothing.**—*The temptation of Christ*:—A great part of the force and power of Christ's example here is lost upon men, through their slipping it aside, by secretly imagining that, after all, His case and theirs are wholly different. They read of His being tempted; and as they do not disbelieve the Scriptures, they admit in a certain way that He was—that is, they never question it. But, practically speaking, and meaning by temptation such temptations as they yield to, they do not believe

that He was tempted; they have a secret reserve—"Christ was tempted, as far as He could be tempted; but how could He who was God as well as man be really tempted? What was there in Him to tempt?" By such questions the practical example of our Lord is set aside; and men lose the benefit designed for them in Scripture, in its narrative of these awful struggles of the prince of darkness with the Captain of our salvation. 1. To be truly tempted, Christ must be truly man. Unless His temptations, sufferings, and death were all wrought in appearance only, there must be that nature truly in Him which is capable of these accidents. And this, in its fullest significance, is the doctrine of the Catholic Church. And to the full perception of this truth, it must be noted, that the nature He took was the human nature as it was in His mother; not, as some have fancied, the nature of Adam before his fall; for how should He have obtained that nature from the Virgin Mary, who herself possessed it not? and if He had, how could He have been "in all points tempted like as we are, sin only excepted"? for we know not that in Adam's body were all those sinless infirmities which dwell in ours, and which indeed we acknowledge in our Lord's. Before the fruit of the forbidden tree had poisoned the currents of his blood, we know not that pain, and weariness, and sickness could have invaded that body which from God's hand had come forth "very good," and which, we doubt not, by the fruit of the tree of life was to have been strengthened till it could not taste of death. But the body which Christ assumed was subject, like our own, to those infirmities which have not in them the nature of sin, and yet which sin has brought into our nature. The contrary opinion has arisen from the pious but mistaken fear, lest in allowing that Christ took the very nature of His mother, we should, unawares, allow that He took what was sinful; but the true answer to this apprehension is, that the Eternal Son took to Himself in the womb of the Virgin, not a human person, but humanity—humanity, which, if it had been impersonated in one of us would have been sinful, but which could not be sinful until it was a person, and was never a person till it was in the Christ. "To His own person" (says Hooker) "He assumed a man's nature." The flesh, and the conjunction of the flesh with God, began at one instant. And that which in Him made our nature uncorrupt, was the union of His Deity with our nature. 2. These two natures, though thus conjoined in one person, were not confounded the one with the other; neither was the proper Godhead of the Son diminished by inferior admixture, nor the humanity swollen out of the true limits of its essential properties by the alliance of Deity. To it, indeed, Deity added that infinite worth which made it a fit sacrifice for sin; to it that grace of unction unmeasured, by which it was held up ever without spot of iniquity; but still each nature was separate and unconfused; and thus, in the unity of the Godhead could Christ declare on earth that the Son of Man was in heaven; thus could He truly suffer and die in His human body, though the Godhead is impassable and immortal; thus could He, in His human soul, be "in an agony," though Deity can never suffer; thus could He pray, "Father, not My will, but Thine, be done," while He could declare, "I and My Father are one." Here, then, was the provision made for the reality of His temptation: for in whatever way Satan can approach us from without, by the influences of a spiritual presence, as suggesting to the imagination, and throwing into the mind, that which is at once temptation, and becomes sin as soon as the will has given to it the first beginnings of assent; in this same way are we enforced, by the verity of His human soul, to believe that the Son of God could be approached by Satan. So that to make His exposure to temptation perfect, we must suppose no sinless avenues to its approach, which in us are open, closed in Him. The fiery darts, indeed, found in that most true loyal soul no sinful tendencies on which to fall; they were cast back at once from the confines of His imagination by a will truly in accordance with the will of the Father, and dwelt in beyond measure by the present influence of the Spirit of all grace. So that, with a perfect exposure to temptation, spot of sin there could be clearly none. (*Bishop S. Wilberforce.*) *The reality of our Lord's contest with Satan*:—When we read of the tempter approaching with his wiles Him whom we know to be the Lord incarnate, God the Maker of all being, we have something of the feeling with which we read of those imaginary conflicts in which man is supposed to strive with beings of a higher order: we feel, that is, as if there could be no real contest; that it is but the apparent acting out of what would be naturally impossible. When we compare the paltry baits with the infinite worthiness of Him to whom they were proffered, we feel so sure of the conclusion, that, knowing the craft and subtlety of the tempter, we cannot believe that he could thus attempt to turn aside the perfect uprightness

of God's only Son. Here, then, we need the recollection, that to him had not been made the revelation we possess of Christ's eternal power and Godhead; that from him was kept secret the virginity of Mary and Him who was born of her, as also the death of our Lord—three of the mysteries the most spoken of in the world, yet done in secret by God; that all he knew was that this was the champion of man, the Holy One of God, the Second Adam, with whom, as with the first, was to be his great struggle for the dominion of the world. He knew that he had triumphed once, by like temptations, over the same nature unfallen; and how should it fare better now? . . . When we look at the temptation in this light, how strikingly does it fall in with the whole course of God's revealed dealings! Throughout the Old Testament Satan is scarcely mentioned; and in the New he is less emphatically the enemy of God than of Christ, as if between the prince of this world and the Son of Man must be the mighty struggle. The devil (says Augustine) was to be overcome, not by the power of God, but by His righteousness. (*Ibid.*) *Lessons from our Lord's temptation*:—As this subject will yield both motives and measures for obedience, so too will it supply us with directions for the due resisting of temptation. The Commander suffered Himself to be tempted, that He might teach His soldier to contend, says Augustine; He taught thee to bear, and He taught thee by bearing. A broad light is thrown by it on every part of temptation. 1. We see the need of watching alway. No height of piety is a sufficient safeguard against danger. We must, therefore, be prepared for conflict, not merely with the principle of evil, but with an actually living, subtle, and most powerful enemy. The principle of evil can mean nothing else than our own inward inclinations to it. By this our Master could not have been tempted, for He had no evil inclination; either, therefore, He could not be tempted, or it must be by a spirit external to Himself, and having, therefore, truly a separate existence. 2. We see the sort of wiles against which we must watch. The evil which seems farthest off is often the nearest. The fast of forty days had surely shown the absolute dominion with which the flesh was curbed in Him to whom the tempter came; yet is His first temptation a suggestion that He should turn the stones around Him into bread. 3. We see, too, with how prompt a readiness the forms of temptation are exchanged. It is not one, and then rest. From sensuality and doubt, how easily did Satan turn to presumption, and from that pass over to the baits of earthly glory, as instruments wherewith to beguile that human heart which only was for ever proof against his snares! And so, when we have resisted the coarser temptations of sensuality or a thirst for worldly advancement, how readily do self-applauding thoughts spring up to poison the purged soil of the heart; or, when we have shut out the louder solicitations of evil, are we drawn unawares, and, if need be, by the very words of Holy Writ, into an attempt to worship God in some new way, and so to approach His altar with an abominable offering of a party-zeal or self-taught service! Conclusion: And so, all through the struggle, how full of teaching is our blessed Lord's example! With what a perfect patience did He endure the struggle to the end; not, as we are wont to do, fretting under it, and peevishly longing for the "rest of the garner," while it is God's will that we should still be "planted in the field." And yet, with this entire patience, how prompt was His resistance, never yielding for a moment to that which He endured to the end. How directly was the sword of the Spirit raised against each following temptation, and how did it pierce through the fraud! And as there is here full instruction how to resist the evil one, so is there, too, a sure earnest of our victory. Satan dared, indeed, to assault our Lord, but He did not triumph over Him. He overcame the devil in our nature, that we might be partakers of His triumph. From us He took flesh, that we from Him might have salvation. In Him we were tempted; in Him we vanquish Satan. He has passed through the battle; but He will not forget those whom He has left to follow Him. He is God over all; but He has not ceased to be the Virgin's Son. Let us trust more in His sympathy, and cast ourselves more on His care. (*Ibid.*) *The hour of triumph is the hour of temptation*:—There was at college, in my day, a young man whose career ran side by side with mine. We matriculated at the same time, and at the same time took our degree. This young man was like unto him of whom we read in the Gospel, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." To his undying honour be it said he remembered that his mother was a widow, and that she looked to him then as she had once looked to his father. Most careful was he never to spend more than was needful, knowing that each shilling he spent left so much less in that widow's purse. Most indefatigable was he in his reading, knowing that it depended on his position in the class-list

whether he could secure his fellowship and so provide a home for that widowed mother. Day after day would he sit over his books ; and night after night, when all else was shrouded in darkness, the flickering lamp in that student's room would tell of the midnight reader. Throughout the whole of that university career, never was known a more earnest nor a more frequent worshipper in the house of God. Regularly as the hour for Divine service came round, so regularly was that widow's son seen to enter that house of prayer. Days, and months, and years, rolled on, and at length the eventful day arrived, when—examinations passed, successfully passed—the tidings went rapidly round from mouth to mouth that the pattern son and student had nobly won his class, his first class. That evening I sought my friend, yea, and I found him ; but where? in what condition? There, on the floor of his room, almost senselessly drunken, lay the dutiful son, the pattern student, the frequent and earnest worshipper. Alas ! alas ! how truly had the tempter marked his time ; the hour of that young man's triumph was the hour of his fall. (*D. Parker Morgan, M.A.*) *The existence of evil spirits:*—It is one of the most ruinously successful artifices of the great adversary of men, to persuade them that he has no existence ; for thus he throws them off their guard, and makes them believe that from him, at least, they have nothing to fear; and thus the very sentiment which would appear to them to annihilate his being, completely establishes over them the plenitude of his power. The doctrine of Scripture in reference to the fallen angels has been most usually opposed by the weapons of ridicule—a mode of attack which says little for the goodness of the cause in which it is employed ; for why resort to an expedient so very low, and so far from pious, if solid argument were at command ? In opposition, however, to the commonly-received opinions on this subject, reason is sometimes appealed to, not only by declared infidels, but, what is far more strange, by some who assume the Christian name. But why should these opinions be reckoned improbable, or absurd ? So far is the existence of beings only spiritual from being improbable, that when it is considered that the Creator Himself is a pure spirit, it is in itself more probable and more easy to be supposed, that He should form creatures purely spiritual, than creatures partly spiritual and partly material. Nor is it at all improbable that angels should fall, any more than that man should have fallen. Nor, again, is it improbable that both the holy and the fallen angels should be employed, or permitted, to take some part in the affairs of men ; that they do so is at least quite capable of proof, though not an original dictate of reason. Were it in our power to visit distant worlds, we should, without question, occasionally do so : and we should, on these visits, not be altogether unconcerned spectators of what is going on, but should in some cases interfere, properly or improperly, according to our different views and dispositions. The same thing, then, may be considered as probable with regard to angels, both good and bad. It is to be supposed that they do thus visit us and act among us, unless, indeed, they be positively prohibited by God. Nor is there any impossibility, or improbability, in the nature of things, that spirits should communicate to us thoughts both holy and sinful. We communicate thoughts to each other, in various ways, of which, if we had not been constituted exactly as we are, it would have been impossible for us to form any conception. Hence it follows that there may be other ways of communication still which we cannot conceive. It will not be disputed that angels communicate their thoughts to each other, and yet we cannot comprehend how they do so ; why, then, should our ignorance of the manner in which they ascertain our thoughts, and communicate thoughts to us, be viewed as a proof that no such intercourse can exist ? It may, indeed, be objected, that when men hold such intercourse with men, they are conscious of the presence and actings of each other; whereas they are not conscious either of the presence or of the communications of good or bad spirits, and therefore ought to conclude against such presence and such communications. To this we reply, that if such consciousness be demanded, there are many well-authenticated instances of it, in which men have been sensible of the presence and words and actings of these spirits. Notice, however, to what an extreme of impiety and atheism it would lead, to say that ideas cannot be conveyed to us by any being of whose presence and acts we are not conscious ; for this would exclude the great Creator Himself from all access to the souls he has made. Both reason and Scripture lead us to believe that God does direct our minds, though we are not sensible of His presence and agency. Why, then, may not the same thing hold substantially with regard to the holy and fallen angels ? Thus the objection, by proving too much, proves nothing. Is there not then, on the whole, something rational in the

idea that good angels may promote man's holiness, and evil angels his disobedience? On the supposition of that agency being equal on both sides, man would be no loser. On the supposition of the favourable influence being at least more general than the unfavourable, man would be obviously a gainer. It is possible, too, that the permission of some unfavourable interference might serve important purposes to man, and be overruled for the greater glory of God. Thus the subject has a very different aspect in the eye of reason, from what some profane witlings and self-conceited objectors pretend. Viewed, again, in the light of revelation, though many points are left obscure, there are many points cleared up, on the subject of the fallen angels. We are told that they were originally holy and happy in heaven, like those who are now confirmed in blessedness; that one of them of high rank, now called Satan, or the devil, by way of horrid eminence, instigated by pride and ambition, rebelled against God, and was joined in his rebellion by a great multitude of the heavenly host; that they were banished from heaven; that no means are appointed for their recovery; that they are reserved under chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day; that though they are in general confined, they, and especially their chief, are permitted, at times, to go a certain length in their endeavour to extend the dominion of sin to which they are prompted by their malice and wickedness; that the devil was the successful tempter of our first parents; that he has been instrumental in many of the crimes and calamities of mankind; that he opposed the Son of God, and excited to His crucifixion; that he and his associates have habitually acted, as far as they could, as the deceivers and destroyers of men; that they will continue in the same desperate course till the end of time: and that then their power will be crushed, and they will be left to lie for ever under the load of guilt and misery which they have brought upon themselves. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *Christ tempted, yet sinless*:—There is a difficulty connected with our Lord's temptation, which has, I suppose, more or less clearly presented itself to every one who has sought at all to enter into the deeper significance of this mysterious transaction. The difficulty and dilemma may be stated thus: Either there was that in Christ which more or less responded to the temptation—how then was He without sin, seeing that sin moves and lives in the region of desires quite as really as in that of external acts? or there was nothing in Him that responded to the suggestions of the tempter—where then was the reality of the temptation, or what was the significance of that victory which in the wilderness He won? The secret of the difficulty which these alternatives present to our minds, so that sometimes it appears to us impossible that Christ's temptation should have had anything real in it, leaving Him as it did wholly unscathed, lies in the mournful experience which we in our own spiritual life, have made, namely, that almost all of our temptations involve more or less of sin, that the serpent leaves something of his trail and slime even there where he is not allowed to nestle and make his home. Conquerors though we may be, yet we seldom issue from the conflict without a scratch—a hurt it may be which soon heals, but which has left its cicatrice behind it. The saint, if he shine as a diamond at last, yet it is still as a diamond which has been polished in its own dust. For we may take up arms against the evil thought, we may rally the higher powers of our souls, and call in the might of a Mightier to put the evil and its author to flight, yet this we seldom do till it has already found some place within us. Our acquiescence may have been but momentary! yet even the moment during which the evil was not abhorred and loathed is irreconcilable with the idea of an absolute holiness, which is as a mirror whose perfect brightness no lightest breath has ever troubled or tarnished for an instant. The reconciliation of an entire sinlessness in Christ with the reality of the temptations to which He was exposed lies in this, that there was never in Him this momentary delectation; even as there need not be in us; and would not be, if we always were, and had always in time past been, upon our highest guard. (*Archbishop Trench.*) *Christ's conflict and ours*:—The temptation in the wilderness is the image of the conflict of the Christian life. 1. The temptation. 2. The enemy. 3. The attack. 4. The weapon. 5. The victory. 6. The crown. Finally, the question: If you fight against Christ, how can you still have courage; if you fight under Christ, how can you still be anxious? (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *Typical temptations*:—The three temptations of the Lord typify those employed against men by Satan at the different stages of life. Sensuality is especially the sin of the youth, ambition especially that of the man, avarice especially that of the old man. Whoever has overcome the first of these three temptations must count upon the second; whoever sees the second behind him will soon be covertly

approached by the third. But in all temptations, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Over against forty days' temptation in the first stand the forty days' peace and joy in the second life of the Lord. (*Ibid.*) *Comfort from Christ's temptation* :—Christ was tempted even as we are, yet without sin. This word is—1. A light for our blindness. 2. A spur for our slackness. 3. A staff for our weakness. (*Rautenberg.*) *Temptation* :—There is no sin in being tempted : for the perfect Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are." Temptation does not necessitate sinning ; for of Jesus, when tempted, we read—"yet without sin." Not even the worst forms of it involve sin : for Jesus endured without sin the subtlest of temptations, from the evil one himself. 1. It may be needful for us to be tempted—(1) For test. Sincerity, faith, love, patience, are thus put to proof. (2) For growth. Temptation develops and increases our graces. (3) For usefulness. We become able to comfort and warn others. (4) For victory. How glorious to overcome the arch-enemy. (5) For God's glory. He vanquishes Satan by feeble men. 2. Solitude will not prevent temptation. (1) It may even aid it. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. (2) Nor will fasting and prayer always keep off the tempter ; for these had been fully used by our Lord. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The fasting and temptation of Jesus* :—What is Christ doing in this long solitude and silence of the wilderness? To say that He is fasting does not satisfy our inquiry. Who has not wished many times that he could have the record of these forty days ? We know that He is not bewailing His sins ; nor afflicting Himself purposely in penances of hunger and starvation ; nor wrestling with the question whether He will undertake the work to which He is called. But these are negations only, and I think we shall be able to fix on several important points where we know sufficient in the positive to justify a large deduction concerning the probable nature of the struggle through which Jesus is here passing. 1. He has a nature that in part is humanly derived. But now it is opened to Him that He is here not as here belonging ; that He is sent, let down into the world, incarnated into human evil. 2. It is not to be doubted that He had internal struggles of a different nature, growing out of His hereditary connection with our humanly disordered and retributively broken state. I refer, more especially, to what must have come upon Him under the law of bad suggestion. 3. It is not to be doubted that His human weakness made a fearful recoil from the lot of suffering, and the horrible death now before Him. 4. There comes upon Him also, at the point of His call or endowment, still another and vaster kind of commotion, that belongs even to His Divine nature. The love He had before to mankind was probably more like that of a simply perfect man. Having now the fallen world itself put upon His love, and the endowment of a Saviour entered consciously into His heart, His whole Divinity is heaved into such commotion as is fitly called an agony. 5. Once more, the mind of Jesus, in His forty days' retirement and fasting must have been profoundly engaged and powerfully tasked in the unfolding of the necessary plan. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *Satan adapts his temptations* :—Whensoever he tempteth he taketh this advantage, if he can discover or obtain it. He is wiser than to set sail against wind and tide, to row against the stream ; therefore he labours all he can to find which way the stream of man's affections runs ; and to what sins his relations, his calling, or his opportunities lay him most open and obnoxious ; accordingly he lays his snares, and spreads his net. When he meets with a proud man, him he tempteth with high thoughts : when he meeteth with a covetous man, him he tempteth to the love of the world ; he lays a golden bait of profit before his eyes : the adulterous he leads to the harlot's house. For howsoever it be true, that every man hath in him a principle suiting to every sin ; yet it is a truth too, that every man is not equally active for, or disposed unto every sin ; and every man hath not every particular sin predominant in him : now Satan, when he seeth what is predominant in any man, then he fashioneth and frameth a temptation suitable. (*Caryl.*) *Temptations in youth* :—The temptations assail you most fiercely now, at the outset of your life. You are like those who have to build the breakwater against the sea. And the great struggle with the waves is for the foundation ; every stone laid is laid in fiercest struggle ; after the foundation, the work can proceed. Now, you are laying the foundation. Yield once to temptation, let but once the tempter be your master, and he may lead you for evermore in chains. Be strong and be very courageous. "Take to yourself the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in this evil day, and having done all to stand!" (*H. Wonnacott.*) *Christ not harmed by temptation* :—His purity will not be sullied by temptation. Temptation cannot defile. The unclean bird, as he flaps his black wings in flight, may throw his

shadow on the whiteness of the mountain snow, but it is not stained. The clear blue of highland lake may be darkened by overshadowing blackness, but the lucid depth is undefiled. Christ may be tempted, but temptation harms only as it is entertained, and dallied with, and obeyed. (*Ibid.*) *Face to face with Satan*:—Perhaps very few of you know how a man feels when, for the first time, he finds himself, as I remember finding myself, within a few inches of a serpent—when he sees the cobra di capello rearing its head ready to strike, and knows that one stroke of those fangs is death—certain death. That moment he experiences a varied passion, impossible to describe. Fear, hatred, loathing, the desire to escape, the desire to kill, all rush into one moment, making his entire being thrill. Now, take two men: one is in the face of that serpent; the other is in the presence of the old serpent called Satan, the devil; one is in danger of the sting; the other is in danger of committing sin. Which of the two has most reason to flee? (*W. Arthur, D.D.*) *The best of men not exempt from temptation*:—Felix Neff was often heard singing praises to God, when alone in his room. Worldly men said of him: "What a singular being! he seems unhappy, and yet, when he is alone, he is always singing!" It was because Neff rejoiced in the Lord. Yet his friends relate that he had also great spiritual trials. He said that he was sometimes so assailed by the adversary of souls, that he seemed to himself to be surrounded with ruins, and he lost for a moment even the hope of being saved. But soon he resumed courage. "He who has taken me into fellowship with Himself is faithful," said he; "and if, on account of my many unfaithfulnesses, He hides for a moment His face, I hope ever in Him: I know in whom I have believed!" *Meaning of "tempt"*:—The word "tempt," in the simple notion of it, signifies to try, to experiment, to prove, as when a vessel is pierced, that the nature of the liquor it contains may be ascertained. Hence God is said sometimes to tempt, and we are commanded as our duty to tempt, or try, or search ourselves to know what is in us, and to pray that God would do so also. So temptation is like a knife that may either cut the meat or the throat of a man; it may be his food or his poison, his exercise or his destruction. (*J. Owen, D.D.*) *Satan is sometime incessant in temptations, and sets upon us with continued importunities*:—Here we may note a distinction of temptations, besides that of invisible and visible: that some are movable and short fits, and as it were skirmishes, in which he stays not long, and others are more fixed and durable. We may call them solemn temptations, in which Satan doth, as it were, pitch down his tents, and doth manage a long siege against us. (*R. Gilpin.*) *Christ tempted with good*:—If any one say He was not moved by any of those temptations, he must be told that then they were no temptations to Him, and He was not tempted; nor was His victory of more significance than that of the man who, tempted to bear false witness against his neighbour, abstains from robbing him of his goods. For human need, struggle and hope, it bears no meaning; and we must reject the whole as a fantastic folly of crude invention, a mere stage show; a lie for the poor sake of the fancied truth. But asserting that these were real temptations if the story is to be received at all, am I not involving myself in a greater difficulty still? For how could the Son of God be tempted with evil? In the answer to this lies the centre, the essential germ of the whole interpretation: "He was not tempted with evil, but with good"; with inferior forms of good, that is, pressing upon Him, while the higher forms of good held themselves aloof, biding their time, that is, God's time. I do not believe that the Son of God could be tempted with evil, but I do believe that He could be tempted with good—to yield to which temptation would have been evil in Him—to the universe. (*G. Macdonald, LL.D.*) *The three temptations*:—In these three characteristic temptations we are—1. To look for the central principles of Christ's work brought to the test at the outset of His career. 2. To discern, in some degree at least, the central points of the trial of all human souls which our Lord felt in all its intensity. (*H. Wace, D.D.*) We will consider—I. THE TEMPTED. I would say here that I believe in one malignant powerful spirit. I believe the devil has a personal existence. He must have influenced the mind of Christ in one of two ways; either immediately, or by means of external agency. Which was it? Judge ye. II. THE TEMPTED. Notice three things. 1. The fact that pure human nature should have been tempted thus at all. Jesus had no sympathy with evil, yet here we find evil coming in contact with Him. 2. This temptation assailed Him immediately after His investiture with singular glory. 3. These temptations came to Christ just as He was beginning His great work of mediation on earth. III. THE TEMPTATION. Notice—1. The scenes. (1) In the

wilderness; (2) in the holy mountain; (3) in the holy city. 2. There is an appropriateness between each of these temptations, and the scenes where they occurred. (1) The first is the temptation of poverty. (2) The second to greatness and officialism. (3) The third to ostentation. 3. In each temptation, Christ was either tempted to use a wrong end or to use wrong means to secure His end, and this is the whole of temptation. APPLICATION: You who are tempted, remember— 1. That the only pure Being on earth was tried by three dreadful temptations. 2. That our nature has vanquished temptation. 3. That He who was tempted and overcame is our Friend and Brother, and High-priest. (*Caleb Morris.*) *The general elements of the temptations*:—I. ABUSE OF POWER. II. PERVERSION OF TRUTH. "It is written," said the tempter. III. MAKING PRESENT HAPPINESS THE END OF LIFE. (*Ibid.*) *The nature of the three temptations*:—I. IN THE FIRST, TO CONVERT STONES INTO BREAD, Christ, if He had yielded to it would have sinned against—1. The law of spiritual self-government. 2. The laws that govern natural life. 3. The law of miracles. II. IN THE TEMPTATION TO FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP. 1. The essence consisted in the giving up of spiritual power to worldly grandeur. 2. The tempter sinned (1) against the spirit of the Bible; (2) against the unity of the Bible; (3) against the authority of the Bible. III. IN THE TEMPTATION TO CAST HIMSELF DOWN FROM THE PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE, CHRIST WAS TEMPTED TO DO THREE THINGS. 1. To seek personal applause. 2. To use unnatural means to secure it. 3. In doing all this, falsely to trust to God for protection. (*Ibid.*) *The secret of victory*:—The history of these temptations furnishes us with the principles on which they may be vanquished. Not by fasting; for He was tempted while He was fasting. Not by retiring from the world; for He was tempted while He was alone. But by the deep indwelling of truth. Not by outward truth, but by truth in us. A man may have truth in his book, and his book in his pocket. He may have it in his creed, and have it in his brain, and yet not possess one truth that will enable him to conquer a single temptation. Christ repelled temptation by indwelling truth. Christ repelled temptation by a threefold statement: "Man shall not live by bread alone"; "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God"; "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." These words may be summed up—man by God; man for God; man according to God. (*Ibid.*) *The design of the three temptations*:—1. To arouse in Jesus a painful sense of the contrast between the abundance due to His Divine greatness and the miserable destitution in which He found Himself. 2. To provoke Him to win universal empire by a sudden exhibition of Divine power rather than by a patient manifestation of the Divine character. 3. To lead Him to presume on the favour and love of which the voice from Heaven had just assured Him. (*F. Godet, D.D.*) *Tempted like as we are*:—There is—I. AN APPEAL TO APPETITE. It is here that temptation first and most strongly besets a youth. The great turning question of life is, "Am I to be the body's; or is the body to be mine, and mine for God's?" He only can be truly said to live who, by faith in God's Word and obedience unto Him, seeks constantly to serve the Lord. II. AN APPEAL TO AMBITION. The same insidious temptation is, in one form or another, repeated in the case of every man; and for the most part, in the commencement of his career, he has to fight the battle, or to yield himself a captive. God's way to honour and power and wealth is still steep, and arduous and rugged; and to the man who is wearifully exerting himself to overmaster its difficulties, Satan comes, offering his short and easy road to the summit of his ambition—in how many cases, alas! with the most complete success. Avoid the devil's short cuts, and make the words of our Lord, "Thou shalt worship," &c., the motto of your lives. Listen to the words of Havelock when told that there were prejudices against him in certain quarters on account of his religion: "I humbly trust that in that great matter I should not change my opinions and practice, though it rained garters and coronets as the reward of apostasy." III. AN APPEAL TO FAITH. This as insidious as the rest. Jesus had already repelled the tempter by expressing His confidence in God, and allegiance to His Father; and to that very principle which had before foiled him, he addresses himself now; as if he had said, "Dost thou trust God? come, and I will place thee in circumstances such as will make manifest to all His guardian care of Thee." The principle of Christ's answer is this: We are never to be guilty of tempting Providence by setting either His natural or spiritual laws at defiance. If we are in danger, in God's service, we may rely that He will be with us. But we have no right to imagine that He will suspend the law of gravitation, whenever we choose to leap over a precipice; or that He will suspend the spiritual laws which regulate the

actions of our souls, whenever we put ourselves in the way of temptation. APPLICATION: You may overcome every temptation by giving up the fortress of your soul to this same Jesus, who vanquished Satan here. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The devil's real character disclosed:*—We learn much of Satan, our great adversary, from the different ways in which he attempted to lead our Lord astray. I. THE POVERTY OF SATAN. How little he has to offer Christ—not so much as bread, only stones. II. HIS IMPUDENCE. Repelled once, he returns to the attack, and asks for adoration to be given him, a lost and fallen angel, by the Lord of heaven and earth. III. His weakness. He did not cast our Lord down: not even bind Him; no power to force—he can only try to persuade. Sin is not so strong as it is often represented. IV. HIS CRAFT. 1. He attacks the Lord's weakness by fasting. As the general surveys the most likely time to raise the siege of a beleaguered city, so the devil always watches his opportunity. 2. He pretends to ask a most simple request, when it is really hard and most difficult. 3. He graduates his temptations. In the first temptation, he places himself before man; then, before an angel; lastly, in the place of God. All sin is graduated. V. HIS LIES. He promises—1. That which he has not to give. 2. That which he has no intention of giving. CONCLUSION: 1. Fear not this devil. 2. Ever watch for him. 3. Meet him boldly, and you will overcome him. (*M. Faber.*) *The devil the architect of evil:*—The devil is the great architect of wickedness, as Christ is the Prince of life and righteousness. *The devil the accuser and defamer of God:*—Here in this chapter the devil doth "strive to put out the very eye of God's providence," that he might shake Christ's faith, as it were, and drive Him to distrust. He accuseth His wisdom in our retirement and secret sins, and that with some scorn: "Tush, God doth not see it: nor is there knowledge in the Most High" (Psa. lxxiii. 11). He accuseth His justice, and puts stout words into our mouths when we deny our obedience: "It is in vain to serve the Lord: and what profit is there that we have kept His ordinances?" (Mal. iii. 14.) He defames His mercy, when, remembering our sins, we fall under them, as a burden too heavy for us (Psa. xxxviii. 4), and as if God had "forgotten to be merciful" (Psa. lxxvii. 9). He roars loud against His very power in the mouth of a Rabshakeh, and would persuade the Israelites that to say God should deliver them was nothing else but to deliver themselves up to famine and thirst (2 Kings xviii. 30). He casts his venom upon all the Divine attributes, and makes them the inducements to sin, which are the strongest motives to goodness. He never presents God to us as He is, but in several forms and all such as may drive us from one attribute to run us on another. He presents Him without an eye, that we may do what we list; without a hand, that we may trust in a hand of flesh; without an ear, that our blasphemies may be loud. He makes us favourable interpreters of Him before we sin, and unjust judges of Him when we have sinned. He makes Him a libertine to the presumptuous, and a Novatian to the despairing, sinner; being a liar in all, whose every breath is a defamation. *Nulla apud eum turpis ratio vincendi*, as was said of king Philip: "He is not ashamed of any lie that may lead us from the truth." And as he defameth God unto us, so in every sin almost he accuses us unto ourselves. In the heat of our zeal he accuseth us of madness, that we may be remiss; and in our meekness he chargeth us with folly, that we may learn to be angry. In our justice he calls us tyrants, that we may yield it up unto unnecessary pity; and in our compassion he urgeth the want of justice, that, to put on the new man, we may put off all bowels of mercy. He accuseth our faith to our charity, and persuades us that for all our good works we are none of the faithful; and our charity to our hope, as if it were so cold it could kindle no such virtue within us. From religion he drives us on to superstition, and from the fear of superstition into that gulf of profaneness which will swallow us up. And then, when he hath us in his nets, when he hath by accusing us unto ourselves made us guilty indeed, when by accusing our virtues he hath brought us to sin, he draws his bill of accusation, and for one sin writes down a hundred. (*A. Farindon, D.D.*) *Why is he called the devil?*—The word signifies a slanderer or accuser. And he accuseth—1. To God; 2. To man. 1. To God he accuseth man; hence called the accuser of the brethren (Rev. xii.). And thus he accused Job (Job i. and ii.). 2. To man. He accuses—(1) God Himself, as to our first parents, as envying their felicity, and over-hardly dealing with them in their restraint of that fruit, and so still he doth in the matter of reprobation and the commandments of the law. (2) He accuses or slanders the graces of God, he brings an ill name upon them to discredit them with us. Thus he slanders zeal to be rashness, justice to be cruelty, wisdom to be craft, mercy to be

fond softness, humility to be baseness. (3) He slanders the servants of God, that they are hot, fiery, furious, factious, enemies to Cæsar, curious, proud, &c. (4) His neighbours, and such with whom he hath to deal, by suggesting false suspicions and surmises against them. (5) His own self, by enraging his conscience against him. Now Satan especially is an accuser, in accusing us to God and our own consciences. And he doth this specially—(*a*) After the committing of some grievous sin which he tempted us unto. Before he seemed our friend, and put upon sin a goodly vizor, but now he plucks it off, and urges us to desperation. (*b*) In some more grievous trial, and specially at the hour of death. (*c*) At the day of judgment. 1. It being the devil's office to be an accuser or slanderer, let us take heed of doing such ill offices. Let the devil have his own office, let us not go about to take it out of his hands. 2. Since the devil is an accuser, it must make us wary over our ways, as we are wary in our worldly estates of the promoter, of pick-thanks, and tale-bearers. He will accuse falsely when there is no cause, much more then will he accuse when we give him cause by our sins. Howbeit, even here will he be a false accuser and slanderer, by making that to be treason which is but petty larceny, and sins of infirmity to be the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. (*D. Dyke.*) *Let us not aid our accuser*:—Let us then say with Joseph, "'How can I commit this wickedness, and sin against God' (Gen. xxxix. 9), who would save me? and how can I commit this, and help the devil, my enemy, to accuse me?" In the affairs of this world we are very sly and cautelous, and will not give any advantage to those whom we suppose to be no well-willers unto us. Nay, many times we abstain from things not unlawful, in the presence of those we do not love, because we fear whatsoever we do will be misinterpreted, and can expect no better gloss than that which malice will make. And shall we be so confident on the greatest enemy of mankind as to help his malice, and to further and promote the desire which he hath of our ruins? Shall I fill this accuser's mouth with arguments against myself, and even furbish and whet the sword of my executioner? This is a folly which we cannot but be ashamed of; and yet in every sin we commit, we commit this folly. But yet, in the last place, as St. John saith, "If we sin, we have an Advocate" (1 John ii. 1); so say I, If we sin, and the devil put up his bill of accusation against us (as most certainly he will), let us learn to accuse ourselves; and that will make his accusation void, and cancel his bill. From a broken and a contrite heart let us say, "We have sinned," and he hath nothing to say. Let us confess our sins, and we have put the adversary to silence. (*A. Farindon, D.D.*) *Why was Christ tempted?*—1. That we might see the horrible rage and senseless madness of the devil against God and our salvation. 2. That we should know how fit it is there should be trials of ministers before they enter into their functions. 3. That ministers might know who will be their special adversary they must conflict with in their ministry. 4. That we might see how fit it is that ministers and men of great callings should be fitted and prepared for the good discharge of them by temptation, and by their own experience might learn to relieve others (2 Cor. i. 4). 5. To give us warning to look to ourselves. If Satan durst set upon Christ, who was as green wood, and had abundance of moisture to quench the heat of his fire, what then will he do to us that are dry, and quickly set on fire? 6. To overcome our temptation with His as He did our death with His. For as death lost his sting lighting on Christ, so also Satan's temptations, and the foil He gave Satan was for us. 7. That by suffering that which was the desert of our sins, his love towards us might appear the more. 8. That there might be some answering to the Israelites being forty years in the desert in many trials and temptations. A day answering a year, as there was before in Christ's going into Egypt. 9. That our Lord might the better know how to pity, and tender, and relieve us with comforts, when we are in temptation. They pity us most in our sicknesses, that have felt the same themselves. (*D. Dyke.*) *Why Christ would submit to be tempted*:—1. Thus was Christ evidenced to be the second Adam, and the seed of the woman. His being tempted, and in such a manner, doth clearly satisfy us that He was true man. 2. This was a fair preludium and earnest of that final conquest over Satan, and the breaking down of his power. 3. There was a more peculiar aim in God by these means of temptation to qualify Him with pity and power to help (Heb. ii. 18; iv. 15). 4. The consequence of this experimental compassion in Christ was a further reason why He submitted to be tempted, to wit, that we might have the greater comfort and encouragement in the expectancy of tender dealing from Him. 5. A further end God seemed to have in this, viz., to give a signal and remarkable instance to us of the nature of

temptations; of Satan's subtlety, his impudency. That neither height of privilege, nor eminency of employment, nor holiness of person, will discourage Satan from tempting, or secure any from his assaults. The best of men in the highest attainments may expect temptations. Grace itself doth not exempt them. 1. For none of these privileges in us, nor eminencies of grace, want matter to fix a temptation upon. The weaknesses of the best of men are such that a temptation is not rendered improbable, as to the success, by their graces. 2. None of us are beyond the necessity of such exercises. It cannot be said that we need them not, or that there may not be holy ends wherefore God should not permit and order them for our good. Temptations, as they are in God's disposal, are a necessary spiritual physic. The design of them is to humble us, to prove us, and to do us good in the latter end (Deut. viii. 16). Nothing will work more of care, watchfulness, diligence, and fear in a gracious heart, than a sense of Satan's designment against it. 3. The privileges and graces of the children of God do stir up Satan's pride, revenge, and rage against them. This is also of use to those that are apt to be confident upon their successes against sin through grace. Satan, they may see, will be upon them again; so that they must behave themselves as mariners, who, when they have got the harbour, and are out of the storm, mend their ship and tackling, and prepare again for the sea. That there may be temptations without leaving a touch of guilt or impurity behind them upon the tempted. It is true this is rare with men. The best do seldom go down to the battle, but in their very conquests they receive some wound; and in those temptations that arise from our own hearts, we are never without fault; but in such as do solely arise from Satan, there is a possibility that the upright may so keep himself, that the wicked one may not so touch him as to leave the print of his fingers behind him. But the great difficulty is, How it may be known when temptations are from Satan, and when from ourselves? To answer this I shall lay down these conclusions: 1. The same sins which our own natures would suggest to us, may also be injected by Satan. 2. There is no sin so vile, but our own heart might possibly produce it without Satan. 3. There are many cases wherein it is very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to determine whether our own heart or Satan gives the first life or breathing to a temptation. 4. Though it be true, which some say, that in most cases it is needless altogether to spend our time in disputing whether the motions of sin in our minds are firstly from ourselves or from Satan, our greatest business being rather to resist them than to difference them; yet there are special cases wherein it is very necessary to find out the true parent of a sinful motion, and these are when tender consciences are wounded and oppressed with violent and great temptations, as blasphemous thoughts, atheistical objections, &c. As Joseph's steward hid the cup in Benjamin's sack, that it might be a ground of accusation against him, so doth the devil first oppress them with such thoughts, and then accuseth them of all that villainy and wickedness, the motions whereof he had with such importunity forced upon them; and so apt are the afflicted to comply with accusations against themselves, that they believe it is so, and from thence conclude that they are given up of God, hardened as Pharaoh, that they have sinned against the Holy Ghost, and finally that there is no hope of mercy for them. All this befalls them from their ignorance of Satan's dealings, and here is their great need to distinguish Satan's malice from their guilt. 5. We may discover if they proceed from Satan, though not simply from the matter of them, not from the suddenness and independency of them, yet from a due consideration of their nature and manner of proceeding, compared with the present temper and disposition of our heart. As—1. When unusual temptations intrude upon us with a high impetuosity and violence, while our thoughts are othewise concerned and taken up. 2. While such things are borne in upon us, against the actual loathing, strenuous reluctancy, and high complainings of the soul, when the mind is filled with horror and the body with trembling at the presence of such thoughts. 3. Our hearts may bring forth that which is unnatural in itself, and may give rise to a temptation that would be horrid to the thoughts of other men. 4. Much more evident is it that such proceed from Satan, when they are of long continuance and constant trouble. Application: The considcration of this is of great use to those that suffer under the violent hurries of strange temptations. 1. In that sometime they can justly complain of the affliction of such temptation, when they have no reason to charge it upon themselves as their sin. Satan only barks when he suggests, but he then bites and wounds when he draws us to consent. 2. That not only the sin but the degree also, by just consequence, is to be measured by the

consent of the heart. (*R. Gilpin.*) *The design of Christ's temptation*:—1. For faith, that the temptations of Christ have sanctified temptations unto us: that whereas before they were curses, like unto hanging on a tree; now, since Christ hath been both tempted and hanged on a tree, they be no longer signs and pledges of God's wrath, but favours. A man may be the child of God notwithstanding, and therefore he is not to receive any discouragement by any of them. 2. Besides the sanctifying, it is an abatement, so that now when we are tempted, they have not the force they had before: for now the serpent's head is bruised, so that he is now nothing so strong (as he was) to cast his darts. Also the head of his darts are blunted. (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *Tempter and accuser*:—And therefore if we be wise, let us resist him in the first, give no place to him when he is a tempter, so shall we not fear him, when he is an accuser, nor feel him as a tormenter. (*Bishop Cowper.*) *The wicked free from temptation*:—So Satan troubles not such as are under his power already; such as are empty of grace he desires not to winnow, for what have they in them to be sifted out? The dog barks not at the dumb sticks, but at strangers: when the door is wide open, and there is free ingress and egress, there is no knocking; but if once shut up, then still one or other is rapping and bouncing. The wicked have the doors of their hearts set wide open to Satan, therefore he raps not there by tentation, but at the godlies, that shut and bar up this door against him. They then that brag they were never troubled with Satan's temptations, do thereby profess their want of grace. If they had any spiritual treasure, this thief would be dealing with them. If they had been taken out of the hands of Satan by the power of Christ, he would have raged, and took on, labouring with all his might to recover his prey. A lion scorns to meddle with a mouse, and so doth this roaring lion with thee that hath no booty for him. While Jacob continued under Laban's tyranny, and would be made his drudge, and his pack-horse, all was well; but when once he began to fly, he makes after him: and so doth the devil; when any one parts from him to Christ, then he is as a bear robbed of her whelps. (*D. Lyke.*) *Good Christians tempted most*:—All good Christians, then, must be tempted. But if any of them be of better graces than other, or calleth forth to higher place and service than other, they are specially eyesores to Satan, they are a fair mark for the arrows of his tentations. (*Ibid.*) *The nature of Satan's temptation*:—1. In these temptations, we may note there were external objects as well as insinuated suggestions. 2. These temptations were complex, consisting of many various designs, like a snare of many cords or nooses. When he tempted to turn stones to bread, it was not one single design, but many, that Satan had in prosecution. As distrust on one hand, pride on another, and so in the rest. The more complicated a temptation is, it is the greater. 3. These were also perplexing, entangling temptations. They were dilemmatical, such as might ensnare, either in the doing or refusal. 4. These temptations proceeded upon considerable advantages. His hunger urged a necessity of turning stones into bread. 5. These temptations were accompanied with a greater presence and power of Satan. 6. The matter of these temptations, or the things he tempted Christ to, were great and heinous abominations. 7. All these temptations pretended strongly to the advantage and benefit of Christ, and some of them might seem to be done without any blame; as to turn stones to bread, to fly in the air. 8. Satan urged some of them in a daring, provoking way—"If thou be the Son of God?" 9. These temptations seem to be designed for the engagement of all the natural powers of Christ; His natural appetite in a design of food; His senses in the most beautiful object, the world in its glory; the affections, in that which is most swaying, pride. 10. Some of these warranted as duty, and to supply necessary hunger, others depending upon the security of a promise—"He shall give His angels charge," &c. (*R. Gilpin.*) *Satan a tempter*:—There are three distinct names given to him in these temptations. 1. His name "Satan" shows his malice and fury, which is the ground and fountain whence all that trouble proceeds which we meet with from him. 2. He is styled "the tempter," and that signifies to us how he puts forth this malice, his way and exercise in the exertion of it. 3. He is called "the devil" or accuser, expressing thereby the end and issue of all. From this name, then, here given, we may observe:—That it is Satan's work and employment to tempt men. Implying (1) That though there be never so many tempters, yet Satan is the chief. (2) That he makes temptation his proper employment. That Satan doth so, I shall evidence by these few notes: 1. Temptation is in itself a business and work. 2. Satan gives up himself unto it, is wholly in it. 3. He takes a delight in it, not only from

a natural propensity, which his fall put upon him, whereby he cannot but tempt—as an evil tree cannot but bring forth evil fruits—but also from the power of a habit acquired by long exercise, which is accompanied with some kind of pleasure. 4. All other things in Satan, or in his endeavours, have either a subserviency, or some way or other a reference and respect to temptation. His power, wisdom, malice, and other infernal qualifications, render him able to tempt. 5. He cares not how it goes on, so that it go on; as a man that designs to be rich, cares not how he gets it; which shows that tempting is general in his design. (1) He sticks not to lie and dissemble. (2) He will tempt for a small matter; if he can but gain a little, or but molest us, yet he will be doing. (3) He will not give over for a foil or disappointment. (4) He is not ashamed to tempt contradictory things: he tempted Christ against the work of redemption. (5) Any temptation that he sees will hold, he takes up. (6) He will sometime tempt where he hath not probability to prevail, even against hope. The use of the observation is this, If it be his business to tempt, it must be our work to resist. (*Ibid.*) *Temptation:*—1. That ministers of the gospel, and all who have to deal with souls, need temptation. How pre-eminently was Jesus an experimental minister! 2. That when temptation cometh of God, we are all the better of it. 3. That deliverance from temptation equally with the temptation itself, to be a blessing, must be from the Lord. It was not until the devil had ended the temptation, all the temptation, that he departed. But when he had ended it, he did depart. Now, mark what immediately followed, viz., that as the Lord had been "led up" of the Spirit "to be tempted," so He was "led out" from the temptation. I read (Luke iv. 14): "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee." My friends, there is instruction for us here. We must "abide" under our trial without impatience, without murmuring, without "making haste," if we would be "led out" as well as "led up." (*A. B. Grosart, LL.D.*) *How should the tempter ever have thought of "tempting" with any hope of overcoming the Son of God?*—I may reply—I. The devil was—in the Bible sense—a "fool," I use the word "fool"—a Bible word—in its deepest and most awful meaning. It seems to me that it is not sufficiently kept in mind that sin had and has the same binding, stupefying effects on Satan that we see it have on bad men. Let a man persist in ungodliness, and see how his very eyes are put out, and how "foolish" he becomes. I should grant the devil's craft and cleverness, but not his common sense, much less wisdom; and he "cannot see afar off." There was pride in particular, to give the tempter a very lofty estimate of his own capacity. The tempter knew the effect which the lofty prize of sovereignty for which he had struck had upon his mind, and with his own self-estimate welded impenetrably by pride, he may have reasoned from himself to Christ in the prospect of that immense bribe of empire with which he was to "tempt"; while again, in retrospect, there was the great and very mournful fact, that not one "in the likeness of sinful flesh" assaulted by him, had stood immaculate, *i.e.*, without yielding less or more. The Incarnation, by the very broadness of Him who was "to be tempted," presented many sides upon which hope of partial success might hang. II. The devil had grounds to expect success, and motives of a commanding kind. I find in that curse the warrant, if I may so speak, of the temptation of the Lord Jesus. The promise gave power to the serpent to bruise the heel of the woman's seed. (*Ibid.*) *The devil a living foe:*—Here is no fate, law, machinery, impersonality merely, but a living friend and a living foe seeking our souls. I apprehend it should impart a more intense reality to our lives did we habitually grasp this verity of our "ever-living advocate," and ever-living accuser—both, not one merely. (*Ibid.*) *Temptation sanctified:*—O how He hath sanctified temptations, and made them wholesome, which before were rank poison! (*Bishop Hacket.*) *An example:*—Christ was tempted, to give us an example how to encounter with the roaring lion, and to win the mastery. As a young learner will observe diligently every ward and thrust that an experienced gladiator makes, so the Holy Ghost hath set down for our advertisement every passage, how Christ did turn and wind the delusions of the serpent. (*Ibid.*) *Temptation a corrective:*—As a little wedge is beaten in sometimes to drive out a greater, so a little temptation is suffered to creep in that a bigger mischief may not enter. The falling into some sins in the best of God's servants is an anticipation against pride, that they may not be puffed up with their own righteousness. Some errors and offences do rub salt upon a good man's integrity, that it may not putrify with presumption. (*Ibid.*) *Satan a reality:*—As if the sheep should think wolves were but a tale, there were no such creatures that sought to devour them. (*Ibid.*) *Christians tempted:*—If Beel-

zebub was busy with the master, what will he be with the servants? (*Ibid.*) *Fire in us*:—To us the devil needs bring but a pair of bellows, for he shall find fire within us; but to Christ he was fain to bring fire too. (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *Christ's antipathy against sin*:—But in Christ there was an antipathy against sin, as in the stomach against some meats, the which the more we are urged to eat of them, the more we loathe them; whereas in other meats that we especially love, the very sight of them is persuasion enough to eat of them. Christ's heart to Satan's temptations was as a stone or brass wall to an arrow, repulsing them back presently. Our hearts are as a butt, where they may easily fasten themselves. Ours is a barrel of gunpowder to the fire, Christ's as water, and therefore He said, "The prince of this world is come, and hath nought in Me" (John xiv. 30). (*D. Dyke.*) *Temptations incessant*:—The more we strive and beat them away, the more, like flies, they come upon us. (*Ibid.*) **And in those days He did eat nothing.**—*Fasting*:—1. Fasting leads to uninterrupted communion with God. I believe that herein lies the great secret of the often-recurring retirement of our Lord, and of many of His holiest followers. It is a good thing to spend a whole day or days alone with God. It tests a man's spirituality. 2. Fasting breaks in upon our matter-of-course reception of every-day "mercies." 3. Fasting is literally necessary to not a few of God's people. But now turning from fasting in itself to the fasting of the Lord, I ask your attention to six things in it. 1. The fasting was watched. All through the "days forty and nights forty" the tempter's eye was upon Jesus. 2. The fasting was supernatural. This lies on the surface of the record. 3. The fasting was preparative. You remember that the Spirit "led up" the Lord "immediately" (Mark i. 12). The threefold temptation came not until the "forty days" were ended. Clearly that He might be prepared for what awaited Him. 4. The fasting was antitypical. The most cursory reader of Scripture must be struck with the recurrence of certain numbers. I cannot now tarry to dwell upon this. But with reference to "forty," it surely is noticeable that "forty" days was the Old Testament period allotted for repentance. 5. The fasting was for our learning. 6. The fasting of the "nights" suggests imitation in measure. It is noticeable how much of night, even midnight prayer and praise, "with fasting," there is in the Psalms and by Jesus. Thus quaintly and racily does John Downame speak, in his "Guide to Godliness," of the benefit of devotion at bedtime: "Ovens that have been baked in over night are easily heated the next morning. The cask that was well seasoned in the evening will swell the next day. The fire that was well raked up when we went to bed, will be the sooner kindled when we rise. Thus, if in the evening we spend ourselves in the examination of our hearts, how we have spent the time past, and commit ourselves unto the good guidance of God for the time to come, we shall soon find the spiritual warmth thereof making us able and active for all good duties in the morning; and by adding some new fuel to this holy fire, we shall with much facility and comfort cause it to burn and blaze in all Christian and religious duties." (*A. B. Grosart, LL.D.*) *Satan invades holy duties*:—There is no place so holy, nor exercise so good, as can repress his courage, or give a stay to the boldness of his attempts, as we see (Mark iv. 14). (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *Oil taken from the lamp*:—Moreover, take away oil from the lamp, and the flame will go out by little and little; and surely hunger and thirst, and afflicting the body, joined with prayer and repentance, shall obtain this mercy, that the violence of voluptuousness and luxury shall be abated in our sinful flesh. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Distress favourable to temptation*:—For as at that time the devil came upon Christ when hunger pinched Him, so where we are in any distress we are to look for temptations. (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *Fastings*:—Fastings there are even still in the kingdom of God upon earth; bodily and spiritual fasts of all kinds; painful and cheerful fasts. Those which are most cheerful are kept in that vernal season of the soul, when in the genial warmth of the risen Sun of Righteousness, it first begins to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; for it now feels the kindness and love of God our Saviour, which hath appeared unto all men, and it is affianced to the heavenly Bridegroom. The soul now no longer needs self-denial and forbearance to be commanded and enjoined, for it renounces self of its own accord. It flies, as by a new instinct, from scenes of temptation and danger, like a bird from the deadly weapon of the fowler. How can the once lost son, now happily recovered, content himself any longer with the husks! for he has tasted the fruit of the vine that flourished in "the pleasant land," and of the refreshments of its milk and honey. How can the renewed man still take delight in the timbrel and the dance,

or rejoice at the sound of the tabret and pipe, after he has once learnt to raise his holy songs of joy on the harp of David! In opposition to the vanities and follies of this world he sets the certainties which his faith now beholds in the opening glories of heaven; and with the couch of ease and luxury he contrasts the cross whereon He whom his soul loveth was suspended, bleeding and crowned with thorns. Away then at once with every wretched and shadowy joy and every glittering vanity; trouble us not, vain world, with these, for we are keeping a fast to the Lord. How often do we hear it controverted and questioned whether one pleasure or another be compatible with real piety! Only let men become really in earnest about their own salvation, and they will cease from such flimsy casuistry; and will perceive at once what agrees or disagrees with the spirit of true religion; or how far permission and ability to pursue any pleasure may belong to children of God and heirs of the kingdom. Other fastings are incident to a state of grace, which are not joyous, but grievous. These happen when the soul is led away, not from the wild luxuries of the world into the pastures of the good Shepherd, but from these refreshing and invigorating pastures into a seeming wilderness. Oh! it is a bitter change, and we have felt it the more from having enjoyed such unspeakable happiness while leaning on Jesus' bosom. We then cry out, "Where is the blessedness I knew? Where are now those lively and sweet emotions, those congenial delights and lively enjoyments which we realized in the Lord's nearness to our souls?" (*F. W. Krummacher, D.D.*) *Fasting a source of trial:*—Now in many ways the example of Christ may be made a comfort and encouragement to us at this Lenten season of the year. And, first of all, it will be well to insist on the circumstance, that our Lord did thus retire from the world, as confirming to us the like duty, as far as we can observe it. Next, I observe, that our Saviour's fast was but introductory to His temptation. He went into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, but before He was tempted He fasted. Nor, as is worth notice, was this a mere preparation for the conflict, but it was the cause of the conflict in good measure. Instead of its simply arming Him against temptation, it is plain, that in the first instance, His retirement and abstinence exposed Him to it. Fasting was the primary occasion of it. "When He had fasted forty days and forty nights He was afterwards an hungered"; and then the tempter came, bidding Him turn the stones into bread. Satan made use of His fast against Himself. And this is singularly the case with Christians now, who endeavour to imitate Him; and it is well they should know it, for else they will be discouraged when they practise abstinences. It is commonly said that fasting is intended to make us better Christians, to sober us, and to bring us more entirely at Christ's feet in faith and humility. This is true, viewing matters on the whole. On the whole, and at last, this effect will be produced, but it is not at all certain that it will follow at once. On the contrary, such mortifications have at the time very various effects on different persons, and are to be observed, not from their visible benefits, but from faith in the Word of God. Some men, indeed, are subdued by fasting, and brought at once nearer to God; but others find it, however slight, scarcely more than an occasion of temptation. For instance, it is sometimes even made an objection to fasting, as if it were a reason for not practising it, that it makes a man irritable and ill-tempered. I confess it often may do this. Again, what very often follows from it is a feebleness which deprives him of his command over his bodily acts, feelings, and expressions. Thus it makes him seem, for instance, to be out of temper when he is not; I mean, because his tongue, his lips, nay his brain, are not in his power. He does not use the words he wishes to use, nor the accent and tone. He seems sharp when he is not; and the consciousness of this, and the reaction of that consciousness upon his mind, is a temptation, and actually makes him irritable, particularly if people misunderstand him, and think him what he is not. Again, weakness of body may deprive him of self-command in other ways; perhaps he cannot help smiling or laughing when he ought to be serious, which is evidently a most distressing and humbling trial; or when wrong thoughts present themselves his mind cannot throw them off any more than if it were some dead thing, and not spirit; but they then make an impression on him which he is not able to resist. Or again, weakness of body often hinders him from fixing his mind on his prayers instead of making him pray more fervently; or again, weakness of body is often attended with langour and listlessness, and strongly tempts a man to sloth. Yet I have not mentioned the most distressing of the effects which may follow from even the moderate exercise of this great Christian duty. It is undeniably a means of temptation, and I say so, lest persons should

be surprised, and despond when they find it so. And this is another point which calls for distinct notice in the history of our Saviour's fasting and temptation, viz., the victory which attended it. He had three temptations, and thrice He conquered—at the last He said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan"; on which "the devil leaveth Him." This conflict and victory in the world unseen is intimated in other passages of Scripture. The most remarkable of these is what our Lord says with reference to the demoniac whom His apostles could not cure (Mark ix. 29). And I think there is enough evidence, even in what may be known afterwards of the effects of such exercises upon persons now (not to have recourse to history), to show that these exercises are God's instruments for giving the Christian a high and royal power above and over his fellows. And this is part of the lesson taught us by the long continuance of the Lent fast—that we are not to gain our wishes by one day set apart for humiliation, or by one prayer, however fervent, but by "continuing instant in prayer." This, too, is signified to us in the account of Jacob's conflict. He, like our Saviour, was occupied in it through the night. In like manner Moses passed one of his forty days' fast in confession and intercession for the people who had raised the golden calf (Deut. ix. 25, 26). An angel came to Daniel upon his fast; so, too, in our Lord's instance, angels came and ministered unto Him; and so we, too, may well believe, and take comfort in the thought, that even now, angels are especially sent to those who thus seek God. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *Fasting*:—And, first, let us beware of the opinion of merit before God: for this conceit makes even good works an abomination to the Lord. There is no place for grace to enter in, where merit hath possession. Secondly, we are to take heed that our fasting be without superstition. Thirdly, that it be not without prayer. Fourthly, let fasting be without ostentation before men. Our Saviour fasted in secret, in the wilderness. Last of all, let it always be seconded with amendment of life. (*Bishop Cowper.*) *Reasons for the fast*:—1. To authorize His doctrine, since He brought it out of the desert, where He had fasted so long a time in solitary retiredness, and not out of the schools and colleges, and that the rather because Moses and Elias, two notable restorers of religion under the law, had done the like. As His fasting could not but be of God, so neither His doctrine, which He thus fasting received. 2. To show the glory of His Godhead in the humiliation of His manhood. As in most of His humiliations, some sparkles of His divinity brake forth as before in His birth and in His baptism. 3. To show how little the belly should be regarded of us Christians in following the businesses of a better life. (*Ibid.*) *Temptation associated with sinless inferiority*:—When the devil spies us weak, in want and necessity, or in any other way disabled to resist him, that is a fit time for him to set upon us. As the enemies will make battery upon the walls where weakest, and every one goes over the hedge where lowest, so Satan, where and when he finds us feeblest, there and then will he be dealing with us. If in such weakness as hunger, how much more then in our deadly sicknesses, and in the very pangs of death. It is but a coward's trick, but the devil cares not for his honour, so he may hurt us. Again, if natural and sinless infirmities yield Satan an hint for temptation, what then do the unnatural and sinful? If natural hunger after meat, what then that inordinate appetite, and itching desire after gain, glory, and preferment? (*D. Dyke.*) *Temptations adapted to temperament and condition*:—The devil fits and shapes his temptations according to our several estates, conditions, and dispositions. As here one temptation for hunger and want. If Christ had been in fulness and abundance He would have had another. He hath temptations on the left hand, and temptations also on the right. When in want, then comes the temptation to distrust, to use shifts and unlawful means. If in discontent, then to be impatient; and if we be of great spirit, then to lay hands on ourselves, as in "Achitophel." If we be rich, and in great and high places, then he tempts to pride, disdain, and oppression, epicurism, and voluptuousness (Prov. iii. 8, 9). Thereafter also as our constitution of body, are his temptations. The sanguine man is tempted to vain lightness and scurrility; the choleric to wrath and fury; the melancholy to dead and unprofitable lumpishness, to strange and idle conceits; the phlegmatic to sloth and drowsiness. Every calling also hath a several temptations. As the judge to be corrupted with bribes, the preacher either with man-pleasing (Ezek. xiii.), or to self-pleasing, as Augustine complains in Psa. li.; the tradesman with deceit, and the serving-man with idleness and gaming. Every age hath its temptations—youth to be overcome with the love of pleasure, and old age with coveteousness. Yea, every gift hath its temptations, as the gift of learning, valour, eloquence, beauty—yea, the saving graces of Christianity and the calling of a Christian. He will not tempt a Christian

ordinarily to the grosser and more odious sins of the world, but to the close and more secret—of privy pride, hypocrisy, coldness, negligence, and security. 1. Look, then, to what temptation thou liest most open, and so accordingly arm thyself. 2. Be not over-censorious in condemning others that are of other estate, calling, age, spirit, constitution of body, gifts, than ourselves, for we know not their temptations. And specially should moderation be showed to those of high place, because their temptations are more dangerous. 3. Take heed of that deceitfulness of heart, whereby we promise ourselves great matters of ourselves, if we might but change our estates and callings to our minds. Oh how liberal would the poor man be if he were rich, how upright and just the private man, if he were a magistrate! But they consider not that there are temptations in those estates and callings, and that more dangerous than in their own. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 3. **If Thou be the Son of God.**—*The devil's preface:*—Satan knows how to write prefaces: here is one. He began the whole series of his temptations by a doubt cast upon our Lord's Sonship, and a crafty quotation from Scripture. He caught up the echo of the Father's word at our Lord's baptism, and began tempting where heavenly witness ended. He knew how to discharge a double-shotted temptation, and at once to suggest doubt and rebellion—"If" . . . . "command." I. THE TEMPTER ASSAILS WITH AN "IF." 1. Not with point-blank denial. That would be too startling. Doubt serves the Satanic purpose better than heresy. 2. He grafts his "if" on a holy thing. He makes the doubt look like holy anxiety concerning Divine Sonship. 3. He "ifs" a plain Scripture. "Thou art My Son" (Psa. ii. 7). 4. He "ifs" a former manifestation. At His baptism God said, "This is My beloved Son." Satan contradicts our spiritual experience. 5. He "ifs" a whole life. From the first Jesus had been about His Father's business; yet after thirty years His Sonship is questioned. 6. He "ifs" inner consciousness. Our Lord knew that He was the Father's Son; but the evil one is daring. 7. He "ifs" a perfect character. Well may he question us, whose faults are so many. II. THE TEMPTER AIMS THE "IF" AT A VITAL PART. 1. At our sonship. In our Lord's case he attacks His human and Divine Sonship. In our case he would make us doubt our regeneration. 2. At our childlike spirit. He tempts us to cater for ourselves. 3. At our Father's honour. He tempts us to doubt our Father's providence, and to blame Him for letting us hunger. 4. At our comfort and strength as members of the heavenly family. III. THE TEMPTER SUPPORTS THAT "IF" WITH CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. You are alone. Would a father desert his child? 2. You are in a desert. Is this the place for God's Heir? 3. You are with the wild beasts. Wretched company for a Son of God! 4. You are an hungered. How can a loving Father let His perfect Son hunger? Put all these together, and the tempter's question comes home with awful force to one who is hungry and alone. When we see others thus tried, do we think them brethren? Do we not question their sonship, as Job's friends questioned him? What wonder if we question ourselves! IV. WHEN OVERCOME, THE TEMPTER'S "IF" IS HELPFUL. 1. As coming from Satan, it is a certificate of our true descent. (1) He only questions truth: therefore we are true sons. (2) He only leads sons to doubt their sonship: therefore we are sons. 2. As overcome, it may be a quietus to the enemy for years. It takes the sting out of man's questionings and suspicions; for if we have answered the devil himself we do not fear men. 3. As past, it is usually the prelude to angels coming and ministering to us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The force of an "if":*—What force there is often in a single monosyllable! What force, for instance, in the monosyllable "if," with which this artful address begins! It was employed by Satan, for the purpose of insinuating into the Saviour's mind a doubt of His being in reality the special object of His Father's care, and it was pronounced by him, as we may well suppose, with a cunning and malignant emphasis. How different is the use which Jesus makes of this word "if" in those lessons of Divine instruction and heavenly consolation, which He so frequently delivered to His disciples when He was on earth! He always employed it to inspire confidence; never to excite distrust. Take a single instance of this: "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" What a contrast between this Divine remonstrance and the malicious insinuation of the great enemy of God and man! (*Dean Bagot.*) Oh, this word "if"! Oh, that I could tear it out of my heart! O thou poison of all my pleasures! Thou cold icy hand, that touchest me so often, and freezest me with the touch! "If! If!" (*Robert Robinson.*) *The begin-*

ning of temptation :—I. The first step towards God is faith in Him and His love. The first step away from Him is doubt. Therefore the devil begins all temptation by seeking to inspire the human soul with doubt. He sought to make Eve doubt God's loving purpose towards her by his "Yea, hath God said?" II. 1. How often are we tempted to doubt God's love! Especially is this the case when we are left for a time without any sensible tokens of His presence. 2. How shall we meet this temptation? By reliance on the Word and the promise of God. Is there not in His Word food for the hungry, solace for the lonely, comfort for the desponding? (*Canon Vernon Hutton, M.A.*) *That where Satan carries on a main design and end he bestows most of his pains and skill in rendering the means to that end plausible and taking* :—The end is least in mention, and the means in their fit contrivance takes up most of his art and care. The reasons whereof are these—(1) The end is apparently bad, so that it would be a contradiction to his design to mention it. It is the snare and trap itself, which his wisdom and policy directs him to cover. His ultimate end is the destruction of the soul. This he dare not openly avouch to the vilest of men. (2) The means to such wicked ends have not only an innate and natural tendency in themselves, which are apt to sway and bias men that way, but are also capable of artificial improvement, to a further enticement to the evils secretly intended; and these require the art and skill for the exact suiting and fitting of them. (3) The means are capable of a varnish and paint. He can make a shift to set them off and colour them over, that the proper drift of them cannot easily be discovered; whereas the ends to which these lead cannot receive, at least so easily with some, such fair shows. It is far easier to set off company-keeping, with the pleasurable pretences of necessity or refreshing divertisement, than to propound direct drunkenness, the thing to which company-keeping tends, under such a dress. If it be demanded, How and by what arts he renders the means so plausible? I shall endeavour a satisfaction to that query, by showing the way that Satan took to render the means he made use of in this temptation plausible to Christ, which were these: (1) He represents it as a harmless or lawful thing in itself. Who can say it had been sinful for the Son of God to have turned stones into bread, more than to turn water into wine? (2) He gives the motion a further pretext of advantage or goodness. He insinuated that it might be a useful discovery of His Sonship, and a profitable supply against hunger. (3) He seems also to put a necessity upon it, that other ways of help failing, He must be constrained so to do, or to suffer further want. (4) He forgets not to tell Him that to do this was but suitable to His condition, and that it was a thing well becoming the Son of God to do a miracle. (5) He doth urge it at the rate of a duty, and that being in hunger and want, it would be a sinful neglect not to do what He could and might for His preservation. (*R. Gilpin.*) *First, shipwreck of faith, then of obedience* :—The devil here seeing Him in great want and hunger, would thereby bring in doubt, that He was not the Son of God, which is not a good argument. For whether we respect the natural tokens of God's favour, we see they happen not to the wisest and men of best and greatest knowledge, as appeareth in Eccles. ix. 11, or the supernatural favour of God. We shall see Abraham forced to fly his country into Egypt for famine (Gen. x. 12). So did Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 1). And Jacob likewise was in the same distress (Gen. xliii. 1). Notwithstanding that God was called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yet were they all three like to be hunger-starved. Yea, not only so, but for their faith many were burned and stoned, of whom the world was not worthy (Heb. xi. 37). So fared it with the apostles; they were hungry, naked, and athirst (1 Cor. iv. 11). (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *Joy and comfort ruined by doubt* :—Hope, joy, peace, thankfulness, repentance, obedience, prayer, patience, worship—all these will vanish away like a morning mist before the sun if the devil can make you distrust with such a temptation as this, "If thou," &c. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Certitude of salvation* :—1. That the Holy Ghost doth beget a true and an humble assurance in many of the faithful touching the remission of their sins in this life. 2. The Holy Ghost doth beget this assurance in them, by causing them to examine what good fruits they have produced already from a lively faith, and do resolve to produce thereafter. 3. This comfortable assurance is not the formal act of justifying faith, but an effect which follows it. 4. This assurance is not alike in all that are regenerate, nor at all times alike. 5. No mortified humble Christian must despair, or afflict his heart, because scruples arise in his mind, so that he cannot attain to a strong confidence or assurance in Christ's mercies. He that can attain but to a conjectural hope, or some beginnings of gracious comfort, shall be blessed before God, who will not quench the smoking flax. (*Ibid.*) *All*

Christians have not the same degree of assurance:—Every tree doth not shoot out its root so far as another, and yet may be firm in the ground, and live as well as that whose root is largest. So every faith stretcheth not forth the arms of particular assurance to embrace Christ alike, and yet it may be a true faith, that lives by charity, repentance, and good works; some faith abounds with one sort of fruits, some with another. God is delighted with all that are good, and He will reward them. In all kind of Divine conclusions some are more doubtful spirited than others. (*Ibid.*) *Faith assaulted*:—We see it is the devil's endeavour to call into question the truth of God's Word. God had said, "Thou art My Son," and now he comes with his "If Thou be the Son of God." In the Word of God there be specially three things—1. Commandments. 2. Threatenings. 3. Promises. Secondly, faith is the very life of our lives, and the strength of our souls, without which we are but very drudges and droils in this life. "The Holy Ghost fill you with all joy in believing" (Rom. xv. 13). "And believing, ye rejoiced with joy glorious and unspeakable" (1 Pet. i. 8). Therefore the devil, envying our comfort and our happiness, would rob us of our faith, that he might rob us of our joy. Thirdly, faith is our choicest weapon, even our shield and buckler to fight against him, "whom resist steadfast in the faith" (1 Pet. v. 9). Therefore, as the Philistines got away the Israelites' weapons, so doth Satan, in getting away faith from us, disarm us and make us naked. "For this is our victory whereby we overcome, even our faith" (1 John v.). And in this faith apprehending God's strength lies our strength, as Samson's in his locks; and, therefore, the devil, knowing this, labours to do to us which Delilah did to Samson, even to cut off our locks. (*D. Dyke.*) *Affliction no argument against sonship*:—If any man should be used like a dog, or a bear, yet as long as he sees human shape and discerns the use of human reason in himself, he would still, for all this usage, think himself to be a man. So though the children of God be used here in this world as if they were wicked, yet as long as they feel the work of grace, and the power of God's Spirit, they must still hold themselves to be God's children. (*Ibid.*) **This stone bread.**—*The plea of necessity*:—That Satan usually endeavours to run his temptations upon the plea of necessity, and from thence to infer a duty. The reasons of this policy are these: 1. He knows that necessity hath a compulsive force, even to things of otherwise greatest abhorrencies. 2. Necessity can do much to the darkening of the understanding, and change of the judgment, by the strong influence it hath upon the affections. Men are apt to form their apprehensions according to the dictates of necessity. 3. Necessity offers an excuse, if not a justification, of the greatest miscarriages. 4. Necessity is a universal plea, and fitted to the conditions of all men in all callings, and under all extravagancies. The tradesman, in his unlawful gains or overreachings, pleads a necessity for it from the hardness of the buyer in other things. We may observe three cheats in this plea of necessity. 1. Sometimes he puts men upon feigning a necessity where there is none. 2. Sometimes he puts men upon a necessity of their own sinful procurement. 3. Sometimes he stretcheth a necessity further than it ought. This must warn us not to suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by the highest pretences of necessity. (*R. Gilpin.*) To open this a little further, I shall add the reasons why Satan strikes in with such an occasion as the want of means to tempt to distrust, which are these:—1. Such a condition doth usually transport men beside themselves. 2. Sense is a great help to faith. Faith, then, must needs be much hazarded when sense is at a loss or contradicted, as usually it is in straits. That faith doth receive an advantage by sense, cannot be denied. But when outward usual helps fail us, our sense, being not able to see afar off, is wholly puzzled and overthrown. The very disappearing of probabilities gives so great a shake to our faith that it commonly staggers at it. It is no wonder to see that faith, which usually called sense for a supporter, to fail when it is deprived of its crutch. 3. Though faith can act above sense, and is employed about things not seen, yet every saint at all times doth not act his faith so high. 4. When sense is nonplussed, and faith fails, the soul of man is at a great loss. The other branch of the observation, that from a distrust of providence he endeavours to draw them to an unwarrantable attempt for their relief, is as clear as the former. That from a distrust men are next put upon unwarrantable attempts, is clear from the following reasons: 1. The affrightment which is bred by such distrusts of providences will not suffer men to be idle. Fear is active, and strongly prompts that something is to be done. 2. Yet such is the confusion of men's minds in such a case, that though many things are propounded, in that hurry of thoughts they are deprived

usually of a true judgment and deliberation. 3. The despairing grievance of spirit makes them take that which comes next to hand, as a drowning man that grasps a twig or straw, though to no purpose. 4. Being once turned off their rock, and the true stay of the promise of God for help, whatever other course they take must needs be unwarrantable. 5. Satan is so officious in an evil thing, that seeing any in this condition, he will not fail to proffer his help; and in place of God's providence, to set some unlawful shift before them. 6. And so much the rather do men close in with such overtures, because a sudden fit of passionate fury doth drive them, and out of a bitter kind of despite and crossness—as if they meditated a revenge against God for their disappointment—they take up a hasty wilful resolve to go that way that seems most agreeable to their passion. Application: Failures or ordinary means should not fill us with distrust, neither then should we run out of God's way for help. He that would practise this must have these three things which are comprehended in it. 1. He must have full persuasions of the power and promise of God. 2. He that would thus wait upon God had need to have an equal balance of spirit in reference to second causes. 3. There is no waiting upon God, and keeping His way, without a particular trust in God. But let the strait be what it will, we must not forsake duty; for so we go out of God's way, and do contradict that trust and hope which we are to keep up to God-ward. But there are other cases wherein it is our duty to fix our trust upon the particular mercy or help. I shall name four; and possibly a great many more may be added. As—1. When mercies are expressly and particularly promised. 2. When God leads us into straits by engaging us in His service. 3. When the things we want are common universal blessings, and such as we cannot subsist without. 4. When God is eminently engaged for our help, and His honour lies at stake in that very matter. (*Ibid.*) *Stones turned into bread:*—How many are there that turn, not stones into bread, but lies, flatteries, base shifts, into silver and gold, yea, jewels and precious stones? Others turn stones, yea, precious stones, and their whole substance into bread, into meats, drinks, and apparel, and wastefully lavish God's good creatures on idle backs and bellies, using this as a means to procure something their affections want. (*D. Dyke.*) *How many sins the devil couched and infolded in this one:*—It teaches us not to measure actions by the outward appearance. What a matter is it to eat bread when one is hungry? but we see what a matter it would have been here in Christ. A little pin, specially being poisoned, may prick mortally, as well as a great sword. Adam's eating the fruit seems a small matter to flesh and blood, which wonders that so small a pin should wound all mankind to the death. But Adam's sin was not simply the eating of the apple, but the eating of the apple forbidden by God. There was the deadly poison of that little pin. And there also the devil so handled the matter, that all the commandments were broken in that one action. As the first table in his infidelity, doubting both of God's truth and goodness, contempt of, and rebellion against God, preferring of Satan before God, and in the profanation of that fruit he ate, which was a sacrament. And for the second table, he broke the fifth commandment, in his unthankfulness to God his Father, that gave him his being, and had bestowed so many blessings upon him. The sixth in the murder of himself and all his posterity, body and soul. The seventh in his intemperancy. The eighth in touching another's goods against the will of the Lord. The ninth in receiving the devil's false witness against God. The tenth in being discontent with his estate, and lusting after an higher. Take we heed now of the deceit of sin. It shows little sometimes, but oh the bundle of mischief that is lapped up in that little! (*Ibid.*) *The aim of Satanic temptation not always apparent:*—Like a waterman, he looks one way and rows another. The special thing he shot at, indeed, was to make Christ call in question the truth of that oracle that sounded at Jordan, to think through unbelief that He was not the Son of God. But yet the words of the temptation seem to import that he sought only the working of the miracle. And yet the devil would rather a great deal He would never work the miracle, so He would doubt Himself not to be the Son of God. For this would have been the greater foil. This discloses to us one of Satan's mysteries. Sometimes he will tempt us to some sin, to which yet he cares not much whether we yield or no, hoping to get a greater conquest of us by not yielding. As thus, when by not yielding we grow proud, vain-glorious, secure, confident; wherein the devil seeems to deal like a cunning gamester, that hides his skill, and loses two or three games at the first, that he may win so much the more afterwards. (*Ibid.*) *God not served for temporal profit:*—If every good Christian were satisfied at all times with temporal blessings, we should appear to serve God for our own profit,

that we might lack nothing which concerned this transitory life. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *The eye to look to heaven*:—God doth not suppeditate bread always to him that is His son, that he may loathe this world, and look for a recompense for all this misery, not among these hard-hearted generations of men, but among the habitations of the blessed. (*Ibid.*) *Hereafter*:—It is my turn to want for awhile, I shall be replenished hereafter. (*Ibid.*) *Better than bread*:—Though a good man labour and watch, and cannot earn the bread of his carefulness, yet he shall fill his bosom with better fruits, for occasion is given hereby to the righteous to exercise these three spiritual graces, Prayer, and Patience, and Charity. (*Ibid.*) *The devil's bread*:—There are others under these, indeed, yet of a most vile condition, that eat their bread by wrongful dealing, when it is grounded with the devil's millstones; and according to Aristotle, my former director, these may be ranged into three sorts: Such as maintain themselves with no calling, such as use a bad calling, and such as cheat in a good calling. We must eat our bread by prayer to God, and good employment in the world, that is, by the duty of invocation, and by the fruits of our vocation; therefore he that fills up no place or part in a commonwealth to earn his gains must needs take the devil's counsel to live by unjust means, command that these stones be made bread. (*Ibid.*) *Bad bread*:—By extortion and usury we may make stones into bread, that is the devil's alchemistry: or haply we may make bread of nothing, when a man gets a thing by another's oversight (Gen. xliii. 12). Or else, what and if we can overreach our brother in subtilty, and go beyond him with a trick of wit or cunning? "Let no man defraud or oppress his brother in any matter: for the Lord is avenged of all such" (1 Thess. iv. 6). The one is called "the bread of violence and oppression" (Prov. iv. 17); the other, "the bread of deceit." (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *The first temptation*:—Though in form sensuous, it is in essence moral or spiritual. What constituted it a temptation—where lay its evil? Christ had to live His personal life (1) within the limits necessary to man, and (2) in perfect dependence upon God. Had He transgressed either of these conditions, He had ceased to be man's ideal Brother or God's ideal Son. His supernatural power existed not for Himself, but for us. The ideal Son could not act as if He had no Father. He conquered by faith, and His first victory was like His last. The taunts He had to bear on the cross—"He saved others, Himself He cannot save," &c.—were but a repetition of the earlier temptations; and then, as now, though the agony was deeper, and the darkness more dense, He triumphed by giving Himself into the hands of the Father. (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*) *The first assault*:—I. THE SATANIC SUGGESTION. To have complied with it would have been a violation of what, on reflection, appeared to Jesus to be the Father's will. II. THE REPLY OF OUR LORD—"It is written, man shall not live," &c. This reply—1. Disposes most effectually of all the arguments which are commonly urged in defence of modern excesses. 2. Points to man's higher nature as his distinguishing possession. 3. Teaches that man is not dependent on bread or material sustenance even for his lower life, but on the sustaining Word of God. (*W. Landels, D.D.*) *Life not a necessity*:—In excuse for some offence against the moral law, it was said to our great English moralist of the last century: "A man must live." "Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "I do not see the necessity." That was the Stoic form of the principle enunciated in our Lord's reply, but our Lord invests it with an infinitely higher character by expressing it in the gracious tones of the gospel. It was true in the highest sense that a man must live; but his life does not consist in the mere gratification of his bodily cravings, or even the natural desires of his mind and heart, or even in his life here. The essential life of his nature consists in his living and acting in harmony with the will of God. (*H. Wace, D.D.*) *Appositeness of the temptation*:—The temptation was shrewdly contrived to meet the peculiar circumstances. Remember that the desert and the Dead Sea, lying in the basin of the barren hills, were a figure of the desolation brought on the world by sin, and that probably our Lord, from the wilderness, looked over this picture of death, and saw in it a figure of the scene of His moral operation. Now Satan steals up to Him, holding out a dead stone, and asks Him to begin His work by transforming that stone. As He is about to make the desert fruitful, and the wilderness blossom as a rose, and the Sea of Death become a lake of living water, let Him begin His work symbolically, with a stone of this district. Very probably the temptation was not to turn the piece of black stone into white wheaten bread, but into the homely, hard rye, black bread, which nourishes, but is no dainty. On the way to Jericho, and, indeed, all around the Dead Sea, are to be found in chalk beds, masses of flint, of rounded shape, which the Arabs suppose to

be the olives, apples, melons, and other fruit of the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, which, at the overthrow of the cities, were turned into stone. Some of these stones have the size and shape of loaves, and it is possible that Satan took one of these rounded masses of flint, and, with his undercurrent of bitterness and scorn, offered it to Christ, supposing Him to share the popular superstition about them. If we may expand his words, they ran thus: "See this loaf-like flint stone! No doubt it was once bread in one of the houses of Sodom, but God overthrew the wicked city, and the bread was turned into stone. Now, O Son of God—that is, if you are the Son of God—as you have come to undo the work of destruction wrought by sin, and to bring life into a world subject to death, show your power on this stone, and turn it back into the loaf of bread which it once was." (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *These stones:*—They were, perhaps, those siliceous accretions, sometimes known under the name of *lapides judaici*, which assume the exact shape of little loaves of bread, and which were represented in legend as the petrified fruits of the cities of the plain. The pangs of hunger work all the more powerfully when they are stimulated by the added tortures of a quick imagination; and if the conjecture be correct, then the very shape and aspect and traditional origin of these stones would give to the temptation an added force. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Crystallization:*—The stones called "Elijah's melons," on Mount Carmel, and "the Virgin Mary's peas," near Bethlehem, are instances of crystallization well known in limestone formations. They are so called as being the supposed produce of these two plots turned into stone, from the refusal of the owners to supply the wants of the prophet and the saint. (*Dean Stanley.*)

Ver. 4. **And Jesus answered him saying, It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.**—*The armoury of Scripture:*—In the plague time none will go abroad without some preservative. None will go forth into the fields, but take at least a staff with them for fear of the worst. Those that travel will not ride without their swords; those that know they have enemies will never go forth unweaponed; and kings always have their guards. Now all of us having Satan's temptations, and our enemies ready for us at every turn, we had need daily to resort to the armoury of the Scriptures, and there to furnish ourselves; for when this word shall be hid in our hearts, and enter into our souls, then shall we prevail both against the violent man and the flattering woman, that is, against all kind of temptations, whether on the right or on the left hand. "I have hid Thy word," saith David (Psa. cxix.), "in mine heart, that I might not sin." (*D. Dyke.*) *All need the Scriptures:*—Cast not off the study of the Scriptures only to the ministers. Though the law be not thy profession, yet thou wilt have so much skill in it, as to hold thy inheritance, and to keep thy land from the caviller. So here, though divinity be not thy profession, yet get so much skill as to keep thy heavenly inheritance against Satan's cavils. As any is more subject to Satan's temptations, so hath he greater need of the Scriptures. (*Ibid.*) *The written word:*—It is written of Augustine, that lying sick on his bed, he caused the seven penitential Psalms to be painted on the wall over against him, in great letters; that if after he should become speechless, yet he might point to every verse when the devil came to tempt him, and so confute him. "Blessed is he that hath his quiver full of such arrows, they shall not be ashamed." Blessed is he that hath the skill to choose out fit arrows for the purpose, as the fathers speak out of Isa. xlix. 2. Christ saith affirmatively of the Scriptures, that "in them is eternal life" (John v. 39). Negatively, that the cause of error is the not knowing of them (Mark xii. 24). David saith it was that that made him wiser than his enemies, than his teachers, and than the ancients (Psa. cxix. 98, 99, and 110). So the error of the former times was in yielding too far to the devil's policy, by sealing up the Scriptures, and locking the storehouse and armoury of the people. The like policy we read of (1 Sam. xiii. 19); when the Philistines had taken away all smiths and armour, then they thought they were safe. So in the time of darkness, the devil might let them do their good works, and what they list, and yet have them still under his lure, that he might offend them at his pleasure, that had no armour to resist him. All the children of God had a right and property in the law of God, as appeareth by Christ's words (John x. 34). He answered them, that is, the common people, "Is it not written in your law?" As though He should say, The Scripture is yours. (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *Safety in the Scriptures:*—We are penned up into the Scriptures as into our sheepfolds, while we contain ourselves within them there we are safe; the wolf may howl, but he cannot bite us. There we are in the

tower of David, where we cannot be assaulted; but as David acknowledgeth: "If my delight had not been in Thy law, I should utterly have perished in my trouble." (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Grace the life of bread:*—It is the grace of God which gives meat in due season so that health and comfort go together with it. And heretofore I have used this similitude to give it light. Sometimes when we apply physic for any disease, we are bid to seethe such and such herbs in running water, and then to drink the water. If this help us, we all know it was not the water which did the sick man good, but the decoction of the infusion. So it is not bread nor drink, considered barely in itself, which doth nourish the body, but the blessing of God infused into it. Daniel, and the three children of the captivity that were with him, prospered better with pulse and water than any of the Babylonians with the continual portion of the king's meat. (*Ibid.*) *God better than bread:*—I am sure this makes it evident that you will neither trust God nor nature unless all the art which luxury and wantonness can excogitate be added unto it. As Elkanah said to Hannah his wife, "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" So let it run in your mind, as if the Lord spake it to you in your ear, "Am not I better unto thee than all the corn in the fields; than all the cattle upon a thousand hills; than all the cookery in the world that can be sweet upon the palate? What is bread? What is a plentiful table without My benediction?" (*Ibid.*) *The best half of man lives not by bread:*—The better half of man, which is the soul and spirit, lives not by material bread, but by the Word of God. (*Ibid.*) *Bread and life:*—1. Our acceptance of the principle re-asserted by Christ that "Man [*the* man, God-fearing, God-trusting] liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." 2. Be more anxious to have God's blessing, with the lowliest and poorest fare, than the richest without it. 3. With reference to the temptation to "turn stones into bread," let me ask if none of you have been tempted by this very snare?—Beware! (Prov. xx. 17). 4. Is there not a great amount of this "living by bread alone"? Are not provision for the wants of the body, and gathering, scraping together of the things of the present life, the all in all with many? (*A. B. Grosart, LL.D.*) *God and bread:*—How shall we live? Multitudes of people are asking that question to-day with peculiar earnestness. The text offers an answer. It strikes out, in a sentence, a theory of living. The two theories of living are here squarely confronted. Satan, as the prince of this world, announces his, and tries to win Christ's assent to it. "Man lives by bread and by bread alone." Christ replies, "Man lives not by bread, but by God." Man lives by God's gifts only, as God is behind them: man's real support is not in the gifts but in the Giver. I. WHAT IS COVERED BY THIS WORD "BREAD"? It covers the whole visible economy of life. For what are the mass of men spending their energies? For food and raiment and position—for the abundance and superfluity of these things. Now I am not blind to men's natural and pardonable anxiety about such things. Food and raiment are parts of God's own economy of life in this world; and Christ Himself saith, "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." But I am speaking of the false position in which men put these things—of their tendency to separate them from God, and to seek to live by them alone. The gifts are to be sought through the Giver. Men often seek food and raiment without reference to God, and often in ways forbidden by God; whereas Christ says, "Seek God first." II. If our Lord had yielded to the temptation, HE WOULD HAVE COMMITTED HIMSELF TO THE BREAD-THEORY AS THE LAW OF HIS KINGDOM, NO LESS THAN OF HIS OWN LIFE. He would have said, by changing the stones into bread, "As I cannot live without bread, so My kingdom cannot thrive so long as men's worldly needs are unsupplied. My administration must be a turning of stones into bread. It must make men happy by at once miraculously removing all want and suffering from the world, and inaugurating an era of worldly prosperity." We know that this has not been Christ's policy. Social prosperity is based on righteousness. Here, then—III. We have CHRIST'S THEORY OF LIFE, INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL. Man lives by God's gifts, but not by the gifts only. By bread, but not by bread alone. Bread is nothing without God. Bread points away from itself to God. Bread has a part in the Divine economy of society; but it comes in *with* the Kingdom of God, under its laws, and not as its substitute. The man who lives by bread alone has nothing when bread is gone. The practical working of the two theories is written down in lines which he who runs may read. What is my theory of life? Is it Christ, or Satan? Is it bread alone, or bread with God? (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) *Not by bread alone:*—With this weapon, taken from the armoury of Deuteronomy, Jesus

foiled the first recorded attack of His implacable enemy and ours. It is not the voice of the Church alone that may be heard on this matter to-day. I. THE WORLD'S GREATEST TEACHERS ARE INVEIGHING AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE, WHICH WOULD SACRIFICE MIND TO THE MOLOCH OF LUXURY. 1. "Man shall not live by bread alone," but by every scientific fact, is the evangel of Science. 2. "Man shall not live by bread alone," is the burden of Philosophy. 3. "Not by bread alone," chimes in the voice of Art. 4. "Not by bread alone," throbs in divinest music from the poet's lyre. But all these voices declare only half the truth—the negative side of it. II. THE CHRISTIAN IS THE ONLY MAN WHOSE ANGLE OF VISION TAKES IN THE GREATEST SWEEP OF THE ILLIMITABLE HORIZON OF TRUTH. "Man shall not live by bread alone," He declares, "but by every word of God." What is every word of God? 1. Science is a word of God. 2. Philosophy, in so far as she has defined, expressed, and enforced truth, has spoken for God. 3. Have not Art and Culture and Poetry voices for God? or are they merely voices of man? We hold that they are truly prophets of God. So far we have the sympathy of many minds not Christian. They say, "Here end the words of God." We say—4. "Here begin the words of God." Revelation, especially the revelation of the Incarnate Word, is the clearest and noblest word of God, because it is addressed to the soul of man. All others are but echoes of this Incarnate Word. (*W. Skinner.*) *The true support of human life:*—The first lesson these words read to us is this. I. THAT WE ARE NOT DEPENDENT SOLELY ON MATERIAL THINGS FOR THE SUSTENANCE AND NOURISHMENT OF OUR LIFE. II. They teach US TO REFUSE TO HOLD OR SUPPORT OUR LIFE IN ANY WAY APART FROM GOD'S WORD. III. They point to the truth that THERE IS A LIFE TO WHICH BREAD DOES NOT MINISTER. (*Studens.*) *God's word the bread of man's life:*—1. The craving for Divine truth in the souls of men was never so much of an imperious passion as it is at the present day. Men have been imposed upon by fictions long enough. If they are to have true life they must have the very truth and substance of things for their nourishment. 2. Consider also how imperative has become the demand for beauty, and art, and poetry. There may be goodness in the world that is never touched by the beauty of art, and is all unconscious of the inspiration of Divine poetry; but it has not the abundant life which Christ came to bring. 3. Another of those cravings in which our best life is founded is in the personal relations which are so necessary to us. In fellowship lies a great part of the strength and joy of life. We cannot truly live without it. 4. And this brings us to consider the deepest and highest personal relation, which is the great end of our creation and redemption, the relation which we have with Christ and through Him with the Father. This relation is the bread of life to us—the vital nourishment and enrichment of our noblest being. (*C. Short, M.A., D.D.*) *The mystery of life:*—I. TRUTHS INVOLVED IN THIS SAYING. 1. Life is valuable and ought to be preserved. Man is to live; nothing can be compared with life—wealth, honour, reputation, dignity, position, rank—what is all that compared with life? Life is an invaluable boon; it is the day of grace, the day of opportunity, the day of responsibility. 2. Life is sustained by the use of appointed means. We are not to expect life to be sustained by miracle. 3. Life is dependent upon the great power of God. He is the great Author of everything, and Arbiter of the destinies of all. 4. God has a variety of means by which He can support life. When He sees fit, He can and does support life by miraculous agency. II. ERRORS CORRECTED BY THIS SAYING. 1. It censures the loose opinions of those who hope to live upon pleasure. Christ says, Men are to live upon bread. There is a very serious character about life. To expect any one to live upon pleasure is like asking a hungry man to a painted banquet; there is the form of food, but it cannot minister to his support. 2. It condemns the conduct of those who toil only for bread. Another world has claims, as well as this. 3. It corrects the doubts and unbelief of many concerning Divine Providence. 4. It suggests the means of life for the higher nature of man. (*George Smith.*) *Christ's miracles reserved for others:*—That to which Satan here challenges the Lord was not sinful in itself, but would have been sinful for Him. To have complied, would have been a defeat of His whole mediatorial work. If on each sharper pressure of the world's suffering and pain upon Himself, He had fallen back on the power which as Son of God He possessed, and so exempted Himself from the common lot of humanity, where would have been the fellow-man, the overcomer of the world by His human faith, and not by His Divine power? The whole life of faith would have disappeared. At His Incarnation the Lord had merged His lot with the lot of the race; the temptation is, that He should separate Himself from them anew; "Son of God, put forth Thy

power." When in some besieged and famine-stricken city, when in hard straits during the march through some waterless desert, a captain or commander refuses special exemptions from the lot of his suffering fellow-soldiers, when a Cato pours upon the sands the single draught of water which has been procured in the African desert and brought for his drinking, such a one in his lower sphere acts out what the Lord in the highest sphere of all was acting out now. He who made the water wine, could have made the stones bread; but to that He was solicited by the need of others, to this only by His own. And this abstinence of self-help was the law of His whole life, a life as wonderful in the miracles which it left undone as in those which it wrought. (*Archbishop Trench.*) *Christ's reply assumes our immortality*:—Suppose bread fails. Suppose the body literally starves, and the man *dies*, as we say. Is Christ's theory disproved? By no means. Christ's choice led Him to the cross, and many a follower of His has been forced to choose between the bread-theory and death. When God says that man shall *live* by His Word, He means by "life," far more than the little span of human years, with their eating, and drinking, and pleasure, and gain-getting. This utterance of the world's Redeemer assumes the fact of immortality. To live by the Word of God is to share the eternal life of God. The bread-life is but the prelude and faint type of this. It gets all its real meaning and value from this. Human life is nothing if it does not foreshadow the larger life of eternity: and when the lower physical life fails for lack of bread, the man does not cease to live: he only begins to live, and to prove that if man cannot live by bread alone, he can live by God alone. (*Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.*) *The rival theories of life tested*:—The practical working of the two theories is written down in lines which he that runs may read. Before you is the picture of the Man of Sorrows, who had not where to lay His head, reviled and spoken against, walking by His hard road to the garden and to the cross, and yet deliberately choosing to live by God rather than by bread; and you see the choice vindicated by the peace and poise of that life, by the enthusiasm of its faith, by its heavenly joy in its work, by its evergrowing power over the life of the world, by the adoration and love and praise daily wafted towards it from millions of souls: and all this while the worldly dominion He refused has proved a vanished shadow, while the old empires have gone down in ruin, and their pleasures have turned to a corruption which is an offence in the world's nostrils. The old city which rang with the cry of "Bread and the Circus!" is only a monument now. The tourist wanders over the Palatine, and peers down into the choked vaults of the Cæsars' palaces; and the antiquarian rummages where Nero's fish-ponds gleamed, and climbs along the broken tiers of the Coliseum, from which the culture and beauty and fashion of Rome looked down with delight upon Christian martyrs in the fangs of tigers. As you look on this picture, surely you will take fresh heart; surely you will win a new faith in Christ's theory; surely you will not dare, with the glory of that life before you, to take the baser theory of the prince of this world, to choose the life which is by bread alone! (*Ibid.*) *Man lives by the Word of God*:—*The Word.* Now what is a word? The human heart is peopled with thoughts and feelings hidden away in its secret lanes and alleys, and what is a word but a silver chariot that rolls out through the portals of the lips bearing some denizen of the palaces and hovels that fill the heart's hidden courts? What are words but the commerce of mind with mind? Words are ships that go to and fro freighted with thoughts, feelings, affections; and there are silver words like the white-winged sloops and schooners, graceful words like the beautiful yachts, iron words like the steamships, barbed words like the man-of-war: words are sometimes sweet as tossed flowers, sometimes sharp and stinging like a shot arrow; words are the commerce of mind with mind, and yet if one finite mind needs a hundred and fifteen thousand words to express its thoughts, how many words, think you, could alone be adequate to express the infinite mind of the Infinite God? And because the infinite words are so many, and man must live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, and as these words are innumerable, He hath found out a way of summing them all up in one word—the Word of God. It is by this Word only that men can live. (*F. C. Ewer, D.D.*) *The Word of God in truth and duty*:—The Word of God includes two notions, one of revelation and one of commandment. Whenever God speaks by any of His voices, it is first to tell us some truth which we did not know before, and second to bid us do something which we have not been doing. Every Word of God includes these two. Truth and duty are always wedded. There is no truth which has not its corresponding duty. And there is no duty which has not its corresponding truth. We are always separating them. We are always

trying to learn truths, as if there were no duties belonging to them, as if the knowing of them would make no difference in the way we lived. That is the reason why our hold on the truths we learn is so weak. And we are always trying to do duties as if there were no truths behind them; as if, that is, they were mere arbitrary things which rested on no principles and had no intelligible reasons. That is the reason why we do our duties so superficially and unreliably. When every truth is rounded into its duty, and every duty is deepened into its truth, then we shall have a clearness and consistency and permanence of moral life which we hardly dream of now. (*Ibid.*) *The higher life in man*:—The temptation of Jesus was not a splendid solitary victory of divinity over human conditions. It was the assertion of the possible victory that waits for every man who, like Christ, has in him the power of divinity. Jesus found in His human consciousness the original purpose of human life. He brought it out clearly. He said, It is not the Divine prerogative alone. Here it is in man—the power to live, not for comfort, but for truth and duty. Here it is in this humanity of Mine, along with all else that is truly human, all My tastes and propensities, all My aches and pains. Here it is in Me, and, lo! other men have found it in themselves, "It is written," &c. And men, all the more clearly since Jesus showed it there, are always finding in their own consciousness and in the prolonged consciousness of their race which we call experience or history, this same higher capacity or higher necessity of man. They find it in their own consciousness. What do we make of every strong young man's discontent with the actual conditions of things before he settles down into the limited contentment, the sense that things are about as good as they are likely to be, which makes up the dull remainder of his life? Question yourself, and see how there is something in you which rebels when the lower expediency of any action is set before you as its sufficient justification, how something rises up in you and tells you that there is a higher expediency, and makes you want to sweep away the worldly maxims which you cannot confute, but which you know are false. Sometimes there comes in all of us a strong, deep craving to give up this endless, complicated search after what it is safe or proper or fashionable to believe, and just to seek what is true; and to get rid of these thousand artificial standards of what a man is expected to do, and, come of it what will, simply do what is right: and when we are simply asking, "What is right?" the answer always comes. (*Ibid.*) *The deeper power in man*:—There always is this deeper power in man, and men are always finding it there. I think we are amazed not at the rarity, but rather at the abundance, of the power of martyrdom. When a great cause breaks out in war, and needs its champions, how wonderful it is to us, with our low notions of humanity, to see the land with its furrows full of the deserted ploughs from which the men have run to go and die for principle, and save their country. How wonderfully frequent are the stories that we hear of men giving their lives to do their duty. The exception is where the engineer of the railroad train which is rushing into certain ruin deserts his post; not where he stands still and calm, and is found with the iron clenched in his dead hand. No doubt, if he had time to think of it at all, he would be surprised at himself in the terrible instant when his quick resolve was made. He reaches down through the ordinary standards of his life, and takes up the deepest one of all, and says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God; and the Word of God which is my duty now says, 'Stand and die'; and so I cannot live except by dying." And in spite of all the men who are sacrificing their convictions to their interests, there are thousands of men who might be at the head of things, and rich and famous, if they would only give up what they think is true for bread. Oh, it is very common! Men find in their own nature necessities which they must submit to, and they do submit to them. We can hear in their submission, though it makes them very poor, something of that same trumpet-like triumph and exaltation which I think we always feel in those words from the lips of the sick and hungry Jesus, "Not by bread alone, but by the Word of God." (*Ibid.*) *Rectitude is better than profit*:—When Mr. Russell Lowell was called as a witness before the Senate Committee to give evidence on International Copyright, he lifted up the whole discussion from the level of interests and expediences into the clear air of duties and moralities. He said, "I myself take the moral view of the question. I believe this is a mere question of morality and justice. One could live a great deal cheaper, undoubtedly, if he could supply himself from other people, without either labour or cost. But at the same time—well, it was not called honest when I was young, and that is all I can say. I cannot help thinking that a book which was, I believe, more read when I was young

than it is now, is quite right when it says, 'Righteousness exalteth a nation.' I believe this is a question of righteousness. If I were asked what book is better than a cheap book, I should answer that there is one book, and that one is a book honestly come by." *Remembering what is written*:—It is related of the late Lord Ampthill, British Ambassador to the Court of Berlin, that during his mission in Rome he possessed a huge boa constrictor and interested himself in watching its habits. One day the monster escaped from the box where he supposed it was asleep, quietly wound itself around his body, and began gradually to tighten its folds. His position became extremely perilous; but the consummate coolness and self-possession which had enabled him to win many a diplomatic triumph befriended him in this dangerous emergency. He remembered there was a bone in the throat of the serpent which, if he could find and break he would save himself. He was aware that either he or the snake must perish. Not a moment must be lost in hesitation. He deliberately seized the head of the serpent, thrust his hand down its throat, and smashed the vital bone. The coils were relaxed, the victim fell at his feet, and he was free! In all wickedness there is weakness, and it is a grand thing to discern the vulnerable spot and to be ready with the exact truth, fact, promise, which deals death to the foe. This insight and power are given to all who prayerfully study God's Word. (*Christian Journal.*) *Man liveth not by bread alone*:—I. ADAM'S BRIEF LIFE NOT BY BREAD ALONE IN EDEN. 1. The angels living by the Word of God alone without bread. "He maketh His angels spirits; and the highest of their heavenly host, those amongst them that "excel in strength" live only by "hearkening to the voice of His Word." The prince of this world in his first estate lived by the Word of God, but he kept not that Word, for "His Word is truth," and he "abode not in the truth," but became "a liar and the father of it." 2. The ox living by bread alone without the Word of God. To the ox his Creator gave "every green herb for meat," but without imparting the knowledge of his Maker, or capacity for acquiring it. The beast of the field was formed by the Word of God, and sustained by His power; but with no command either what to eat or from what to abstain, with no consciousness of good or evil, of obedience or transgression, and with no conception of the great Being to whom He owed his life. He ate the grass without sin and without holiness, and lived by grass alone without the Word of God. As he was formed, so he liveth on from generation to generation to the world's end, "asking no questions." 3. Adam living by bread with the Word of God. "In the image of God made He man," and He made him for communion with Himself. He did not evolve him from any beast of the field after its likeness, but fashioned him in His own likeness, "a little lower than the angels," leaving the ox utterly and for ever incapable of entering into the heart or mind of man; but creating man capable at once of entering into His own thoughts, and of loving and being consciously loved by the invisible God. From the day of man's creation he lived by bread, but not for one hour by bread alone without the Word of God. Of every tree of the garden he might freely eat; but the liberty was by the Divine Word in express permission, and in *so* eating man lived. II. ISRAEL'S CHEQUERED LIFE NOT BY BREAD ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS. 1. Israel redeemed from Egypt and day by day fed by the hand of God. One chief end of the forty years' travelling through the wilderness was to train Israel to know that man doth not live by bread only, but by the Word of God; showing us both how high a place this lesson takes in the Divine teaching, and how slow men are to learn it. 2. Ransomed men learning to live not by bread alone. When the three thousand converts at Pentecost were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, "they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God." It was repentance unto life and deliverance from condemnation that had been granted them from heaven; and they had no care "what they should eat or wherewithal they should be clothed." But for the first time in their lives they had learned that man does not live by bread only, but by every word of God; the eating of their daily food became part of their higher and everlasting life; and receiving it from the hand of a reconciled Father, they lived not by bread alone, but by bread with the Word of God that sanctified it to them. III. THE SON OF MAN'S WHOLE LIFE ON EARTH NEVER BY BREAD ALONE. (*The Expositor.*) *God in means*:—The very heathen apprehended this point very well; they made their goddess Providence to be the midwife of nature, showing that nature could do nothing without the power of God's providence. And hence, though the wiser of them acknowledge but one God, yet to every several creature gave they the name of God, as of Ceres to the corn, of Bacchus to the wine, of Neptune to the waters,

to show that the power of God was in these creatures, and that it was not so much they, but God in them, and with them that wrought. What a shame then for Christians to repose and secure ourselves in these outward means? Oh, when one hath gotten a great living, and great friends, we say, Oh, he is made for ever. God that can break the staff of bread, can break the staff of friends, riches, favour, and all such means as we trust to. As He did the staff of physic to Asa (2 Chron. xv.) As He restrained the fire (Dan. iii.) from hurting and from burning, so can He also from helping and from warming. If we want means, then let us not only seek to them, but to God. And if we have them, though in never such strength and abundance, yet let us as earnestly crave God's blessing and help, as we would do in our greatest want. For what have we when we have the means? Have we God locked up in the means? No, we have but dead things, unable to help without God. Therefore in the fourth petition, Christ teacheth the greatest princes that swim in wealth, to pray for their daily bread, as the poorest beggar. 2. This teaches us never to use meats, drinks, marriage, physic, recreation, apparel, habitation, or any other of God's creatures without prayer. This sanctifies them all (1 Tim. iv. 4), nor yet otherwise to go about any business. (*D. Dyke.*) *Living by the Word:*—In this case the temptation seems to refer to natural hunger, but the answer of our Lord goes deeper, even to the life itself. I. THE WORDS OF MY TEXT, TAKEN IN THEIR LOWEST SENSE, IN WHICH SATAN PROBABLY UNDERSTOOD THEM, ARE SIMPLY TRUE. Man does not live by bread alone; he needs raiment, shelter, and a thousand other things, not included in bread alone. Man creates nothing. From the grain that springs up after his planting and furnishes "bread to the eater and seed to the sower" to the lightnings of heaven that flash along the lines of His providing, carrying His messages over continents and under oceans to the uttermost parts of the earth—all, all is of God, the result of His inward thought and His spoken Word, and we are living now, as never before, in all the history of our race, not by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. But man is an intellectual being and—II. HIS INTELLECTUAL LIFE REQUIRES MORE THAN BREAD. Nothing satisfies human intelligence but the Word, "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The human mind is so constituted as to recognize every expressed idea of the Divine mind. Take English literature, for instance, and what is there in it that deserves to live and that will live, that does not in some degree express the Divine thought. Take the bad books that are printed—literary garbage, rightly excluded from the mails, and hauled out and dumped with other garbage on waste places. How it shuns the light! Literature can only live, and bless mankind, that has in it the Word of God. Mark the history of our own English literature. It had its rise in the fourteenth century in the translation and publishing of the Holy Scriptures by John Wickliffe. It gathered new life in the times of the English Reformation when the same Word was freely given to the people, and reached its zenith, intellectually considered, in the reign of King James at the hands of Shakespeare and Lord Bacon. Literature lost none of its strength, but became purer in the days of Milton and more religious during the revival period under Whitfield and the Wesleys. Take out of our literature all that is inspired by the Bible and all that expresses the Divine Word in creation, and little would remain worth saving. Yes, man lives by ideas. God's ideas inscribed, it may be, on the unhewn tables of stone that build up the foundations of the earth, or they may wave in beauty on the green banners that adorn its surface, or shine with resplendent glory in the heavens above us, wherever they exist they are God's ideas. The scientist in his deepest researches only discovers them. He is engaged in translating an ancient manuscript, and if he dares to say there is no God he is trying to translate a book that has no author. But the meaning of Christ's answer to the tempter is deeper and broader than this. Man never truly lives until the conditions of his moral nature are met and satisfied. This is a fact too often overlooked by the epicurean and the scientist, and it will remain a fact even after these worthies have exhausted all their resources in trying to prove that man is nothing more than an intellectual brute. III. MAN'S MORAL LIFE REQUIRES MORE THAN BREAD AND IDEAS. Man is as truly moral as he is intellectual and physical. His moral nature can no more be fed on bread than his physical powers can be sustained by pure thought. If in the Divine word provision has been made for the body and the mind it would be a strange and inexplicable oversight if no word has been spoken of sufficient vitality to meet the wants of man's moral nature. And this oversight, if it exists, is all the more grievous from the fact that man's happiness in this life depends absolutely upon his moral condition.

(*H. C. Cushing.*) *Extraordinary means*:—God is not tied to the second ordinary causes, but He can do that without them which He can do with them. This will appear in these particulars: 1. God sometimes works without the means at all, as in the first creation of the chaos, and in Christ's healing of many diseases. 2. God sometimes works by ordinary, but those weak and insufficient, means in the order of nature. As when the bunch of figs healed Hezekiah's sore (2 Kings xx.); as when Jacob's rods laid before the sheep of one colour, and made them conceive, and bring forth parti-coloured ones (Gen. xxx.); when the wind brought the Israelites quails in such abundance (Exod. xvi.); when Gideon's three hundred soldiers got the victory (Judg. vii.); and Jonathan and his armour-bearer alone chased away and slew so many of the Philistines (1 Sam. xiv. 6). 3. God otherwhiles works altogether by unusual and unwonted means: such as was manna in the desert. 4. God sometimes works not only by means diverse from, but quite contrary unto, the ordinary. As the blind man's eyes are restored with clay and spittle (John ix.); and Jonah is saved by being in the whale's belly. (*D. Dyke.*) *Unlawful means not needed*:—He needs not His own lawful, much less thy unlawful, means. Unlawful it was under the law to couple an ox and an ass together, how much more to couple God's holy and just providence, and thine unholy and unrighteous means? (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 5, 8. **And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.**—*Satan a close solicitor*:—1. The importunity of Satan: he is upon our Saviour again: "Again the devil taketh Him up." 2. The variety of his shifts: from the pinacle of the Temple "he taketh Him up to an exceeding high mountain." 3. Note by what gate or passage he would enter his temptation: by the eye; he shows a goodly object unto Him. 4. The dignity of the object: he shows Him kingdoms. 5. For the amplitude and generality: "All the kingdoms of the world." 6. In their most amiable and desirable shape he showed them in their glory. 7. Satan showed himself to be an arch juggler, or prestidigitator, as artists call it, for St. Luke adds, that he showed all this "in a moment of time." A close solicitor, and a diligence worthy to be commended, if it had been in a good cause; but they that are in a wrong way are most zealous in their course, and negotiate for hell more urgently than we do for heaven. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Temptation recurrent*:—But that tyranny is uncessant, the hatred of the devil hath no stint; expect it, be ready for it, and let it not sting your conscience with horror if you find somewhat within you always warring against the Spirit; temptations are not like some diseases, which are not incident to a man above once in his life, escape once and secure for ever, but like hereditary infirmities which are ever recurring to torment the flesh. A quotidian is more like to be cured, if it be well looked to, than an ague whose paroxysms keep longer distance. (*Ibid.*) *Principle not place the safeguard*:—But it is not the shifting to this place or that place that breeds contrary affections in a good man. Where there is an inward principle of goodness, firm and sure under every cope of heaven the mind is unalterable. (*Ibid.*) *Renewed temptation*:—His mouth was stopped, and he was set *non plus* in the former temptation, yet how soon doth he begin to open his mouth again? He was repulsed, yet he comes to fight again. He hath many strings to his bow, and many arrows in his quiver. When one way takes not he tries forth with another; yea, he will make proof of all ere he leaves. (*Ibid.*) *The eye the portal to the heart*:—There is nothing so soon enticed and led away as the eye; it is the broker between the heart and all wicked lusts that be in the world. And therefore it was great folly in Hezekiah to show his robes and treasure (Isa. xxxix. 2), as he was told by the prophet; it stirred up such coals of desire in them that saw them, as could not be quenched till they had fetched away all that he had, and all that his ancestors had laid up, even till that day. It is the wisdom that is used nowadays, when men would have one thing for another, to show the thing they would so exchange; as the buyer showeth his money, and the seller his wares in the best manner that he can, each to entice the other (by the eye) to the desire of the heart. (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *Fancy enticed*:—His power and work upon the fancies of men is none of the least of his ways whereby he advanceth the pleasures of sin. That he hath such a power, hath been discoursed before, and that a fancy raised to a great expectation makes things appear otherwise than what they are, is evident from common experience. The value of most things depends rather upon fancy than the internal worth of them, and men are more engaged to a pursuit of things by the estimation which fancy hath begat in their minds, than

by certain principles of knowledge. Children by fancy have a value of their toys, and are so powerfully swayed by it, that things of far greater price cannot stay their designs, nor divert their course. Satan knows that the best of men are sometimes childish, apt to be led about by their conceits, and apt in their conceits to apprehend things far otherwise than what they are in truth. (*R. Gilpin.*) *The after-claps of sin*:—We, knowing this craft, must labour in these temptations to see that which the devil hides, and to apprehend the fearful after-claps. Let us labour to see Jael's nail as well as her milk; Delilah's scissors as well as her bosom; the snake's poison as well as her embrace; and the bee's sting as well as her honey. (*D. Dyke.*) *True sight after sin*:—The devil blinds us so that we see not till afterward, as Gen. iii., "Then were their eyes opened." (*Ibid.*) *Distance lends enchantment to the view*:—Put a bit of broken glass, or a shred of worthless mica, in a ploughed field, and let the sun shine upon it, and it sparkles as vividly as that gem which "spills its drop of light" on the finger of beauty. "Afar off," it is a glory: near, just a bit of broken glass, or shred of mica. My dear friends, beware of the "glory," the "splendour" that seems to show very substantially at a distance, but which needs only to be approached to prove unreal. I remember very well how, up in the Italian and Styrian Alps, many an apparent sky-kissing range of yet mightier Alps seemed to tower, white and lustrous, over what we had deemed the loftiest peaks. They were but vanishing clouds, climbing higher than the peaks, but with no base—showing fair, glitteringly, astonishingly, unutterably beautiful, but carrying within them the rain that drenches, and the lightning that smites and the blast that loosens the roaring avalanche. "Take heed" to this artifice of the world's "show" at a distance and from the mountain-top. There is delusion and peril in the "splendour." (*A. B. Grosart.*) *And the devil taketh Him up into an high mountain*:—Here the temptation seems eminently gross. Yet devil-worship can assume many forms, and some of these may be most refined. Worship is homage, and homage to a person, real or supposed, representative of certain principles, modes of action, and aims. What it here means seems evident enough. Jesus is recognized as seeking a kingdom, as intending, indeed, to found one. His aims are confessed to be more than Jewish, not national, but universal; not an extension of Israel, but a comprehension of the world. It is known that His purpose is to be the Messiah, not of the Jews, but of man. The only question is as to the nature of His kinghood and kingdom. The kingdom here offered is one not of the Spirit, but "of the world." And "world" here means not what it may be to the good, but what it is to the bad. It and its kingdoms may be won at once, and will be, if Jesus worships the devil, *i.e.*, makes evil His good, uses unholy means to accomplish His ends. It is as if the tempter had said, "Survey the world, and mark what succeeds. Away there in Italy lives and rules the emperor of the world, a selfish, sensual man, whose right is might. Over there in Cæsarea sits his red-handed, yet vacillating, procurator. In your own Galilee a treacherous and lustful Herod reigns, its deputy lord. Up in Jerusalem are priests and scribes, great in things external, the fierce fanatics of formalism. Everywhere unholy men rule, unholy means prevail. Worldliness holds the world in fee. By it alone can you conquer. Use the means and the men of Cæsar, and your success will be swift and sure. Worship me, and the kingdoms of this world are thine." The temptation was subtly adapted to the mood and the moment, and was as evil as subtle. Bad means make bad ends. Good ends do not justify evil means; evil means deprave good ends. So a Messianic kingdom, instituted and established by worldliness, had been a worldly kingdom, no better than the coarse and sensuous empire of Rome. And Jesus, while He felt the force, saw the evil of the temptation, and vanquished it by the truth on which His own spiritual and eternal city was to be founded, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God," &c. (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*) *The force of this temptation*:—Could it be other than a temptation to think that He might, if He would, lay a righteous grasp upon the reins of government, leap into the chariot of power, and ride forth conquering and to conquer? Glad visions arose before Him of the prisoner breaking jubilant from the cell of injustice; of the widow lifting up the bowed head before the devouring Pharisee; of weeping children bursting into shouts at the sound of the wheels of the chariot before which oppression and wrong shrunk and withered, behind which sprung the fir-tree instead of the thorn, and the myrtle instead of the briar. Could He not mould the people at His will? Could He not, transfigured in snowy garments, call aloud in the streets of Jerusalem, "Behold your King"? And the fierce warriors of His nation would start at the sound; the ploughshare would be beaten into the

sword, and the pruning-hook into the spear. Ah, but when were His garments white as snow? Not when He looked to such a conquest; but when, on a moment like this, He "spake of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." But how would He, thus conquering, be a servant of Satan? I will not inquire whether such an enterprise could be accomplished without the worship of Satan. But I will ask whether to know better and do not so well, is not a serving of Satan? whether to lead men on in the name of God as towards the best, when the end is not the best, is not a serving of Satan? whether to flatter their pride by making them conquerors of the enemies of their nation instead of their own evils, is not a serving of Satan? Nothing but the obedience of the Son, the obedience unto death, the absolute *doing* of the will of God because it was the truth, could redeem the prisoner, the widow, the orphan. But it would redeem them by redeeming the conquest-ridden conqueror too, the strife-giving jailor, the unjust judge, the devouring Pharisee. He would not pluck the spreading branches of the tree; He would lay the axe to its root. It would take time; but the tree would be dead at last—dead, and cast into the lake of fire. It would take time; but His Father had time enough and to spare. It would take courage and strength and self-denial and endurance; but His Father could give Him all. The will of God should be done. Man should be free—not merely man as he thinks of himself, but man as God thinks of him. He shall grow into the likeness of the Divine thought, free not in his own fancy, but in absolute Divine fact of being, as in God's idea. The great and beautiful and perfect will of God *must* be done. (*George Macdonald, LL.D.*) This was a temptation which every worker for God, weary with the slow progress of goodness, must often feel, and to which even good and earnest men have sometimes given way—to begin at the outside instead of within, to get first a great shell of external conformity to religion, and afterwards fill it with the reality. It was the temptation to which Mahomet yielded when he used the sword to subdue those whom he was afterwards to make religious, and to which the Jesuits yielded when they baptized the heathen first, and evangelized them afterwards. (*J. Stalker, M.A.*) This was of all the temptations the most awful and searching. It was the only one of the three in which Satan suggests no doubt of the Divine Sonship and Divine glory of Christ. Could a Divine Son rightly refuse the honour and glory of a son? Could it be anything but a sin to turn His back on the only way that seemed to lead straight up to His throne? Was not this a "tempting" of God? How solemn and heart-searching are the lessons it may teach all those who profess to be servants of God among men; lessons which, perhaps, were never more needed than in the present day. 1. The conversion to Christ of the unconverted, and the evangelization of the masses, absorb the energies and the efforts of the Church. But the intensity of this passion for saving men may itself become a peril to the Church. In its zeal to save souls it may become indifferent to the means by which they are saved. 2. To resort to worldly and carnal methods for the extension of Christ's kingdom; to lose faith in the power of the gospel of Christ to do its own work, and to win its own way in the world is treason to Christ and to God; it is the worship of the devil. (*G. S. Barrett, B.A.*) *What would the result have been if Christ had yielded?*—There can be little doubt that in one sense Satan would have fulfilled his promise. No cross would have stood at the end of Christ's earthly life. There would have been louder Hosannas than Jerusalem ever offered Him as its King; there would have been vaster throngs of people proclaiming Him their Messiah and Lord; a more splendid homage from the rich and great, from rulers and Pharisees, would have been laid at His feet; in a word, Christ would have received the crown of worldly dominion and glory. But at what a cost! The great burden of human guilt would have been left still resting on the world; the heart of man would have been still weary and heavy-laden; the hope of immortal life would have been left a yearning and a longing, unsatisfied and unfulfilled; and the kingdom of God among men would have been unfounded and unknown. Christ would have lost the kingdom by appearing to gain it. The promise of the devil, like all his promises, would have turned out a black and terrible lie. He would have given the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them to our Lord, but only after Christ had given Himself to the devil. Satan would have lost nothing of his kingdom, for he would have been king of the world's King. Appearing to resign his sovereignty for a moment he would have secured it for ever. (*Ibid.*) *The temptation on the mountain:*—1. The vision was a splendid one, well fitted to appeal even to a mind that was actuated by no vulgar ambition. 2. The desire for power here appealed to is one of which the noblest natures

are susceptible. 3. It was not a wrong thing, nor at variance with His mission, that Christ should contemplate the prospect of becoming universal King. 4. The prospect held out to Him was well-fitted to stir the loftiest and holiest ambition. 5. It may well, then, foster our reverence for His character, while it teaches us lessons of the greatest practical importance, that although His universal dominion would lead to such blessed results, He would not procure or hasten it by entering into compromise with, or doing the slightest homage to, wrong. 6. Paying homage to evil with a view to the easier and speedier accomplishment of good is a sin to which the Church has always been powerfully tempted. 7. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. It is neither formed on worldly principles nor furthered by worldly measures. (*W. Landels, D.D.*) *An high mountain*:—The "high mountain" is most probably Abarim, with its three peaks of Pisgah, Peor, and Nebo. From the western point, Peor, Balaam overlooked the tents of Israel and blessed them, when brought there by Balak to curse the people. From the northernmost peak, Nebo, above Baal Maon, a complete panorama of the Dead Sea is obtained. Thence it was that the Lord God showed Moses "all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and all the land of Judah . . . unto Zion" (Deut. xxxiv. 1–4). Now Satan takes Christ to the point where Moses stood to view the Promised Land which he was *not* to enter. And here again we notice a covert sneer. "O Thou Prophet of the Most High, like unto Moses, who comest to lead the people of God out of bondage into liberty, to restore again the kingdom to Israel! Thou wilt, may be, do what Thou undertakest. But what will be the result to *Thyself*? Wilt Thou profit in any way by it? God gave to Moses a hard forty years in the wilderness, and instead of rewarding him with rest at the end, let him see the Promised Land from afar, even from this spot, and let him die without allowing him to set foot on it. That is how God deals with His prophets, and that is how He will deal with Thee!" And as he spake may be the eye of the Son of Man rested on far-off Calvary, which is visible from this spot. Then Satan went on with the contrast: "But I—I reward my servants at once. Come, bend the knee to me, and I will give Thee glory, and power, and dominion in the present." And there rose a mirage of the desert, and in that mirage was a vision of palaces and palm trees, and glittering sheets of water, on which gay barges sailed, apparently very real, but it was only a phantom scene painted in the unwholesome vapours that rose from the Dead Sea, and from the hot bituminous desert sands and rocks. A phantom splendour over desolation and death. That was what Satan offered. And observe likewise the difference between his offers and those of God, offers which he makes quite unabashed, and emphasizes. God gives present pain and future glory; Satan gives present satisfaction and future wretchedness. Only note how he pitches on one half of each offer, and contrasts only the present, saying nothing of the future. God gives present sadness, Satan present satisfaction; and he utters not a word about the future. The vision was but for a moment. Satan "showed unto Him, *in a moment* of time, all the kingdoms of the world"; the desert mirage does not last long, but while it lasts it is thoroughly deceptive. So it is with the gifts of Satan; they are but for a moment, and then they vanish away, and leave dust, and ashes, and barrenness, and death behind. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *Satan's short cut*:—The devil fits his temptation nicely to his purpose. Christ is about to begin His mission, and to found His kingdom, which is to be universal, to extend throughout the world. Satan shows Him how to make the kingdoms of earth His own instantaneously, by doing homage to himself. No need then for Calvary, no laborious preachings, no persecutions, no martyrdoms, no sowing in tears, no casting of the bread on the waters and patient expectance of the result after many days. The kingdoms of the world will become the kingdoms of Christ at once, if He will conform to the world, and acknowledge the Evil One as supreme—if He will allow the presence of evil, legislate for it, accept it, and not fight against it. But this offer of Satan is an usurpation of power—of God's power. No compromise with evil. "Get thee behind Me, Satan." (*Ibid.*) *Satan's methods*:—An illustration of Satan's method of beguiling to destroy, was one day witnessed by the writer when rambling near Scawfell. His guide said he thought he could find a trout, and stooping down over the grassy bank of a small mountain-stream, remained for a few minutes perfectly quiet, excepting a slight motion of the arm. Presently he brought up a large fish. He knew where it was likely to be; he gently touched its back, drew his hand lightly backwards and forwards, soothed and charmed his victim, then grasped and captured it. So "the devil's policy is to tickle his victims to death, and damn them with delights."

(*Newman Hall, LL.B.*) *Elation no temptation to Christ*:—The tempter had tried the Son of Man through the power of depression; he now tries Him by the power of exaltation. He had sought to vanquish Him by the scourge of poverty; he now seeks to overcome Him by the vision of plenty. He had brought Him down into the valley, and had tempted Him by the dangers of humiliation; he now carries Him up to the mountain and tempts Him by the dangers of elevation. Why was the Son of Man superior to all circumstances? Only because He was superior to all sin. The sinless heart will be free from temptation everywhere. It will neither be reduced by the exigencies of the valley of humiliation, nor by the allurements of the mountain of elevation; it will not turn the stones into bread to avoid the famine; it will not bow the knee to Baal to purchase a crown. (*G. Matheson, M.A., D.D.*)

Vers. 6, 7. **All this power will I give Thee.**—*The devil's bounty*:—His bounty is treacherous. (*D. Dyke.*) *Bounty attractive*:—Bounty in a master is a great attraction to his service. (*Ibid.*) *Satan's promises*:—1. That the very desires of abundance and greatness are in themselves unlawful, though we desire them not upon such conditions as here the devil offers them. We are commanded (1 Tim. vi. 8) to be content with mere necessaries, for food and raiment. 2. That the devil in these promises deceives us, and that three ways. (1) Sometimes not giving all the things promised, but the contrary. Adam was promised to be like God Himself, but how well he obtained it, witness God's bitter scoff, "Behold, man is become as one of Us" (Gen. iii.). (2) The devil deceives us in his promises, in getting far better things of us, than we have of him. For in these contracts with the devil we make Esau's pennyworth, sell heaven for a mess of pottage; Glaucus' exchange, gold for copper. We are as foolish as children that lose their parents and their own liberty, and suffer themselves to be stolen away for an apple. Yea, as the bird that accepts of the fowler's meat, but buys it full dearly with her own life. 3. That all these things he promises are vain and insufficient to give true content. For (1) they are inferior unto us as men, much more as Christians. A thing worse than thyself cannot make thee better. Gold and silver are inferior to thee. (2) They are fickle and fugitive, therefore well shown here in a moment, because they glide away, as the running water, and in representation, because they have no substance, but are mere shadows and vanishing shows. 4. Meditate of the excellent reward of the life to come. (*Ibid.*) *Toleration not donation*:—Now the devil turns toleration into donation, connivance and permission into approbation, and that which is done at some times and in some places he makes constant and general. This is the trick of devilish liars thus to piece out things by addition. A little truth shall be enough to face out and colour over many lies. (*Ibid.*) *Mortifying the carnal desires*:—This being so dangerous and prevailing a temptation that hath wounded so many, it must teach us to strengthen ourselves against it. Which that we may do, two main remedies must be used. The first is the mortification of our fleshly members, the eye and the ear of old Adam. If a man should come to a dead man, and promise him never so many kingdoms, and show him never so much honour and glory, he is nothing moved. Now mortification makes us dead men to the world, as blind men to this goodly sight of the Word, and as deaf adders to the charms of this charmer. (*Ibid.*) *Giving; Divine and Satanic*:—But, on the other hand, what a difference between all other "I will gives" and the "I will give" of Jesus! After the ringing of changes by good Richard Clerke on the tempter's "I will give," let the sweet bell-sounds of the Lord's promise-words rise and swell through your memories—"Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28); "Ask whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it" (Mark vi. 22); "I will give you the sure mercies of David" (Acts xiii. 34); "I will give thee a crown of life"; "I will give him the morning-star"; "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. ii. 10, 28; xxi. 6). Thus is it also in the Old Testament, in historic book and prophecy and Psalm. (*A. B. Grosart.*) *Satan offering stolen goods*:—And before whom could he have told this tale, to be taken in a lie so soon, as by driving this bargain with Christ? As if a thief should steal plate, and offer to sell it to the owner; or a plagiary, filtch a great deal out of a book, and rehearse it for his own before the author. So the tempter had robbed Christ of that honour and majesty which was most properly His own (I mean he robbed Him of it by the blasphemy and falsehood of his tongue), and then brings it to Christ to barter it away for other merchandise. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Satan's*

attempted bribery of Christ:—There was, let us remember, nothing coarse or common in the suggestion which Satan here brought before the mind of Christ. He appealed to an attribute of man which, though often misdirected and abused, was originally a heaven-born instinct, designed to lift him above all other earthly creatures, viz., ambition and a desire for power. There is by nature something kingly in each human soul. Man was made for ruling. God set him at the first to be a lord in Eden. And, knowing that Christ had come to establish here upon earth that kingdom which the throne of David but faintly symbolized, the tempter spread before His soul a vision of universal dominion, offered Him the sceptre of world-wide sovereignty, with all the glory belonging thereto, adding this promise, "Everything shall be yours, without the Cross, without the cost of pain, or toil, or sacrifice, if you will only make the very slight and harmless, because secret, acknowledgment of indebtedness to me. All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt bend in reverence to receive them at my hands." Was that vision a mere dream? Was the offer all a lie? If so, where was the temptation? There must have been at least some truth in it. Think of the political condition of the world at that time. There were many kingdoms, but over them all spread the one consolidating and ruling power of Rome. Her law reached everywhere. Her empire stretched from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, a distance of more than three thousand miles, and from the Danube on the north, and the friths of Scotland, to the cataracts of the Nile and the African desert. All the tribes and nations inhabiting this immense territory had surrendered their independence and were fused into one political system. Moreover, that empire was tottering towards its fall. It was ready to accept even then a new Leader, even as only a little while later on it did in its helplessness accept the new faith. Can we who know how men have risen from the lowest to the highest worldly positions, doubt the possibility of Christ's reaching, without supernatural help, the place which Julius Cæsar gained? Suppose by skilful management, and by a little concession here and a little there, He had united the three rival factions of Judæa, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians, taking for a basis this last, which was a political party favouring the dominion of Rome. That first step might have led on gradually to the grand result which the tempter showed Him. All this any shrewd and far-discerning man could have thought of as possible. On the other side, and as the only alternative, Christ saw a lonely path, leading through Gethsemane and its terrible agony, and rising, step after step, up to Calvary and its awful Cross. He knows beforehand His rejection and betrayal, the scourging, the mocking, and the borrowed sepulchre. Even now, amid the solitude of the wilderness and its solemn stillness, He hears that bitter, maddened cry, "Away with Him! Crucify Him! We will have a Cæsar for our king, and no one else." That is, He knows that if He now accepts the tempter's offer, instead of being afterwards rejected by "His own" nation, He will become their acknowledged king. And beyond those three years of ministry and of conflict which He Himself must endure, He sees at least nineteen centuries during which His Church must fill up that which remains behind of His appointed sufferings, praying meanwhile for the coming of His kingdom. "Save Thyself," the tempter said, "and spare Thy followers. Take the Crown without the Cross." It was a proffered bribe. The question was whether Christ should sacrifice principle, or whether He should sacrifice Himself; whether He should reach that end for which He had come into the world by God's appointed way, or by one easier; in short, whether He should make duty or policy the law of His life. You know the decision and the answer. Nevertheless, let me read it in your ears, for the voice of this very temptation comes often to us all, and therefore the Voice of the Victor is never without its lessons. (*E. E. Johnson, M.A.*) *Unprincipled success is failure*:—What looks outwardly like the highest worldly success, may, nevertheless, be the worst kind of failure, because it has been purchased at the price of honesty and principle. It is not so very difficult to gain riches and social position, to secure control over this or that kingdom of earth, provided a man will bend all his energies towards that particular end, and at the same time crush down every conscientious scruple that rises to protest in God's name against the unrighteousness of the methods he is using. Christ would not march to His kingdom except by a king's highway, and along an unswerving path of loyal integrity. In the worship and also in the service of God, that is to say, both by making Him supreme, and then, instead of folding our hands, using every power we have in the work to which He calls us, we too can resist the power of him who comes whispering with honeyed, sympathetic voice, "Poor, weary, unsuccessful one, let me show

you an easier way." (*Ibid.*) *The temptation to doubt God's present government of the world*:—While we maintain most firmly the simple and literal truth of the facts of the temptation as recorded by the evangelist, utterly renouncing the scepticism that would resolve them into oriental imagery; yet we see in them something far beyond the mere facts, the absolute truth of which we nevertheless maintain. They are symbols full of meaning, symbols of what was going on all through the human life of the Redeemer, and of the struggle which all must maintain who would follow in His steps. The very order in which they are related is expressive. Beginning, as they did, with a suggestion that He should abuse the high powers with which He was endued, by providing through them for the gratification of appetite now sharpened by long fasting—passing on, when He had triumphed easily over this coarser temptation, to the more ensnaring and alluring bait of promised success through a compromise with evil; and when this also had been thrust aside, seeking to lift up into presumption that most holy soul—what is this but the history of man's temptation, first amidst the passions of youth, then in the scheming worldliness of middle life, and last of all, in the self-confident elation which has caused the fall of many who had hitherto run well? 1. Many have believed, from his audacious taunt and the silence with which Christ dismissed it, that Satan has, to a great degree, the power to which he here lays claim; they secretly admit, in their suspicions at least, that he does bestow the good things of this life; that in this sense, rather than as being the tyrant over the faction of earthly and wicked hearts, he is "the prince of this world." (1) Mischievous effects of this doctrine. Allow for a moment that the world is in any sense under the dominion of Satan, that it has been committed to him, and the whole scheme of God's government becomes entangled in hopeless contradiction. Such a thought, admitted even in its lowest degree, must take from the heart its power of striving against sin, and of labouring to relieve the misery around it. Nothing can keep this in vigorous action but the undoubting confidence that we are at every turn really in the hand of a good and holy and Almighty Governor, and that He is now ruling all things, and disposing all things according to His own counsel; angels and men and every created being but carrying out His will; the holy and the just doing it from love; the unholy and rebellious bowed by its irresistible compulsion. Without the living energy to which this thought gives birth, who could strive alone against the multitude of evil doers; and what would there be to redress all the apparent contradictions of the mighty entanglement of this world? We must be entirely certain, in the depth of our hearts, that in all the maze (as it would seem) around us, there is to be traced a wise and a mighty plan, working out its harmonious accomplishment, that the kingdom of the "Stone cut out without hands" is even now set up; that this world is not renounced by God; that in the Church of the redeemed, each one of us may work with and for God, just as surely as the angels of heaven. For then, and never before, shall we see in every duty an opportunity of service; in every sorrow a messenger of love, and in every threatened peril the fiery squadrons of the heavenly host shielding the true servants of the Highest. (2) The nature of the fraud here used by Satan. We do not deny that sin is often so far successful as to gain for a time, for the sinner, certain specific objects that he has desired, or that the righteous are often kept bare of those outward good things which the wicked possess; but we affirm that this is not (as Satan would have us believe) because any power is committed to the evil one, or that he is allowed to suspend, even for a moment, God's righteous government, and so to reward his own followers; but that these objects of men's desire are given and withheld by God Himself, as a moral governor, upon a strictly moral rule, and in exact accordance therewith; that they are given to the wicked in anger, and withheld from the righteous in love; that they are given by Him, who has appointed certain results to follow from certain causes; who permits, therefore, the activity and the earnestness and the labour of the evil to work out for them those results which activity and earnestness and labour will, through His appointment, in general attain: but that even in giving these He marks the gift with His anger. For even when the particular object is attained, its possession does not bring with it that which the evil man had promised to himself, and which made it desirable in his eyes. He gets it; and it is barren and joyless. And herein is the juggling of the great deceiver. He promised the gift as his reward, and he promised with it the enjoyment of it; but as, even when the end is gained, it is not of his giving, so neither can he give with it the enjoyment of it. God bestows the objects desired, but puts in a sting with the gift, and so the followers of the evil one are cheated. 2. Con-

cluding applications of this truth. (1) Warning. Which of us is not oftentimes tempted to believe this lie of Satan? Who is not tempted, by doing evil, or by enduring evil, or by winking at evil (all different forms of worshipping the evil one) to seek for some advantage which will (as it seems) be held back from him if he walk straight on along the narrow path which leads unto life? Who has not had a place to gain in the life-race, steps to make good in the world-struggle, a family to push, a fortune to better, a powerful friend to gain or to keep, some weak point to cover by a falsehood, or some simulated virtue to make shine in the eyes of others? And who has not known, if he searched his heart at such a time, the flattering voice of expediency, and the grating harshness of truth? I ask you, in the sight of God, how have you acted at such times? How are you acting now when they arise? Take up this thought in its simplicity, without doing away by artifice its strength, and then try your lives by it; try by it your daily conduct, whether in the shop, family, counting-house, senate, or wherever your lot may be cast. God's rule follows you into every act of every day; His sentence of anger or of approval is ever pronounced, ever executed. No one sin can prosper in God's world. That which flatters the most is commonly in the end the keenest torturer of him who yields to it. (2) Encouragement. Christian man! this God is your God for ever and ever; He shall be your guide even unto death. He is your Father, if you be a true and earnest believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is comfort for you in every trial; in the midst of the world's sorrow, here is joy. You must be truly happy, for God is with you; you must be truly rich, for you possess all things in Him. This thought reverses in an instant every earthly calculation. (*Bishop S. Wilberforce.*) *The devil's bargain*:—As it was proposed to Christ at the opening of His ministry, so mostly is it offered to men's acceptance in the opening of their youth. Practically it was the same bargain that was made with our first parents in the garden. I. A TEMPTING BARGAIN. II. A DECEITFUL BARGAIN. 1. In the quantity. 2. In the quality of the article purchased. III. A DEAR BARGAIN. Consider—1. The sin of it. 2. The humiliation of it. (*T. Whitelaw, M.A.*) *Satan's offer*:—Are men and women ever tempted in this way, and in our day? I think so. 1. There is the danger generally of pursuing legitimate ends by unlawful and unrighteous means. 2. The temptation to pious frauds, the suppression, misrepresentation, or obscuring of the truth in the supposed interests of religion. 3. With regard to our own personal salvation, the idea that there is some royal road into the glories and blessedness of the eternal kingdom. (*Gordon Calthrop, M.A.*) *Two mountain scenes*:—The offer was empire, and the price was worship. Jesus Christ said "No." and came down from the mountain as poor as He was when He was taken up. So much, you say, for throwing away the great opportunities of life. But read again Matt. xxviii. 16–18, "The disciples went away into Galilee into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. . . . And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Put these two mountain scenes together. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *A plausible lie*:—"For that is delivered unto me." One of the additions made by Luke to our knowledge of the temptations is the monstrous assumption of power and royalty on the part of the tempter. There is something fearful in the language which he uses—God had never given over the power to Satan. "*Thine*," we truly confess in our prayer to our Father in heaven, "is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." It was a lie, such as might have been expected to proceed from the "father of lies." Yet there was sufficient appearance of truth to make the lie plausible. Anybody looking upon the world would say, especially at the time of the Temptation, that the power and glory were acknowledged by general consent to belong to the prince of evil. Thank God that it is not so, and thank God that Jesus Christ came into the world to prove how false Satan's words were, and to claim the power and the glory wholly for God His Father. (*Bishop Harvey Goodwin.*) *The bait of worldly prosperity*:—A literary angler in the lochs of Scotland was wont to catch trout in a singularly suggestive fashion. The bait consisted of a pellet made of chloroform paste. No sooner had a trout taken one of these pellets into his mouth, than it fell into a sweet sleep. All efforts at escape were prevented; it could instantly be drawn to the shore. Prosperity acts similarly upon many. They are lulled to spiritual slumber, and easily become Satan's prey. If that is a man's peril, what worse can happen to him than so-called success? (*G. T. Coster.*) *Satanic fascinations*:—Not unlike this is the experience sometimes of many Christian brethren. Those who are of a fervid temperament and lively imagination, can tell of similar fascinations. The adversary is the readier to practise them upon persons of this

description, because their natural love of excitement and the vividness of their sensations seem to promise him a surer triumph; indeed, he is often far too successful in bearing their spirits up to his enchanting heights. For this purpose he commonly employs some outward means. These he will gather, for instance, from the fine arts, as they are everywhere abused to worldliness and the pleasures of sin. Thus at one time it is a beautiful picture, at another the witcheries of poetry, at another, the sweetness of melody, or the sublimity of musical composition, whereby he dissolves their spiritual firmness. Sometimes, if only some sweet mazy melody softly undulating from a distance, be listened to, as one sits musing in the solitary chamber, his sorcery may prove successful. (*Dr. Krummacher.*) *The world possessed by Satan*:—Who can number the hundreds of millions whose souls he secures in his manifold chains, in the bands of sin and ignorance, in countless spiritual prisons and cells, under Mohammedan imposture, or in pagan idolatry; in the strong delusions of the Talmud, or under the dogmas of the seven hills; in heaven-defying rationalism, pantheism, or atheism. Surely, without any arrogant claim, Satan might say, "All this is mine!" For the little which is not his, the "lodge in the garden of cucumbers," the "worm Jacob," the despised handful of Israel, is, as compared to the giant domains of this prince of fallen angels, but as a drop to the ocean. What is there in the whole world that the devil has not usurped for the extension and establishment of his kingdom, and made subservient, especially in the present age, to his infernal plans? Are not most of our pulpits and professional chairs still his? May not the same be said of the greater part of our public journals and newspapers? Are not our assemblies, associations, and clubs chiefly devoted to his service? And which of the sciences or of the fine arts is exempt from perversion to his interests? Almost everything in the world has he contrived to draw by little and little into subservience to his cause. Who deals out poetry in that deluge of romance and comedy which inundates the world with millions of infidel falsehoods and unholy ideas? Who is the invisible manager and conductor of those sensual operas, elysian concerts, and other entertainments, whereby music, that gift bestowed to praise withal the perfections of Jehovah, stands prominent as the destroyer of souls, because it is now made to breathe subtle poison into human hearts? Who is it that has stationed his camp behind the ramparts of modern philosophy, and aims from thence to inflict the most wicked and deadly blows on the gospel of peace? Who is it that has schemed and palmed upon Christendom that fashionable modern religion sweetened with effeminate taste, and spiced with lax and godless morality, which lulls people into a deep spiritual slumber, from which but too late the thunder of judgment will awaken them? From whom does all this originally proceed but from the father of lies, the old serpent, the dragon of the bottomless pit? Nor let us be surprised that he even speaks of "giving" what is certainly within the compass of his power. (*Ibid.*) *The flesh and Spirit in conflict*:—"God made all things," saith Lactantius, "to set two armies in array"—the flesh and the Spirit; sense and reason; man whom He made after His own image, and the prince of this world. And therefore He hath mixed, as it were, an appearance of good with that which is evil, various and delectable pleasantness in the things of this world, that by those fair allurements in show there may be a possibility of inducement into that evil which is not seen: and He hath blended an apparency of evil with that which is good, that, by those sorrows and labours which are distasteful to the eye, there may be a possibility in us of refusing that good which is covered with such horror. But the present pleasure He checketh with fear of punishment, and the present horror and sharpness He sweetens with hope of reward; that we may see more with our mind than with our eye; that when our sense would join with evil because of its colour, our reason may fly from it because of its smart; and when the flesh declines goodness because it is irksome, the spirit may embrace it because it hath the promise of a reward; that when the devil speaketh fair, we may shut our ears, because we know his words are as swords; and when God nails us to the cross, we may bless His name, because He means to crown us. (*A. Farindon, D.D.*) *Gifts Satanical*:—There are gifts Satanical as well as gifts Divine; and the world has always abounded with persons who have owed their enjoyments, treasures, honours, titles, and rank, to Satanical ministration or superintendence. For our great adversary has always his pay and his prize-money in readiness for any who will follow his banner, and he has various methods of handsomely remunerating their zeal in his service. (*Dr. Krummacher.*) *To be right is to be rich*:—How, then, as to the truth of the doctrine that to be right is to be rich? To test that doctrine you

must get into the very heart of the sufferer himself. He will show you the compensations of a righteous life; he will tell you how sweet is the bread eaten in secret, how holy and all-comforting is the approval of a good conscience, and how infinite is the independence of the soul whose trust is in God. In such a case the poverty is wholly on the outside; the soul is clothed in more than purple and fine linen, and is rich with more than gold. Outside, things are rough enough undoubtedly; the storm does not spare the roof, nor do the rags keep away the biting wind, yet somehow the man who is right has a quiet and thorough mastery over the circumstances which fret and vex the mere surface of his life. The king is within. The fountain of his joy is not dependent on the clouds, but on "the river of God, which is full of water." "The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Satan's bid for the soul*:—A story is told of Rowland Hill, the eccentric preacher. Lady Ann Erskine was passing by in her carriage, and she asked her coachman who that was that was drawing such a large assembly. He replied that it was Rowland Hill. "I have heard a good deal about him," she said; "drive up near the crowd." Mr. Hill soon saw her, and saw that she belonged to the aristocracy. He all at once stopped in the midst of his discourse and said, "My friends, I have something for sale." This astonished his hearers. "Yes, I have something for sale; it is the soul of Lady Ann Erskine. Is there any one here that will bid for her soul? Ah, do I hear a bid? Who bids? Satan bids. Satan, what will you give for her soul? 'I will give riches, honour, and pleasure.' But stop. Do I hear another bid? Yes, Jesus Christ bids. Jesus, what will you give for her soul? 'I will give eternal life.' Lady Ann Erskine, you have heard the two bids—which will you take?" And Lady Ann fell down on her knees, and cried out, "I will have Jesus." The devil lies when he promises, but Christ always keeps His word. *Sold to the devil*:—Laura Phillips, "a pretty and well-educated young woman," committed suicide in Omaha the other day. She took blood from her own veins, and wrote with it the following note, which was found on her pillow: "I, Laura Phillips, hereby sell my soul to the devil, in consideration for which he agrees to give me wealth, beauty, and the power to overcome all my enemies." She left a comfortable home in Iowa three years ago, and went step by step into the slough of degradation. (*Newspaper.*) *The soul sometimes sold for the smallest things*:—It does not require a devil to tempt you. The smallest thing can tempt. As poor John Bunyan said once, something kept tempting him to sell Christ. If he stooped to pick up a pin the voice said, "Sell Him for that! sell Him for that!" And men sell their honour for things as cheap. A pin will do it; a sweet smile; a fair face; the ruby wine; the love of money. Ah, for what has not a man sold his soul! (*George Dawson.*) *Satan a tyrant though he may seem a parasite*:—When we are once sure, Satan is a tyrant; till then, he is a parasite. There can be no safety if we do not view as well the back as the face of temptation. (*A. B. Grosart.*) *Wrong moral conditions cannot be productive of happiness*:—Look at the price required for the supremacy offered to Christ—"If Thou wilt fall down and worship me"! But consider what it is to worship at the wrong altar! It is to debase the affections, to bring the best energies of the soul under malign influence, and to forfeit the power to enjoy the very things which it is supposed to purchase. Worship expresses, though it may be feebly, the worshipper's supreme ideal of life; if, therefore, it be offered to an evil spirit, the whole substance and course of life will be deeply affected by the error. What if the very act of false worship disqualify the soul for relishing any supposed or undoubted joy? Offer a man long draughts of the choicest wines if he will first drench his mouth with a strong solution of alum, and what are the choicest wines to him then? They cannot penetrate to the palate, they are absolutely without taste, and they mock the appetite they were meant to gratify. So, if a man put his moral nature under false conditions, and create anarchy between himself and the principle of eternal righteousness, no matter what fortune or honour may accrue to him, his power of serene enjoyment is gone, and he becomes burdened and plagued by his very successes. This will be the first point insisted upon by the moralist; in the plainest words he will say, "The promise is very great, but it is a lie to begin with, and the man who sells his soul to get it will soon find that he is neither more nor less than a dupe of the devil." (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 8. **Get thee behind Me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.**—The necessity of a quick and speedy rejection of a sinful motion is, then, beyond dispute, and there needs no more to be

said for the explanation of this direction, but an account of what is implied in a speedy denial. It contains these four things:—1. That it must issue from a fixed determination against sin. 2. This positive denial must be also wisely jealous of Satan, in motions that are unlikely, or that may seem light, little, and not directly intended. 3. The refusal must be so quick, that it may be ready to take the temptation by the throat. 4. When this is done, we must endeavour to maintain and stick to our first disallowance. (*R. Gilpin.*) *Service joined to worship*:—Dr. Thomas Taylor similarly, but in his own original way, observes:—"God must not only be worshipped, but also served. The distiuction is easily observed. For a man may in heart and gesture honour another to whom he owes but little service. And this word in the Hebrew is taken from servants, who, besides inward reverence and outward worship, owe to their masters their strength, labour, and service, yea, frank and cheerful obedience. And suppose any man have a servant who will be very complimental, and give his master cap and knee and very good words, yet when his master commands him anything, he will not do it—here is honour, but no service; and denying service, he plainly shows that his honour is but dissembled and hypocritical. So as this service to God, as to earthly masters, stands—(1) In 'fear' and reverent inward affection; (2) In dutiful and ready obedience in all holy and civil [moral] actions. For—1. These two, God in the Scriptures hath everywhere joined together; and therefore no man may separate them. 'Oh that there were in them such an heart to "fear" Me, and to keep My commandments!' (Deut. v. 29). 'Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in uprightness, else choose you: for I and my house will serve the Lord' (Josh. xxiv. 14, 15). 'Let us hear the end of all, Fear God and keep His commandments' (Eccles. xii. 13), which is all one with 'fear God and serve Him.' 2. This service is a fruit of fear, and a true testimony of it, for fear of God is expressed in service; and if a man would make true trial of his fear he may do it by his service." (*A. B. Grosart.*) *Temptation firmly rejected*:—The nature of temptations, as dangerous or infectious, doth sufficiently enforce a necessity of their speedy removal. Things of danger require a sudden stop. If poison be taken into the body, we speedily labour to cast it up, or to overcome it by antidotes. We labour to stay the spreading of a gangrene presently. Who thinks it fit to delay when fire hath taken hold upon a house? The very opportunity of help is in the speediness of the endeavour. It is too late to bring water when the house is consumed, too late to apply a remedy when the disease hath conquered. They that consider what a temptation is will see no reason to move slowly in opposing. (*R. Gilpin.*) *The devil quotes Deuteronomy*:—The Law (we know) is a great cooler to presumption. (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *True worship: The essentials of true worship*:—I. THE OBJECT: The Lord God. II. THE CHARACTERISTICS: 1. Meditation; 2. Realization; 3. Personal communion. (*A. F. Barfield.*) *The service of God*:—I. HE HAS THE RIGHT TO CLAIM OUR SERVICE. His right is threefold. He is—1. Our Creator. 2. Our Preserver. 3. Our Redeemer. II. HIS CLAIM UPON US IS FOR OUR UNDIVIDED AND WHOLE-HEARTED SERVICE. "Him only." You cannot serve Him and anything else that is contrary to Him. Our "reasonable service" is the presentation of ourselves. III. HIS SERVICE CONFERS THE HIGHEST HONOUR UPON THOSE WHO UNDERTAKE IT. To serve self and sin is to sink always deeper into the depths of degradation. To serve God is to be exalted to the position of fellow-labourer with Him in the accomplishment of His purposes. IV. HIS SERVICE IS THE ONLY SERVICE WHICH IS FREEDOM. "I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy precepts." V. THE SERVICE WHICH HE HAS A RIGHT TO DEMAND HE YET CONDESCENDS TO ENTREAT. He seeks for no compulsory obedience. The only service acceptable in His sight is that which springs from love. "My son, give Me thy heart." (*J. R. Bailey.*) *Satan cannot stand a text*:—"What's wrang wi' ye noo? I thocht ye were a' richt," said a ragged boy, himself rejoicing in the Saviour, to another, who a few nights before professed to be able to trust Jesus, but who had again begun to doubt. "What's wrang wi' ye noo?" "Man, I'm no richt yet," replied the other, "for Satan's aye tempting me." "And what dae ye then?" asked his friend. "I try," said he, "to sing a hymn." "And does that no send him away?" "No; I am as bad as ever." "Weel," said the other, "when he tempts ye again, try him wi' a text; he canna staun then." *Unflinching fidelity to God*:—Be not in haste to be rich or to be famous or to be admired. "Make haste slowly," says the proverb, and it means just this—Make haste in God's way; take everything you can get from God, take nothing from the devil. Most powerfully was this illustrated in the life of the noble Havelock. For many years in the army he struggled against the arbitrary character of official patronage, and the odious abuses of the

purchase system; and he, who in the end was the redeemer of the Indian Empire, was for a dreary while only a lieutenant. Yet how did he bear himself under it? As a Christian soldier, after the pattern of the Lord here, he placed the worship of the Lord first, and that he would not renounce for anything that man could name. Hear his words, and they are worthy of being written in letters of gold; yea, the spirit which utters them manifests a nobler courage than that which won so many fights and rescued the forlorn garrison at Lucknow. Here they are: "Let me ask you, my good friend, what you mean by prejudices against me. Tell me plainly. I am not aware of any. Old —— and others used to tell me that it was believed at the Horse Guards and in other quarters that I professed to fear God, as well as to honour the Queen, and that Lord Hill and others had made up their minds that a man could not be at once a saint and a soldier. Now, I dare say any such authorities must be right, notwithstanding the example of Colonel Gardiner, Cromwell, and Gustavus Adolphus. But, if so, all I can say is, that their bit of red ribbon was very ill bestowed upon me; for I humbly trust that in that great matter I should not change my opinions and practice, though it rained garters and coronets as the reward of apostasy." (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Motto for the tempted*:—There is in the south of France, on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, a huge tower, forming part of the fortifications by which St. Louis secured his embarkation for his troops for the last crusade. It is called the Tower of Constance, and in it were imprisoned during the reign of Louis XIV., Protestant women who would not renounce their faith at the request of the great king. In this lonely tower there is a gloomy chamber in which these women passed their lives, and there carved with some rude instrument on the pavement of the prison this one word, "Resist." It is ascribed to Marie Duran, who, for being sister to a French pastor, was there confined for more than forty years. She found her great resource, her great consolation, in carving out this word for any one who should hereafter come to read it there. (*Dean Stanley.*)

Vers. 9, 13. **And he brought Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence.**—*It is Satan's policy in tempting to run from one extreme to another*:—Reasons of this policy are—1. The avoiding of one extreme gives the soul such a swing, if care be not used to prevent it, that they are cast more than half way upon the other. 2. While men avoid one extreme by running into another, they carry with them such strong impressions of the evil they would avoid, and such fierce prejudices, that it is not an ordinary conviction will bring them right, but they are apt to be confident of the goodness of the way they take, and so are the more bold and fixed in their miscarriage. That as distrust on the one hand, so presumption on the other, is one of his grand designs. Show what presumption is. It is in the general a confidence without a ground. 1. It is made up of audacity—which is a bold and daring undertaking of a thing—and security. 2. The ground of it is an error of judgment. A blind or a misled judgment doth always nourish it. 3. In its way of working it is directly opposite to distrust, and is a kind of excessive though irregular hope. 1. Then it is presumption, when from external or subordinate means men expect that for which they were never designed nor appointed of God. 2. When men do expect those fruits and effects from anything unto which it is appointed, in neglect or opposition to the supreme cause, without whose concurrent influence they cannot reach their proper ends—that is, our hopes are wholly centred upon means, when in the meantime our eye is not upon God. 3. It is a presumption to expect things above the reach of our present state and condition. 4. When men expect things contrary to the rules that God hath set for His dispensations of mercy, they boldly presume upon His will. 5. It is also a presumption to expect any mercy, though common and usual, without the ordinary means by which God in providence hath settled the usual dispensations of such favours. 6. When ordinary or extraordinary mercies are expected for an unlawful end. Having thus proved that presumption is one of the great things he aims at, I shall next discover the reasons of his earnestness and industry in his design, which are these—1. It is a sin very natural, in which he hath the advantage of our own readiness and inclination. 2. As it is easy for Satan's attempt, so it is remote from conviction, and not rooted out without great difficulty. 3. The greatness of the sin when it is committed, is another reason of his diligence in the pursuit of it. 4. The dangerous issues and consequences of this way of sinning, do not a little animate Satan to tempt to it. It was no small piece of Satan's craft to take this

advantage, while the impression of trust in the want of outward means was warm upon the heart of Christ. He hoped thereby the more easily to draw Him to an excess. For he knows that a zealous earnestness to avoid a sin, and to keep to a duty, doth often too much incline us to an extreme, and he well hoped that when Christ had declared Himself so positively to depend upon God, he might have prevailed to have stretched that dependence beyond its due bounds, taking the opportunity of His sway that way, which, as a ship before wind and tide, might soon be overdriven. (*R. Gilpin.*) *Satan watches the wind:*—They admire how it comes to pass that their temptations should so suddenly alter, that when Satan seems to be so intent upon one design, he should so quickly change, and urge them presently to a different or contrary thing; but they may know that the devil watcheth the wind, and spreads his sail according to the advantage which ariseth from our answer or repulse. So that if we would but plough with our own heifer, and observe our frame of spirit, we should easily find out this riddle. For as it is in disputings and arguings of men, replies beget new matter for answer, and so do they multiply one another; thus are temptations altered and multiplied, and out of the ashes of one assault repelled, another doth quickly spring up. (*Ibid.*) *The influence of place in temptation:*—As long as Noah was in the ark in the midst of the waters, he had in him no presumptuous thought; but sitting under the vine in his vineyard, he was overcome therewith. And just Lot (2 Pet. ii. 8) in Sodom, had no fit time or place to be presumptuous; but when he dwelt in the mountain in security, then he committed incest with his daughters, being made drunk by them. David, so long as he was persecuted by Saul, tossed up and down from post to pillar, had no leisure to be presumptuous; but in the top of his turret, when he was at rest in his palace. (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *The same devil:*—But though it be not the same temptation, yet it is the same devil in both places. (*Ibid.*) *Pride seeks the pinnacle:*—All other sins keep out of the way, as well as they can, but pride is not ashamed to be manifested, nay, it loves to have witnesses of its folly and insolency. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Satan loves open sins:*—This is that itch which Satan hath rubbed upon self-admiring pride, sometime to be gazed upon at one place, sometime at another, by the court, by the theatre, by the congregation assembled to praise God, by the whole city, if it be possible, as it was purposed in this temptation. But the more publication pride makes of itself, the more scandal is given, the more scandal the more guiltiness, and the more guiltiness the greater condemnation. Satan loves these open, these flaming sins, that weak ones may run to them like moths to the light of a candle, and be touched and scorched with coming near them. (*Ibid.*) *The holy Temple defiled:*—And above all places on earth if he make us his instruments to defile the holy Temple, God's glory is put to the greatest scandal and reproach. And this is brought to pass so many ways, that it is plain to see there hath been a most witty complotter in the treachery. 1. When any prelate is so puffed up that he thinks himself too great to be a doorkeeper in God's house, but will be higher than all the Church, and set on the top of the pinnacle, who, sitting in the Temple of God, exalts himself above all that is called God. 2. The temple is defiled by setting up idols in the courts of our heavenly King, even in the midst of thee, O thou sanctuary of the Lord. 3. By offering up unclean sacrifice, either false doctrine, or impious prayers, or superstitious worship, or corrupted sacraments. 4. When men set their foot within the sacred tabernacle with carnal thoughts, with worldly imaginations, with no zeal or attention. 5. To bring any profane work, any secular business within those walls which are consecrated to the name of the Lord. (*Ibid.*) *Satan not discouraged by failure:*—The manner is, after one hath taken a foil, his courage will fail. The angel would have been gone, when he saw he could not prevail over Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 26). But it is not so here with the devil. For when he saw that his first temptation would not prevail he trieth another. (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *A new assault made out of vanquished temptation:*—He is not only content to take a foil, but even out of the same thing wherewith he was foiled maketh he matter of a new temptation, a new ball of fire. Out of Christ's conquest, he makes a new assault; that is, since he will needs trust, he will set him on trusting; he shall trust as much as he will. As the former tempted him to diffidence, so this shall tempt him to precedence. (*Ibid.*) 1. It is a favourite snare of the tempter to "take" men, ay, Christian men, to "pinnacles." 2. It is to "tempt" God, to do anything wrong on the plea of imagined or intended good to others. 3. Too many make the same mis-use of the Bible that the devil did. 4. The believer must appropriate to himself the Bible promises and commandments. 5. Obedience must

be kept abidingly in mind. 6. We must never sunder means from ends. 7. Let the tempted realize the great protecting hands. (*A. B. Grosart.*) *A pinnacle of the Temple* :—The "pinnacle" is properly the wing of the temple-buildings, not of the main building itself. The pinnacle has been supposed to be the pediment of the three-storied royal hall, which Herod had erected at the southern corner of the temple area, and which reached to the mouth of the Tyropœon, and stood high above the ravine of Cedron, where it turns into the Valley of Hinnom. Josephus thus describes it. "It was an astonishing work of art, the like of which was nowhere else to be seen, for the valley was so deep, that when any one standing on the top looked down into it, he lost his head. Above this, Herod erected a portico of four storeys of pillars, of such extraordinary height, that when any one ascended to the parapet, so as to look down from the roof on the entire depth of building and natural precipice, he stood a chance of becoming giddy before his eyes reached the bottom of the abyss." The parapet here, no doubt, formed a low pediment, such as is common to the gables of Grecian temples. On the top of this pediment stood Jesus, with Satan by Him. A great commotion, and, indeed, a riot was caused in Jerusalem, by the erection of a golden Roman eagle, on the Temple gate, as crowning the pediment, by Herod the Great, about 4 B.C. The eagle was torn down and broken in pieces by the rioters. It was a symbol both of Roman power and of Jupiter, the king of the gods. Now—perhaps in covert reference to this incident—Satan plants the Lord on the apex of the pediment of Herod's great four-storied hall, or, possibly on the entrance gate, on the very pedestal from which the golden eagle had been thrown down. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *The devil where least expected* :—During the past week I had a nosegay of flowers brought me. I handled them, and they passed through the hands of my household. They had been in the house four-and-twenty hours, when, going into the room where they were, I observed a serpent issuing from among the flowers. When I approached it darted about the room, shooting out its poisoned fangs. I thought, "How like the 'old serpent the devil,' coming to us hidden in those beautiful flowers, where we least expected to find anything so dangerous!" (*J. Stuchbery.*) *Christ on the pinnacle* :—Looking down from that dizzy height, He could see the marble pavement and the people walking upon it. "Cast Thyself down from hence." He could have done it. Sustained by angel hands, kept secure by His own inherent power, He could have descended without harm into the midst of the people. No doubt it would have brought Him great applause from the idle and wonder-mongering crowd, but whose tears would it have wiped away, whose aching heart would it have comforted, whose sickness would it have healed? Never, never, would the Lord of love put forth His power for such a useless, fruitless, purpose as that; and He kept his Divine resources in all their virgin freshness and fulness. He kept them untouched till presently the lepers crossed His path and He could cleanse them, till presently the dying were within His reach and He could lift them into life again, till the broken-hearted were by His side, and He could dry up the fountain of their woe and make their broken hearts to be whole again. (*C. Vince.*) *Satan busy during spiritual exercises* :—To the "holy city," to the holiest place in the holy city, the Temple, is the Lord Jesus "taken" by the tempter, and there afresh tempted. Whither then will not the tempter enter? What "light-flaming battlement" will be not over-leap? My dear friends, we must be "vigilant" everywhere; at all times, and in all places: in the house of God; at the family altar; within our closets; beside our opened Bible. I would even say that most of all must we "watch unto prayer" in these holy scenes and seasons. For it is with the "roaring lion," who ever "goes about seeking whom he may devour," as with the beasts of prey in the forest. I remember once, when camped on the shores of one of the great lakes of America, that in the stillness of the pine-forest, within whose shadows our camp-fire was lit, it was a sight to see the wild beasts stealthily stealing to their watering-places. It so chanced that in the tangled jungle opposite us, there was one of their lurking-places; and as the moonlight streamed its wan radiance over it, I could see the fierce creatures couched behind a shattered pine. Why there? Because from beneath its roots, gushing from out the ferns, was a spring of water. Thither the "flocks and herds," came, and just as they lapped their refreshing draught, out sprang at a bound the wehr-wolf or other terrible beast. It is precisely so with us. While the believer is quenching his soul's longings and thirstings at the well of salvation, the adversary crouches to make his fatal spring. Alas, alas! that so many "of the flock" are borne way. (*A. B. Grosart, D.D.*) 1. The tempter comes a second time with an "if." Doubt is too

potent a thing to be lightly or readily abandoned. 2. The tempter goes from extreme to extreme. This seems to be a favourite device of the evil one. 3. The tempter is very successful in tempting professing Christians with his "If [=since] son thou be of God, cast Thyself beneath." Everyday observation will satisfy that there are two classes who fall before this snare. There is first of all the man who has newly proved the power of the "gift" of "faith" to produce absolute trust. Strong in that trust, there is the danger of thinking of and relying more upon the gift than the Giver; and of acting upon the grace in possession as semi-independent, instead of looking to Him who holds all grace in His own hands. Presumption inevitably comes out of that; self-confidence, rashness, "high thoughts," and all under the guise of an unquestioning faith. My dear friends, search and see if you are not liable to presume upon your Christian character, and to run risks such as you should else shrink from. 4. The tempter seeks first to lead into sin, and then to justify the sin by Scripture. 5. The tempter can only persuade, never compel. "Satan can tempt and persuade us, but he cannot force us to sin, or he cannot cast thee down unless thou 'cast thyself down.'" (*Ibid.*) *What was the evil in this suggested act?*—It was twofold, evil alike on the Godward and on the manward side. 1. In the first aspect it meant that God should be forced to do for Him what He had before refused to do for Himself—make Him an object of supernatural care, exempted from obedience to natural law, a child of miracle, exceptional in His very physical relations to God and Nature. 2. In the second aspect it meant that He was to be a Son of wonder, clothed with marvels, living a life that struck the senses and dazzled the fancies of the poor vulgar crowd. In the one case it had been fatal to Himself, in the other, to His mission. Special as were His relations to God, He did not presume on these, but, with Divine self-command, lived, though the supernatural Son, like the natural child of the Eternal Father. His human life was as real as it was ideal. The Divine did not supersede the human, nor seek to transcend its limits, physical and spiritual. And His fidelity to our nature has been its pre-eminent blessing. No man who knows the spirit of Christ will presume either on the providence or the mercy of God, because certain that there remains, even in their highest achievements, the dutiful servants of Divine wisdom and righteousness. He who came to show us the Father, showed Him not as a visible guardian, not as an arbitrary, mechanical providence, but as an invisible presence about our spirits, about our ways, source of our holiest thoughts, our tenderest feelings, our wisest actions. The Only-begotten lived as one of many brethren, though as the only one conscious of His Sonship. And, perhaps, His self-sacrifice reached here its sublimest point. He would not, and He did not, tempt the Lord His God, but lived His beautiful and perfect life within the terms of the human, yet penetrated and possessed by the Divine. (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*) *The temptation to presumption:*—"If God is to be so trusted, try Him. Show thyself His darling. Here is the word itself for it. Take Him at His word." Again, with a written word, the Lord meets him. And He does not quote Scripture for logical purposes—to confute Satan intellectually, but as given even Satan the reason of His conduct. If the Father told Him to cast Himself down, that moment the pinnacle pointed naked to the sky. If the devil threw Him down, let God send His angels; or, if better, allow Him to be dashed in pieces in the valley below. But never will He forestall the Divine will. The Father shall order what comes next. The Son will obey. In the path of His work He will turn aside for no stone. There let the angels bear Him in their hands if need be. But He will not choose the path because there is a stone in it. He will not choose at all. He will go where the Spirit leads him. (*George Macdonald, LL.D.*) *The temptation of display:*—I. THE ATTACK. 1. It was a temptation to presumption. 2. The object of this presumption was display. 3. The temptation was presented with an excuse in Scripture. II. THE REPULSE. 1. Our Lord again quotes Scripture, partly (*a*) for the same reason as formerly, for that which is good when rightly handled must not be abandoned because evil persons abuse it; and partly (*b*) because Scripture is best interpreted and balanced by Scripture. 2. The words quoted by our Lord show that He regarded the act of presumption suggested by Satan as an insult to God. (*W. F. Adeney, M.A.*) *Illustrations:*—Walker was treated less respectfully. William thought him a busybody, who had been properly punished for running into danger without any call of duty, and expressed that feeling, with characteristic bluntness on the field of battle. "Sir," said an attendant, "the Bishop of Derry has been killed by a shot at the ford." "What took him there?" growled the king. (*Macaulay's History of England.*) Wellington, of an officer killed: "What business had he lurking

there? Shall not mention him in my despatch." *Trusting and tempting providence:*—You may rely upon God for protection, solace, help, but not if you are foolhardy. No miracle will do for you what you can do for yourself. Jesus might have come down by the staircase; there was no need to get down the other way—tempt providence, and providence will fail you to a certainty. If you are idle and feckless, no philosopher's stone will turn your dross into gold. If you have weak lungs and expose yourself recklessly to chill, God's icy wind will slay you in spite of your prayers. If you neglect the laws of health and live fast, you will soon sink from the heaven of health into the hell of disease. If, from the pinnacle of desire, you leap into the pit of lust, you shall die mangled. If, from the pinnacle of greed, you plunge into the gulf of peculation, you fall crushed. The moral order of the universe will not be suspended for you—"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Pinnacle of the Temple:*—Some places are as dangerous for our souls as the pinnacle of the Temple was for the body. (*D. Dyke.*) **Cast Thyself down from hence.**—*Humility employed in the service of pride:*—That He might fall down bodily, and be proud spiritually, and so he thrust together a frivolous presumption, and a dangerous descension. How much is humility abused when pride will wear the colours of that great virtue to deceive the world. There was gross ambition in Absalom's stooping to steal the hearts of the people. As a kite will sweep the earth with his wings, that he may truss the prey in his talons, and fly aloft to devour it, so all the crouches and submissions which an ambitious man makes are to get somewhat what he seeks for, and to clamber to promotion. This is observed, because Satan impels Christ to cast Himself down, not for true humility's sake, but upon vainglory to flutter in the air, that all Jerusalem might take notice how precious He was to the care and custody of all the angels. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Election no reason for presumption:*—I see now who is the author of that fallacy which, I fear, hath cost many a soul the loss of eternal life, that such as assure themselves they are elect ones, they are the sons of God, may make bold with their Father's mercy, may rely upon it, and now and then transgress His commandments for their pleasure, or profit, or some other fleshly consideration; there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; God sees no sin in the righteous—though they fall, they shall rise again; and many more such deluding axioms as they apply them, which I beseech you return back again to hell with him that invented them. (*Ibid.*) *Trusting too much:*—As, seeing the water of distrust will not extinguish His faith, but that He would trust in God, he endeavoureth now by Scriptures (that magnify the providence of God, and the confidence we are to put in Him) to set Him as far gone in the other extreme, by presuming or trusting too much, that so the fire, which before he would have quenched, may now so flame out as not to keep itself within the chimney, but to set the whole house on fire. (*Bishop Andrewes.*) *Vice coloured with virtue:*—The devil sees that against God's children oftentimes he can have no other advantage, than that which they had against Daniel (Dan. vi.) in the law of his God, in the graces of God's Spirit, and therefore he dyes his bad clothes in good colours, and paints the foul faces of sin with the colours of graces and virtues to deceive us; as here he presents presumption to Christ under the colour and in the habit of faith; and so now covetousness, of frugality and good husbandry; drunkenness and carousing of healths, of good fellowship; sottish sloth, of quietness (Eccles. iv. 3), unlawful sports both in regard of the nature of the games, as dice. What need have we not to be carried away with everything that hath a show of goodness, or of indifferency, but to bring these painted strumpets of the devil to the light, yea, and to the heat of the Word of God, and then their painting shall melt away, and we shall see their beauty came only out of the devil's box? (*D. Dyke.*) **For it is written, He shall give His angels charge over thee.**—*Satan quoting the Psalms:*—A man would have thought Satan would have skipped the Book of the Psalms though he had searched over all the Scripture beside. It is the volume of joy, of consolation, of alacrity, the very songs of angels. "Is any man merry, let him sing psalms," says St. James. Is there any use of that sweet harmony for him that lives in perpetual torment? (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Scripture not defiled by Satanic uses:*—I will not put myself to the task to go any further in this reckoning; for all schisms and heresies, and almost all sins, will shroud under the patronage of the Word of God. Yet such is the pureness of that fountain, that it is not puddled, though dirty swine do wallow in it; nay, though the devil himself run headlong into it, as he did into the sea. Here he tumbles about in this psalm to cast dirt upon it, yet the psalm is no whit less sacred and venerable than it was before. (*Ibid.*) *Misuse of Scripture no*

argument against its use:—It is no disgrace nor disparagement to the Scriptures to proceed from Satan, nor any occasion to make us leave our hold; for Christ answereth again, and striketh with the same weapon wherewith He was stricken, showing us that it is lawful to use a text well, against them that do abuse a text; and if Christ's example be our precedent, then we may allege Scripture against depraved Scripture. For the bee may gather honey on the same stalk that the spider doth poison. And though a swashbuckler kill a man with his weapon, yet a soldier may lawfully knit a sword to his side; and though there be many piracies committed on the sea, yet may the merchants traffic; or though some surfeit by gluttony, yet may others use their temperate diet. And if the devil change himself into an angel of light, shall therefore the angels lose their light? *Misquoted Scripture*:—"In the ways" all is safe. Out of the ways all is perilous. *Satanic use of Scripture*:—I shall show to what base designs he makes it subserve. 1. He useth this artifice to beget and propagate erroneous doctrines. Hence no opinion is so vile, but pretends to Scripture as its patron. 2. He makes abused Scripture to encourage sinful actions. 3. By this imitation of the commands and promises of God, he doth strangely engage such as he can thus delude unto desperate undertakings. 4. He sometimes procures groundless peace and assurance in the hearts of careless ones by Scripture misapplied. Lastly: This way of Satan's setting home scriptures proves sadly effectual to beget or heighten the inward distresses and fears of the children of God. It is a wonder to hear some dispute against themselves, so nimble they be to object a scripture against their peace, above their reading or ability, that you would easily conclude there is one at hand that prompts them, and suggests these things to their own prejudice. And sometime a scripture will be set so cross or edgeway to their good and comfort, that many pleadings, much time, prayers, and discourses cannot remove it. I have known some that have seriously professed scriptures have been thrown into their hearts like arrows, and have with such violence fixed a false apprehension upon their minds, as that God had cut them off, that they were reprobate, damned, &c., that they have borne the tedious, restless affrightments of it for many days, and yet the thing itself, as well as the issue of it, doth declare that this was not the fruit of the Spirit of God, which is a spirit of truth, and cannot suggest a falsehood, but of Satan, who hath been a liar from the beginning. (*R. Gilpin.*) *Scripture falsely cited*:—Another point of Satan's unfaithful dealing with Scripture is his false citation of it. It is nothing with him to alter, change, or leave out such a part as may make against him. If he urge promises upon men, in order to their security and negligence, he conceals the condition of them, and banisheth the threatening far from their minds, representing the mercy of God in a false glass, as if He had promised to save and bring to heaven every man upon the common and easy terms of being called a Christian. If it be his purpose to disquiet the hearts of God's children, to promote their fears, or to lead them to despair, then he sets home the commands and threatenings, but hides the promises that might relieve them, and, which is remarkable, he hath so puzzled some by setting on their hearts a piece of Scripture, that when the next words, or next verse, might have eased them of their fears, and answered the sad objections which they raised against themselves from thence, as if their eyes had been holden, or as if a mist had been cast over them, they have not for a long time been able to consider the relief which they might have had. This hiding of Scripture from their eyes, setting aside what God may do for the just chastisement of His children's folly, is effected by the strong impression which Satan sets upon their hearts, and by holding their minds down to a fixed meditation of the dreadful inferences which he presents to them from thence, not suffering them to divert their thoughts by his incessant clamours against them. (*Ibid.*) *The Word of God*:—Now, brethren, I would have you remember two things throughout, in our Lord's use of Scripture, in this sore contest. First: As towards Himself and His own human, and therefore, it might be supposed, infirm heart. It is, you see, the sole argument which He uses, the sole guide which He takes, the sole source of strength on which He throws Himself. You see nothing added to it, no consideration from any other quarter, of reason, or convenience, or ultimate gain; no calculations of any kind called in to give it fresh power, or an influence not properly its own. It is thrust boldly, nakedly, solitarily forward, by its own strength alone sustained. Secondly: It is clearly implied that the powerful spirit who was tempting Him was quite as well aware as He Himself that God's word was immutable and unconquerable; and that it contained within itself all that faith needed to resist his utmost assaults. He knew full well that all spiritual

strength and comfort was contained in it; nay, a clothing of the soul that rested on it with the very power of Him who spake it in His truth and holiness, and victory to tread all sin and temptation under foot. With all his subtlety, therefore, and devices of a bad wisdom, he has nothing to reply to the bold and straightforward declaration of God's will. He is struck dumb. It seems, after this, useless before Christians, to give any reasons why it should be so, seeing that we have such a witness to it; but one or two immediately occur to every thoughtful person, which I will just suggest. 1. Almighty God is the very truth itself, and it is no more possible for Him to utter what is false than for the glorious and blessed sun to shoot forth darkness instead of light. 2. He is all-powerful, as well as all true, and therefore, if He be bent upon executing His will, whatever it be, it is impossible to resist it. 3. He is all good, and gracious, and loving, and hath poured the riches of His mercy into the book which He has given unto us; and so far from dreading these perfections of His nature, which make all that He has said unchangeable, and grieving that it cannot be blotted out—herein is our joy, as sons of God by adoption and grace, that "it is written" that heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one tittle of that blessed writing! And now, only turn for a moment to what it is in this temptation of Satan of which our Lord affirmed that it was the Word of God, and found strength whereby, in the hour of His great need, to vanquish the tempter, and bring down angels out of heaven to minister to Him! For you may be sure, that the sinless Lamb of God, who took our nature upon Him, that we might be raised to the purity of His, seeing that He was flesh and blood in all things, sin only excepted, hath recorded His own temptations, because He knew full well, by the wisdom that was in Him, that the very same would assault us! Look well, dear brethren, to this! 1. Though it be true, that we must all labour in the station to which God has called us, and by the sweat of our brow must eat bread, yet that is not the first thing; that is not the great, the one thing needful. "The kingdom of God is not meat, or drink, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." "My meat," saith our Lord, and therefore ours, "is to do the will of My Father which is in heaven!" "Thou shalt not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." "Look at the lilies of the field, how they grow! they toil not, neither do they spin! and yet your heavenly Father clotheth them! Shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" In one word, "It is written," and it cannot be changed. Again—look at this: Do you never tempt the Lord your God? that is, presume upon His aiding and protecting you, where He has not promised to do so, but the contrary, and so bring a curse upon the soul, and not a blessing! But, you may say, can we trust God too much? or throw our whole souls with too unreserved a love and confidence upon His fatherly care? But to presume on His love when our heart is elsewhere, and when we refuse to obey His evident commandments, is death to us! Again, it is written, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Thirdly: Do we fall down and worship Satan? "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve!" Finally: Before we part, let me once more impress upon you, that all this, and much more of the like import, is written, and that to tell you so is the same thing as to tell you that it will all come to pass, as sure as man is sinful and ignorant, and God wise, holy, and true. And in more than one sense it is thus written: for first of all—you find it in the holy book! There it is, and fire cannot burn it out, nor water wash it out, nor all the wishes and struggles of ungodly men make it less, even by a single letter. It is written, therefore, not only in a book, but in the eternal counsels of God, out of the depths of which, in the fulness of time, it hath all issued forth to us. It has been written from everlasting to everlasting, that thus it shall be. But there is one more book, dear brethren, in which this blessed, and eternal, and unchangeable word must be written, if we would be the better or the more blessed for it. In our own hearts—in our souls, in the fleshly tablets within us, and not on stone tables, or paper books, must the Word of God be engraven by the Spirit. So long as it remains an outward thing, merely spoken or merely written, it is only condemnation; it hath a sword in its hand, and killeth. (*J. Garbett, M.A.*) *The devil quoting Scripture*:—The failure of the tempter has not deterred mankind from venturing on the same appeal, with no very unlike design. Among the crowd of pilgrims who throng the pages of his allegory, Bunyan depicts one Mr. Selfwill, who holds that a man may follow the vices as well as the virtues of pilgrims. "But what ground has he for so saying?" is Mr. Greatheart's query. And old Mr. Honesty replies: "Why, he said he had Scripture for his warrant."

"The devil can quote Scripture for his purpose;
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the core."

Such is Antonio's stricture on Shylock's appeal to Jacob's practice; and there is a parallel passage to it in the next act, where Bassanio is the speaker:—

"In religion,
What damnèd error, but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it, with a text
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament."

Shakespeare embodies in Richard of Gloucester a type of the political intriguer; as where the usurper thus answers the gulled associates who urge him to be avenged on the opposite faction:—

"But then I sigh, and with a piece of Scripture
Tell them that God bids us do good for evil.
And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With old odd ends, stolen forth of holy writ;
And seem a saint when most I play the devil."

An unmitigated scoundrel in one of Mr. Dickens's books is represented as openly grudging his old father the scant remnant of his days (on the ground that "Threescore and ten's the Bible-mark"); whereupon the author interposes this parenthetical comment: "Is any one surprised at Mr. Jonas making such a reference to such a book for such a purpose? Does any one doubt the old saw that the devil quotes Scripture for his own ends? If he will take the trouble to look about him, he may find a greater number of confirmations of the fact in the occurrences of a single day than the steam-gun can discharge balls in a minute." (*F. Jacox.*) *The religious devil:*—"But what is this I see? Satan himself with a Bible under his arm, with a text in his mouth? No devil is so dangerous as the religious devil." So writes Bishop Hall, speaking of the temptation of Christ. There are two classes of devils, the religious and the irreligious—both in reality irreligious—and the former more so than the latter; but these make no show or pretence of religion, whereas those do. St. Paul had to contend with them. Speaking of false apostles, he wrote: "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light," &c. The religious devil has often been enthroned as the head of the Church on earth; he has at one time or another enjoyed the emoluments of every bishopric in Europe; there is scarcely a monastery of which he has not been abbot; there are not many pulpits from which he has not preached, for he is to be found in every denomination. A religious devil has been known to join a Church, and go from one Church to another, from one denomination to another, in order to secure customers in the congregation. (*H. S. Brown.*) *Satan's many disguises:*—No player hath so many several dresses to come in upon the stage as the devil hath forms of temptation; but he is most dangerous when he appears in Samuel's mantle, and silvers his foul tongue with fair language. (*Gurnall.*) *The Word of God the end of controversy:*—To dispatch this out of hand, the misconstruing the Word of God is the beginning of all strife; the true allegation of it is the end of a controversy. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Satan God's ape:*—That the Scripture is alleged in a perverse apish imitation, because Christ had alleged Scripture before. Thus hath the devil always been God's ape, as in sacrifices, washings, tithes, priests, altars, oracles of the heathen, all which he did apishly imitate, and counterfeit the like to those in the Church of God, thinking by this means to disgrace the ordinances of God. (*D. Dyke.*) *The abuse of Scripture:*—That the abuse of the Scriptures must not take away the use of it. Christ doth not give over alleging Scripture because the devil abused it. The honest traveller doth so much the more wear his weapon and his sword because the thief useth the same weapon. (*Ibid.*) **And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.**—*Faith distinguished from presumption:*—Thou shalt not tempt, &c. Is there any law which can be laid down which will serve in all cases to distinguish faith from presumption, which will warn us when we are no longer honouring God by our trust, but dishonouring Him by our unbelief?

There is, and it is as follows:—The moment trust in God presumes to break any one, even the least, of the laws of God, and then expects God to save it from the consequences of its disobedience, it is not trust, but unbelief; it is not faith, but presumption; it is not honouring, it is tempting, God. (*G. S. Barrett, B.A.*) *Our Lord's quotations from the Scriptures*:—The words of all the three answers to the tempter come from two chapters of Deuteronomy, one of which (chapter vi.) supplied one of the passages for the phylacteries or frontlets worn by devout Jews. The fact is in every way suggestive. A prominence was thus given to that portion of the book which made it an essential part of the education of every Israelite. The words which our Lord now uses had, we must believe, been familiar to Him from His childhood, and He had read their meaning rightly. With them He may have sustained the faith of others in the struggles of the Nazareth home with poverty and want. And now He finds in them a truth which belongs to His high calling as well as to His life of lowliness. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The inductive study of the Scriptures*:—What the Saviour did here was to fill out and complete the interpretation of the passage which Satan had repeated, and He did that by showing from various passages the conditions within which alone the former could be rationally and intelligently accepted. Now the procedure of the Lord in this instance plainly implies that one portion or saying of Scripture is to be read in connection with all other portions of it, and is to be understood and interpreted only in that sense which is in harmony with every other utterance of the sacred oracles. What Nature is to the physical philosopher, Scripture is to the theologian. In prosecuting a systematic examination of the Scriptures there are three things in reference to which we must be always on our guard. 1. We must see to it that all the passages brought together have a real bearing on the subject in hand. 2. We must see to it that we give to each passage its own legitimate weight—no more, no less. 3. We must see to it that our induction of passages is complete. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Spiritual acuteness*:—There is a story of a limner, that to show his art, drew a white line so small that it could hardly be discerned; another, to show that he could excel him, drew a black line through the middle of it. It required an acute sight to detect either. But our Saviour at first view immediately discerned the black line of temptation to run through the plausible advice that Satan gave Him. (*White.*) *Tempting God*:—And surely one principal and notorious offence is committed when a man exposeth his life to unnecessary dangers, upon an ill-grounded confidence that God will bring him off with safety. 2. The Lord is tempted when we will not believe Him, unless we see signs and wonders, and provoke Him to let us see some print of His omnipotence, or we will fall out, and trust Him no more. 3. There is another crooked branch, much like unto the former, growing out of the same root; not simply by declining natural means, but by declining all means; having no calling, using no labour, cashiering all providence, and yet expecting to live and thrive as well as they that eat the bread of carefulness by the sweat of their brows. 4. Then they shall stand for the fourth, that make holy vows, and bind themselves in a perpetual obligation, where God hath given no promise of assistance, that they shall be able to perform them. 5. Fifthly, to use such things again, which either always or for the most part have been unto us an occasion of sinning, is to tempt the Lord, whether He will let those things prevail against our souls which so often have proved unto us an occasion of falling. 6. And sixthly, this smells of a most audacious spirit, provoking wrath, and urging the patient God to indignation, when you make slight of all the terrors and minacies in the law, as if they were high words; but do what you will they shall never fall upon you. This was the first imposture that Satan put upon our first parents. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Tempting Providence*:—To go into any peril, however great, at the call of duty, trusting that God will protect, is faith. To go into any peril, when there is no call of duty, trusting that God will protect, is presumption. Every one can see that, as a general principle, presumption is not faith. Both are trust in God; but faith is reasonable trust, presumption is unreasonable trust. Faith is trusting God, where He has told us and because He has told us to trust Him. Presumption is trusting that God will do what would suit us, though He has never said He would. I know that the two trusts shade off into each other; and it is difficult, in some cases, to say whether to trust that God will provide, will order, will protect, is faith or presumption. Many virtues have a black shadow that keeps near them, a corresponding vice into which they melt by imperceptible gradations. Who will say exactly where courage ends and foolhardiness begins;

where tact ends and trickery begins? But then it is just here that each man's own conscience and common sense must guide him. We read in the history of that same great king who has already been named of a case in which the tempting of God's providence brought instant and awful consequence. During a battle in Flanders, King William was giving his orders under a shower of bullets, when he saw with surprise and anger among the officers of his staff, one Michael Godfrey, a mercantile man, the Deputy-Governor of the Bank of England. A foolhardy curiosity to see real war had brought him there. The king said, sharply, "Sir, you ought not to run these hazards; you are not a soldier; you can be of no use to us here." "Sir," answered Godfrey, "I run no more hazard than your Majesty." "Not so," said William; "I am where it is my duty to be; and I may without presumption commit my life to God's keeping; but you——" The sentence was never finished; at that moment a cannon-ball laid Godfrey dead at the king's feet. I do not venture to talk of judgments. But here the man's death was beyond all question the consequence of his temerity. Now that we have thought of the general truth set forth in the text, I wish to show you its application to certain particular cases, with which we are all quite familiar. I. The text tells us, if it tells us anything, THAT WE OUGHT NOT, NEEDLESSLY, TO GO IN THE WAY OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE. Well, there are some people who, if they would not fail of their duty, must just trust in God's providence, and run that risk. This is part of their vocation; to this they are called of God. To them the promise is, that His angels will keep them; for here is their way, the way God has set them; and in that way God has said He will protect His people, heartily doing their appointed work. The doctor, fulfilling his noble calling; the nurse; the minister. It is no tempting of Providence if such as have been named be near the sick, even where sickness is most malignant. But there it ends. To go, when you are not needed; when you can do no good; when you may carry away fatal infection to others: that is doing what Christ in my text forbids. II. There is another familiar instance in which my text is disregarded, which one constantly hears named as a singular folly and eccentricity, but which, in the light of the word of our Master, looks something more serious than folly. There are many men, as we all know, whose business, and daily work, lies upon the sea, fishermen and sailors; and there are others also who are many times called to be upon the sea. Now, God has made us so, and made the waters so, that if we fall into deep water and sink beneath its surface, we must soon die; two minutes, and, as a rule, life is gone. But God has made us so, and made the waters so, that in two or three weeks we may each acquire a simple art, that needs no machinery, no tools, nothing but the limbs God gave us, and skill to use them, and courage got in their use; and then, this simple art acquired, we may fall into deep water, and be just as safe and as much at our ease as on dry land. Now, strange to say, a great many of those men whose work is on the waters will not take the trouble of learning this simple art, the knowledge of which, the exercise of which for five or six minutes, may some day just decide the question, Whether or not their poor children shall or shall not be left fatherless little paupers. III. And now let us think of a third case in which the warning in my text should be laid to heart by all of us. THIS IS AS CONCERNS THOUGHT AND FORESIGHT IN THE MATTER OF OUR WORLDLY MEANS; the laying by in prosperous times against the rainy day which may come; the provision to be diligently made by the head of every family, while health and strength last, for the support of wife and children after he is taken away. The Savings Bank and the Life Insurance Company are sacred institutions as much as any institutions can be. It is tempting Providence when a working-man, earning large wages, does not try to lay by something which may be a stay should sickness come, or work fail. He ought to go to the Savings Bank as regularly as he goes to the church. Then it is tempting Providence, in another walk of life, when a professional man, earning a considerable income, spends it all, though knowing it must cease with his life, never caring what is to become of his wife and children if he dies. IV. Surely it is a tempting of God's providence IF WE DO NOT TAKE EVERY MEANS TO PREVENT THE CHOLERA FROM COMING, AND TO PREPARE FOR IT SHOULD IT COME. He has put within our reach means that conduce to the health of the community. We know that impure air, and impure water, and filthy dwellings, and drunkenness, are direct invitations to the cholera; and though no authority, however stringent and searching, can compel individuals to be clean and sober, yet an enlightened, efficient magistracy has great power. We know that it is tempting Providence to pray without working, and yet that all our work will go for nothing without God's

blessing sought by prayer. All through my discourse I have been pointing out to you what you are bound, as reasonable creatures, to do for yourselves. Do it; but after all is done you must still pray for God's blessing on it; you must still trust in His providence. True faith in Him will do its own best as though it could do all; and then remember that without His blessing it can do nothing. That is our way, and by God's grace we shall go on in it. By God's grace. (*A. H. K. Boyd, D.D.*) *Presumption*:—1. In a way of distrust. (1) Some will not believe the gospel except they see a miracle or hear an oracle. Christ representeth their thoughts (Luke xvi. 30). (2) Some will not believe God's providence, but make question of His power and goodness, and care over us and our welfare, when He hath given us sufficient proof thereof. (3) Some will not be satisfied as to their spiritual estate without some sensible proof or such kind of assurance as God usually vouchsafeth not to His people. 2. In a way of presumption; so we tempt God when, without any warrant, we presume of God's power and providence. (1) When without call we rush into any danger, or throw ourselves into it, with an expectation God will fetch us off again. (2) When we undertake things for which we are not fitted and prepared, either habitually or actually, as to speak largely without meditation. The heinousness of the sin. 1. Because it is a great arrogancy when we seek thus to subject the Lord to our direction, will, and carnal affections. 2. It is great unbelief, or a calling into question God's power, mercy, and goodness to us. 3. It looseneth the bonds of all obedience, because we set up new laws of commerce between God and us; for when we suspect God's fidelity to us, unless He do such things as we fancy, we suspect our fidelity to Him. 4. It is wantonness, rather than want, puts us upon tempting of God. 5. It argues impatiency—"They soon forgat His works; they waited not for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert" (Psa. cvi. 13, 14). 6. The greatness of the sin is seen by the punishments of it. One is mentioned—"Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents" (1 Cor. x. 9). (*T. Manton, D.D.*) **He departed from Him for a season.**—*The devil leaveth Him*:—He had run out his line, and tried all his strength, our Saviour stood it out till His enemy tilted the very dregs of his gall, and drew them out. He that undertakes an ill cause cannot except, but the hearing of it was very fair, if he may plead out his matter till he can say no more; so the tempter cannot say he was cut off before he came to a period, he was provided of better arguments, but he was stopped from proceeding, he could not make these cavils for shame, for his departure was not commanded until he ended all his temptation. (*Bishop Hacket.*) *Satan ashamed*:—Another reason why he fled from the presence of Christ is, he was so beaten out of all falsehoods and inventions by the evidence of truth, that he was ashamed to appear any longer before the face of the Conqueror. (*Ibid.*) *Breathing time*:—The use of it shall come home to ourselves thus: The Lord sometimes takes off our foe from us, and gives us breathing time after temptations, it is but for a season, not to flatter ourselves with quietness and security, but to repair our ruins to keep out the batteries that will ensue. It is but a refreshing after the fit of an ague, the sick day is coming again. Like a calm upon the sea, while a sweet gale blows what sensible man will not have all things ready for a tempest. Remember the parable, Luke xi. And what the unclean spirit said, "I will return into my house from whence I came." (*Ibid.*) *A feigned departure*:—A fox will stretch himself for dead that poultry may come into his reach and never fear him; yet if they do stalk towards him, they shall find to their cost he is not past doing mischief. So the tempter will give back, as if he were fled for ever, but he departs only for a more seasonable opportunity, and will return again with seven spirits worse than himself, when you are worse prepared. (*Ibid.*) *The life of temptation*:—The circle of attack had been exhausted. All possible temptation had been summed up, and had failed. Creation, providence, redemption, had each furnished the ground of attack. Body, soul, and spirit had each been assailed. But in vain. The triumphant Lord had been "tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin." But the words which immediately follow are of dark and ominous significance: "He departed from Him for a season." What do these words mean? To what further and future conflicts do they point? Can we discover in the after narrative of the Gospels any light on these mysterious words? Yes, four or five times at least in our Lord's after-life did specific temptation occur. 1. The first of these renewed assaults occurs in John vi. 15. The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand had just taken place and had made a profound impression on the multitude. They

resolved at once to proclaim Jesus as their Messianic King. Once more the former temptation was repeated. How did Christ meet it? Withdrew into a mountain to pray. 2. A little later on a still more remarkable repetition of the same temptation in which the tempter was none other than one of Christ's own disciples, is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. Christ had been unfolding to His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things, &c. (Matt. xvi. 21, &c.). Simon Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord. In these words another than Peter had spoken to Christ. Satan had come again. The Lord turned and said unto Peter, almost repeating the very words He had spoken to Satan, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," &c. And then follow the words, so solemn and piercing, which told the disciples that the only way to the kingdom of God on earth is the way of the cross: "Whosoever would save his life," &c. 3. The third recurrence of this temptation took place nearly at the close of Christ's earthly life, and just before the anguish of Gethsemane. Multitude crying Hosanna (Mark xi. 9, 10). Once more the earthly crown seemed within our Lord's grasp. The conflict, however, did not fully begin until the day but one after this triumphal entry. Certain Greeks had desired to see Jesus. In them Christ sees the first fruits of His redeeming work among the Gentiles. "The hour is come," He says, "that the Son of Man should be glorified." But the mention of His own glorification at once suggests the dark and sorrowful way through which alone it could be reached. For one moment there was a human shrinking from the cup. "Father," He cried, "save Me from this hour." The next words check the natural shrinking—"But for this cause came I unto this hour." And the answer quickly came. Voice from heaven spake of which we only read at the great crises of His life. The victory was once more won, and with new and triumphant joy Jesus cries, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out," &c. 4. One final crisis in the life of Jesus is recorded in the Gospels. Hitherto each successive assault had been beaten back, and now the time of conflict was drawing to a close. Gethsemane still intervened between the struggle in the upper room and the crucifixion, and it is in Gethsemane that the last conflict takes place. The last damning act of ingratitude is consummated in the traitor's kiss, but as Jesus is betrayed into the hands of men, the last words He utters in the garden disclose the presence of a vaster hostility than even the hatred of the son of perdition: "This is your hour, and the power of darkness," &c. (Luke xxii. 53). 5. Possibly during the crucifixion there was a recurrence of another of these three wilderness temptations. The very words that Satan used challenging Christ to prove His Divine Sonship by a miracle, are again heard in the scornful mockery of the crowd beneath the cross, "If Thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. xxvii. 42). But Christ's triumph in the wilderness over Satan was only augmented in the voluntary obedience of the eternal Son to death, even the death of the cross. He had come to save others, and Himself He would not save. 6. It is impossible to believe that the instances of temptations which we have been considering were all the temptations which Christ endured subsequently to His temptation in the wilderness. His life, from first to last, was a tempted life. Was there no temptation to our Lord (1) in the poverty of His earthly life? (2) in the hopeless indifference and deadness of the people? (3) in the activities of His public life—activities so incessant that we read that there was not, at one time, "leisure so much as to eat"? 7. The life of temptation was also a life of uninterrupted victory. It is in this light that the sinlessness of Jesus becomes amazing. It is idle to imagine that it is possible to get rid of the supernatural in the Gospels by blotting out the miracles wrought by Jesus. The miracle of Jesus remains—the miracle of a will ceaselessly assaulted, but as ceaselessly victorious; the miracle of a goodness touching, like the sunlight, the darkest and most festering pollutions of this world and remaining as untainted as the sunlight by contact with impurity. (*G. S. Barrett, B.A.*) *How to vanquish temptation*:—In his charge to the newly-ordained ministers Dr. Pope, when ex-President, referred to a certain teacher of the Church who, on one occasion, asked his pupils by what means they sought to vanquish the temptation to worldly lusts. One answered "By prayer!" Another, "By endeavouring to realize what the punishment of transgression will be!" The third, however, replied, "When the tempter comes I simply say, The place is occupied! pass on!" "The best way to keep tares out of a bushel," says an old writer, "is to fill it with wheat." *Christ the devil's master*:—Timms had a very wicked master, whose ridicule of all religion was sad to hear. Coming up to his old servant one day, he said, "Timms, I hear you're

converted." "Yes, master, praise the Lord!" "Can you tell me who's the devil's father?" said the master. "I dinno as I can, but I can tell 'e who's 'is master, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ; He clean licked him when He had the fight with him; and, master, I can tell 'e who's the devil's servant. You be, master, and accordin' to my knowledge of him you be servin' a bad master." (*Sword and Trowel.*) *Angelic ministry after temptation:*—That God maketh use of the ministry of angels in supporting and comforting His afflicted servants. Why doth God make use of the ministry of angels? and how far? 1. To manifest unto them the greatness and glory of His work in the recovering mankind, that their delight in the love and wisdom of God may be increased. 2. To maintain a society and communion between all the parts of the family of God. 3. To preserve His people from many dangers and casualties, which fall not within the foresight of man, God employeth "the watchers," as they are called in the Book of Daniel, chap. iv. 13, 17, for He is tender of His people, and doth all things by proper means. Now the angels having a larger foresight than we, they are appointed to be guardians. 4. Because they are witnesses of the obedience and fidelity of Christ's disciples, and, so far as God permitteth, they cannot but assist them in their conflicts. Thus Paul; "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men" (1 Cor. iv. 9). (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *Resisting Satan:*—I. THE KIND OF RESISTANCE. 1. It must not be faint and cold. Some kind of resistance may be made by general and common graces; the light of nature will rise up in defiance of many sins, especially at first, before men have sinned away natural light; or else the resistance at least is in some cold way. But it must be earnest and vehement, as against the enemy of God and our souls. 2. It must be a thorough resistance of all sin, "take the little foxes," dash "Babylon's brats against the stones." Lesser sticks set the great ones on fire. The devil cannot hope to prevail for great things presently. 3. It must not be for a while, but continued; not only to stand out against the first assault, but a long siege. II. ARGUMENTS TO PERSUADE IT. 1. Because he cannot overcome you without your own consent. 2. The sweetness of victory will recompense the trouble of resistance. It is much more pleasing to deny a temptation than to yield to it; the pleasure of sin is short-lived, but the pleasure of self-denial is eternal. 3. Grace, the more it is tried and exercised, the more it is evidenced to be right and sincere (Rom. v. 3–5). 4. Grace is strengthened when it hath stood out against a trial; as a tree shaken with fierce winds is more fruitful, its roots being loosened. Satan is a loser and you a gainer by temptations wherein you have approved your fidelity to God; as a man holdeth a stick the faster when another seeketh to wrest it out of his hands. 5. The more we resist Satan, the greater will our reward be (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8). The danger of the battle will increase the joy of the victory, as the dangers of the way make home the sweeter. 7. The Lord's grace is promised to him that resisteth. God keepeth us from the evil one, but it is by our watchfulness and resistance; His power maketh it effectual. III. WHAT ARE THE GRACES THAT ENABLE US IN THIS RESISTANCE? I answer, the three fundamental graces, faith, hope, and love. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 14, 15. **And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.**—*The higher spiritual life:*—Jesus returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. This is full of interest in every way. 1. As bringing up the question of Christ's Divinity. Can One who is Divine receive augmented powers? Especially can He from another co-equal Spirit? To this inquiry it may be replied that Christ's life on earth was the Divine circumscribed. The power of the Spirit that rested upon Christ brought forth no new elements, but it brought out the Divine element previously existing. 2. Interesting as a study of the life of Christ, it becomes even more so in its connection with ourselves—with the whole sphere and operation and possibilities of the human mind. A like experience will be traced in the apostles' lives. At the time of His death they were very little advanced, except in personal affection for Him, beyond Nicodemus, or other devout and spiritually-minded Jews. He had told them to stay in Jerusalem until some great change should come upon them. And He declared what that change should be—power from on high; the power of the Holy Ghost. And then came the Pentecostal experience. 3. We find traces in the early Church to show that there were those who received this special power over and above mere ordinary endowments. 4. In every age there have been those to whom these disclosures have been made, pre-eminently the case with John Wesley, who laboured years, as he regarded it, in bondage, and at last came out in the power of the Spirit. 5. Lastly, many now living are distinctly conscious that

this same impulse, this same clothing of extraordinary power remains on earth. Men's faculties are telescopic. Used in their lower state they are, as it were, undrawn out. They are capable of being brought to a condition in which they will be a hundred times more than in their ordinary condition. The consciousness of this transcends all other evidences of the Divine life. APPLICATION: Many of you are longing for the renewal of life. Here is the instrument of your power. This is what you need; this is what we all need—that higher life which comes by the Spirit of God. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The power of the Holy Ghost*:—There was no great natural capacity in Harlan Page; and yet he was an apostle; and his life has quickened the lives of tens of thousands since he has been gone. Being dead, he yet speaks. But he had the Holy Ghost rising upon him. There are men who say but little; and yet they give you a new ideal. They shine as stars in the heavens. And there can be no accounting for it, except on the ground of the dynamic influence of spiritual life and spiritual power in this world. There are men who stand in the centre of circles, and all rise up and call them blessed; and nobody can tell why, except that they bring heaven near, and bring invisible things near, and gain faith, and strengthen their moral tendencies, and see God, and have the power to reflect what they see upon other persons. It is these men who have the higher region of their soul enlightened by the Spirit of God, that do the most for other men; that set aside scepticism, that convince the unconvinced, that penetrate the unconverted through with a new and eternal sense, both of their lacks and of their possibilities and hopes. It is these men who are joined together, and who receive their power of life and of working from God, that, after all, are the lights of the world. (*Ibid.*) *Effects of the indwelling of the Spirit*:—Dr. Daniel Steele says, "Soon after Dr. Finney's conversion he received a wonderful baptism of the Spirit which was followed by marvellous effects. His words uttered in private conversation, and forgotten by himself, fell like live coals on the hearts of men, and awakened a sense of guilt which would not let them rest till the blood of sprinkling was applied. At his presence, before he opened his lips, the operatives in a mill began to fall on their knees and cry for mercy, smitten by the invisible currents of Divine power which went forth from him. When, like a flame of fire, he was traversing western and central New York, he came to the village of Rome in a time of spiritual slumber. He had not been in the house of the pastor an hour before he had conversed with all the family, the pastor, children, boarders, and servants, and brought them all to their knees seeking pardon, or the fulness of the Spirit. In a few days almost every man and woman in the village and vicinity was converted, and the work ceased from lack of material to transform, and the evangelist passed on to other fields, to behold new triumphs of the gospel through his instrumentality." (*Lightning Flashes.*) *Spiritual power*:—Dr. Steele mentions another case, not, however, so well known in this country as that of Professor Finney. He says, "Another rare instance of extraordinary spiritual power is that of Father Carpenter, of New Jersey, a Presbyterian layman of a past generation. A cipher in the Church, till anointed of the Holy Ghost, he immediately became a man of wonderful spiritual power, though of ordinary intellect, and very limited education. In personal effort, hardened sinners melted under his appeals and yielded to Christ. Once in a stage-coach going from Newark to New York, he found six unconverted men and one believer his fellow-passengers. He began to present the claims of Jesus, and so powerfully did the Spirit attend the truth, that four were converted in the coach, and the other two after reaching New York. At his death it was stated that by a very careful inquiry it had been ascertained that more than ten thousand souls had been converted through his direct instrumentality. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 16. **And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.**—*The tides of the Spirit*:—The moment was overcharged with a certain sad intensity. Since last He stood upon that spot, a change had passed upon Him; a light, long struggling with the clouds, and often drowned in a golden haze of mystery, had cleared itself within Him; He was no longer at His own disposal, nor free to rest upon the trodden paths; but the sacred dove was ever on the wing before Him; and now alighted on the synagogue of Nazareth, and there, where He naturally fell into the attitude of docility, left Him to speak the word of supernatural power. Never is it so hard to follow and trust a higher inspiration, as amid the crowd of customary things. If ever Jesus could yield to misgivings of what was committed to Him it would be in that place. There, in the presence of those at whose feet

He used to sit—there, where He first heard and pondered Israel's hope, and watched a holy light on other faces, not knowing that it was reflected from His own—how could He stand up and draw the great words of Isaiah upon Himself, and say aloud, "This is the hour. Lo! it is I." But He had emerged from the desert that lay between the old life and the new. The very Spirit of God had driven Him thither to hear what could be said against itself. And now, He was no longer His own. No flitting of the Spirit, off and on. It rested with Him now. And so He could bear those native scenes again, for they lay in another light; the hills of Nazareth were transfigured before Him; from all things round the chill and weary aspect had fled, that makes them press with the weight of usage; and He stood amid the well-known groups, as some immortal friend might return and look in among us here, with unabated love, but with saintly insight into meanings hid from us. Lifted then into the full power of the Spirit, whither, as least congenial, does He take His heavenly point of view? To the village synagogue, on the stated day of rest; nothing newer, nothing higher; but just the place and time which had been sacred to the fathers. The first thing which He did, under freshest inspiration, was to resume the dear old ways, to fall in with the well-known season, to unroll the same venerable page; only to find a new meaning in words that had long carried their rhythm to His heart. We are sustained then by the sympathy of the highest inspiration, when we make it our "custom," too, to illuminate in our calendar some holy day, and to raise near every cluster of our dwellings a house where "prayer is wont to be made." Against the Christian habit of *seasonal* and *local* worship the truth is often urged that God is a Spirit, eternal and omniscient, abiding neither in "this mountain" nor in that "Jerusalem," and bearing equal relation into every mind and moment. In the *occasionalism* of piety I see, however, not its shame but its distinctive glory. For of all God's agencies and manifestations, it is the lowest that are least mutable, and most remain the same from first to last; whilst the highest have ever a tidal ebb and flow—moving in waves of time, and surprising hidden inlets of space with their flood. Be assured then that in your ancient usages of seasonal and local worship, in seeking here to meet at intervals the high tides of God's Spirit, you are in harmony with His sublimest providence—with a law of variation transcending any physical uniformity over which it sweeps. Reverence the holy custom, shelter from heedless slight the living impulse that week by week calls you hither to remember, to aspire, to pray. Bring only the pure, lowly, childlike hearts, tender to everything except the sins you must confess—full of hope for the world and trust in God; spread out an eager and a gentle spirit for the dropping of fruitful seeds from Holy Writ and saintly hymn; freshen the fading vow of self-sacrificing love; and your worship here will not only resemble His who, in fulness of the Spirit, "went as His custom was," &c., but prepare for a higher communion where "your life is hid with Him in God." (*J. Martineau, LL.D.*) *Synagogue worship*:—The Jewish synagogues were open every day for three services, but as those of the afternoon and evening were always joined, there were, in reality, only two. It was the duty of every godly Jew to go to each service, for so sacred was daily attendance that the Rabbis taught that "he who practised it saved Israel from the heathen." The two market days, Monday and Thursday, when the country people came into town, and when the courts were held, and the Sabbaths, were the special times of public worship. Feast days and fasts were also marked by similar sacredness. (*Dr. Geikie.*) *A good example in attending public worship*:—Of good Archbishop Leighton it is said, that the Sabbath was his delight, and no slight hindrance could detain him from the house of prayer. Upon one occasion, when he was indisposed, the day being stormy, his friends urged him, on account of his health, not to venture to church. "Were the weather fair," was the reply, "I would stay at home, but since it is otherwise, I must go, lest I be thought to countenance by my example, the irreligious practice of allowing trivial hindrances to keep me back from public worship." (*Life of Leighton.*) *Evil of neglecting public worship*:—Of the late venerable Dr. Waugh, his biographer records that, in his ministerial visitations, his nationality was often strongly displayed, and this with most beneficial effect, both in sentiment and language. When, without any adequate cause, any of his hearers had failed to attend public ordinances so regularly as he could have wished, and would plead their distance from the chapel as an excuse, he would exclaim in the emphatic northern dialect, which he used on familiar occasions to employ, "What, you from Scotland! from Melrose! from Gala Water! from Selkirk! and it's a hard matter to walk a mile or two to serve your

Maker one day in the week! How many miles did you walk at Selkirk?" "Five." "Five!" "And can ye no walk twa here? Man! your father walked ten or twal (twelve) out, and as many hame, every Sunday i' the year; and your mither too, often. I've seen a hunder folk and mair, that aye walked six or seven—men, women, and bairns too: and at the sacraments folk walked fifteen, and some twenty miles. How far will you walk the morn to mak' half-a-crown? Fie! fie! But ye'll be out wi' a' your household next Sabbath, I ken. O my man, mind the bairns! If you love their souls, dinna let them get into the habit of biding awa' fra the kirk. All the evils among young folk in London arise from their not attending God's house." Such remonstrances, it may easily be imagined, were not often urged in vain. (*Baxendale's Anecdotes.*) *The synagogue service*:—The order of service was certainly fixed and invariable in the time of Christ. The supreme moment of the service was that of the reading of the law, for the great end of meeting was to hear and study the law. Prayer preceded this exercise, and the reading of a passage chosen from the prophets, followed by the benediction, closed the service. In the opening prayer there were several distinct portions. It began with the recitation of the Shema (three passages of the law, viz., Deut. vi. 4–9; xi. 13–21; Numb. xv. 37–41). Then came the eighteen blessings. During this solemn recitation, the people remained standing with their faces turned towards Jerusalem and the Holy Place. The reciter stood before the chest containing the manuscripts. Any member of the assembly could be called on by the president to perform this important duty. Minors alone were excepted, and Christ may have very likely taken His turn in these introductory prayers, both at Nazareth and at Capernaum. The people responded with a loud Amen at the close of each prayer. The reading of the law followed. The Chazzān took the sacred scroll out of the chest, removed its case, and placed it before the first reader. The seven members who had been chosen, rose, and read in turn at least three verses each. The first reader before beginning used a short formula of benediction, which he repeated also at the end. The Torah was divided into one hundred and fifty-three sections. In three years the whole was read through. Subsequently these sections were made three times as long, and the whole law was read through in one year. The Chazzān remained all the time close to the reader, and watched that he made no mistake, and read nothing unsuitable for a general audience. To the reading and its translation was always added a commentary, a sort of homily, to which great importance came to be attached in the Christian Churches, and which subsequently developed into the sermon. The reading of the law being over, the one who had recited the opening prayer read a portion from one of the prophets. This was called the closing lesson, because it completed the service. The reader was chosen by the head of the synagogue. He read three verses in succession, and then translated them (into Aramaic). Christ one day read one of these closing lessons in the synagogue at Nazareth. It is possible, however, that He may have chosen the passage Himself. We notice that it consists of only two verses. This was allowable, because He proposed to make some comment on it. The final benediction was then pronounced, and the assembly broke up. (*E. Stapfer, D.D.*) *Jesus of Nazareth admired but rejected*:—If we were to single out one place as illustrating more perhaps than any other place St. John's remark, "He came to His own and His own received Him not," that place would surely be Nazareth. I. Observe THE VALUE WHICH THE LORD PUTS UPON THE PUBLIC MEANS OF GRACE—"As His custom was." Although there was very little life or spirituality in the synagogue services, yet Jesus was a habitual worshipper there. What a lesson for those who excuse themselves on such grounds as that—1. They can pray as well at home. Do they? 2. The service is not quite to their mind (Heb. x. 25). II. THE ACCOUNT WHICH CHRIST GAVE AT NAZARETH OF HIS OWN OFFICE AND MINISTRY. III. THE EFFECT PRODUCED BY OUR LORD'S DISCOURSE AT NAZARETH. 1. Admiration and astonishment. 2. But, mingled with this, contempt. 3. And so Christ and His salvation are rejected. (*G. T. Harding, M.A.*) *An inaugural discourse*:—The first sermon of Jesus at Nazareth, a standard for the minister of the gospel at the beginning of His work. The narrative imparts to the minister of the gospel pregnant suggestions. I. In reference to the POINT OF VIEW from which he is to consider his work. 1. Origin. 2. Matter. 3. Object of preaching. II. In relation to the MANNER in which he must perform his work. His preaching must be, as here—1. Grounded on Scripture. 2. Accommodated to the necessity of the hearers. 3. Presented in an attractive manner. III. In relation to the FRUIT upon which he can reckon in this labour. Nazareth shows us—1. That blossoms are as

yet no certain signs of fruit. 2. That this fruit may be blasted by the most unhappy causes. 3. That the harvest may turn out yet better than at the beginning it appears (there in the synagogue were Mary, and also the "Lord's brethren," who afterwards believed; and if the Saviour did not work many miracles at Nazareth, He yet wrought some) (Matt. xiii. 58). IV. In relation to the TEMPER in which he is to begin a new work. 1. With thankful recollections of the past. 2. With holy spiritual might for the present. 3. With joyful hope for the future. Happy the teacher who is permitted to begin his preaching under more favourable presages than Jesus began His in the city where He was brought up. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *View of Nazareth*:—Sheets of smooth rock; fields of huge boulders, between which, at times, there was scarcely room to pass; acres of loose stones of all sizes, no path or track visible—parts so steep that to hold on to the horse's mane was a help—everything unspeakably rough and difficult—such was the way up the face of the rocks to get to the table-land on which Nazareth stands. After a time spots of green appeared on the wide, unearthly desolation, and some lean cattle were to be seen picking up poor mouthfuls among the stones. Further on was a larger, but still very small, spot of green. Goats and sheep alone could find sustenance in such a weird place. After an hour's ride, during which we passed both camels and donkeys toiling up the face of the hill with heavy loads, we came to a spring at the wayside, now running, but dry in summer. At last, all at once, a small valley opened below, set round with hills, and a pleasant little town appeared to the west. Its straggling houses, of white, soft limestone, and mostly new, rose row over row up the steep slope. A fine large building, with slender cypresses growing around it, stood nearest to us; a minaret looked down a little to the rear. Fig-trees, single and in clumps, were growing here and there in the valley, which was covered with crops of grain, lentils, and beans. Above the town the hills were steep and high, with thin pasture, sheets of rock, fig-trees, and now and then an enclosed spot. The small domed tomb-shrine of a Mahommedan saint crowned the upper end of the western slope. Such was Nazareth, the home of our Lord. . . . Numerous hills, not grassy like those of England, but bare, white, and rocky, though here and there faintly green, shut in Nazareth from the outer world; the last heights of Galilee, as they melt away into the plain of Esdraelon. Their long, rounded tops have no wild beauty, and there are no ravines or shady woods to make them romantic or picturesque; indeed, so far as the eye reaches, they are treeless, or very nearly so. . . . The water of Nazareth is mainly derived from rain-cisterns, for there is only one spring, and in autumn its supply is precarious. A momentous interest, however, gathers around this single fountain, for it has been in use for immemorial ages, and, no doubt, often saw the Virgin and her Divine Child among those who frequented it morning and evening, as the mothers of the town, many with children at their side, do now. The water comes through spouts in a stone wall, under an arched recess built for shelter, and falls into a trough at which a dozen persons can stand side by side. Thence it runs into a square stone tank at the side, against which gossips at all hours delight to lean. The water that flows over the top of the trough below the spouts makes a small pool immediately beneath them, and there women wash their linen, and even their children; standing in the water, ankle-deep, their baggy trousers—striped pink or green—tucked between their knees, while those coming for water are continually passing and repassing with their jars, empty or full, on their heads. The spring lies under the town, and as the Nazareth of ancient times, as shown by old cisterns and tombs, was rather higher up the hill than at present, the fountain must in those days have been still farther away from the houses. (*C. Geikie, D.D.*) *The synagogue*:—A synagogue generally stood on the highest piece of ground in a city, or near it; it was oblong, and the end opposite to the entrance pointed towards Jerusalem. There were the seats of the elders, and in the midst, at this end, was the ark with a lamp always burning before it, in which was preserved the roll of the Law. Before it also was an eight-branched candlestick, lighted on the highest festivals. A little way down was a raised platform, on which several persons could stand at once, and in the middle rose a pulpit, in which the reader stood to read those lessons which were not from the books of Moses. The roll of the Law was taken with great solemnity out of the ark, and unrolled by the Rabbi, so that the congregation might not look on the writing. The lessons from Moses were so arranged that the books of the Law were read through once in three years. Much less ceremony was shown about the second lesson, which was taken from the prophets and historical books. On week-days, not less

than twenty-one verses were read; on the Sabbath, not more than three, five, or seven. After this lesson followed the exposition, or interpretation. The Scriptures were read in Hebrew, but the Hebrew was unintelligible to the Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity, consequently the interpreter translated or expounded what he had read in the Aramaic or Syro-Chaldee tongue. The reader stood when reading the prophets, but was allowed to sit or stand for the historical books. Originally the prophets and historical books had not been read in the synagogue service, but when Antiochus Epiphanes forbade the reading of the Law, in the services of the Sabbath, the prophets and other books had been substituted for those of Moses, and when this restriction was withdrawn the Jews continued reading the prophets, but read the Law as well, as of old, in the place of honour. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *Christ's mission*:—I. THE GREAT DISTINCTION IN WHICH OUR LORD EXULTED—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." As this was what distinguished the Lord, so it ought to distinguish His Church. II. THE GREAT MESSAGE OUR LORD HAD TO DELIVER—"To preach the gospel to the poor," &c. III. THE GREAT WORK OUR LORD HAD TO ACCOMPLISH—"To heal the broken-hearted," &c. (*J. P. Chown.*) *The Christ as a preacher*:—Christ read the appointed lesson for the day (which happened to be the day of Atonement), but not the whole of it. He had not come to proclaim the day of the vengeance of our God. The gospel is primarily a deliverance shadowed by the year of Jubilee; it embraces the physical and social ills of men, and their spiritual ills. The inextricableness with which they are united in the words of Christ suggests the profound mystery of body and spirit, mind and matter, environment and spiritual history. In these words we find a theology and a life, a doctrine and a practice, and that the two are inseparable. Pass now to this preaching of Christ. I. ITS SUBSTANCE. Without doubt we have here the key-note to His entire teaching. It is the peculiarity of Christ's preaching that He pierces at once to the centre of His great delivering system, and plants His ministry upon it. The peculiar feature of this quotation from Isaiah, which Christ makes His own, is its doubleness: poor, captives, blind, bruised *physically* and *morally*, but chiefly morally. Let no man think that there is any gospel of deliverance or helpfulness for him, except as it is grounded in a cure of whatever evil there may be in him—evil habits, or selfish aims, or a worldly spirit. II. ITS PHILOSOPHY. Suppose some questioner had arisen in that synagogue of Nazareth and asked Jesus, not as to the substance of His preaching, for that was plain enough, but what was the ground of it, on what ultimate fact or reason it rested. I think the answer would have been of this sort: "I am making in this gospel a revelation of God, showing you His very heart. This is what God feels for you; this is how He loves and pities you; this is what God proposes to do for you, to cheer you with good news, and open your blind eyes, and free your bruised souls and bodies from the captivity of evil." III. ITS POWER. In one sense its power lay in its substance; in another, in the philosophy or ground of it; but there was more than come from these; there was the power that resided in Him who spoke these truths. In what lay the commanding power which made them wonder at His words? Not in any impressiveness of manner, or felicity of presentation. These are elements of power, but they do not constitute power. The main element of power in one who speaks is, an entire, or the largest possible comprehension of the subject. Here we have the key to the power with which Christ preached. He saw the meaning of the Jewish system. He knew what the acceptable year of the Lord meant. He pierced the whole symbolism to its centre, and drew out its significance. He saw that God was a deliverer from first to last, and measured the significance of the fact. The whole heart and mind of God were open to Him. This was the power of Christ's preaching; He saw God; He understood God; He knew what God had done, and would do; the whole purpose and plan of deliverance and redemption lay before Him as an open page. We cannot measure this knowledge of the Christ, we can but faintly conceive it. But the measure of our conception of it is the measure of our spiritual power over others. (*T. T. Munger.*) *Jesus at Nazareth*:—Observe—I. THE PLACE SPECIFIED IN THE TEXT. 1. The obscurity of Christ's private life. 2. We see in it God's estimation of the world's pomp and glory. 3. We see honest industry honoured by the Saviour. II. WHAT JESUS DID ON HIS VISIT TO NAZARETH. 1. The place to which He resorted. "The synagogue." 2. This place was identified with former associations. "As His custom was." 3. The time when Christ went into the synagogue was the Sabbath. 4. What Jesus did in the synagogue. 5. The portion of the Sacred Scriptures which He read. Application: 1. Give especial heed, &c.,

to the Holy Scriptures. 2. Let Scripture be the test of all your views and doctrines, &c. 3. The rule of your life, &c. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Christ's first sermon:*—I. THE ACCOUNT WHICH JESUS GAVE OF HIS MISSION. 1. He refers to His Divine qualification. (1) The Spirit was upon Him in unbroken plenitude. (2) He had the Spirit always with Him. 2. He refers to the fulfilment of a striking prophecy. Every word of God is pure, true, unalterable. 3. He declares the character of His work. (1) To preach the gospel to the poor. (2) To heal the broken-hearted. (3) Deliverance to the captives. (4) Recovering of sight to the blind. (5) He sets at liberty those that are bruised. (6) He proclaimed the year of jubilee to the people. The very reverse of their former state, made known the joyful sound of peace and plenty, of rest and festivity. The gospel era is emphatically "the acceptable year of the Lord." II. THE EFFECT IT PRODUCED UPON HIS AUDITORY. 1. They listened with marked attention. This was proper, necessary, pleasing. Some have their eyes closed in sleep, some gaze about, some look into their Bibles and hymn books; but they fixed their eyes upon the speaker. 2. They were filled with astonishment and wonder. No doubt at His wisdom, but equally so at the tenderness, condescension, and love with which He spake. 3. They were spell-bound, however, by prejudice. 4. They attempted to murder the Son of God. Truth flashed upon their minds, but they hated it; it exasperated them, and they tried to cast the messenger of mercy headlong down the hill, &c. Application: 1. To you Jesus has come with the message of life. 2. You stand in need of the blessings He bestows. 3. Do not allow prejudice to make Christ a stone of stumbling and rock of offence. 4. Embrace the message, and live. 5. Put on Christ, and profess Him to the world. (*Ibid.*) *Jesus at Nazareth:*—Let us notice the chief points of interest connected with Christ's first appearance as the Messiah, proclaiming the gospel in the home of His childhood. I. THE PLACE. He was ready to preach where He had been known all His life. Many resolve to become disciples of Christ as soon as they get away among strangers. They say they have not courage to follow Him amongst their own friends. Every one knows their past sins. Their friends would laugh at them. Their changed lives would attract general attention. But, the greater the change, the more reason for showing it at home. Jesus had no past sins laid to His charge when He went back to His own home to preach glad tidings. If your past character has been upright, the remembrance of it will give weight to your testimony as a disciple of Christ. If your past life has been evil, no one will be so moved by the genuineness of the change in you as those who knew you before your conversion. II. THE ASSOCIATIONS. He preached in the synagogue. It was His custom to attend there. He always worked through the regularly organized channels for religious labour, and among those who professed to be religious. There are those who profess to be followers of Christ, who stand apart from the Churches because of the imperfections of Christians. They cannot work with or enter into fellowship with Christians. But they find no warrant for this in the example of Jesus. The Jewish Church was corrupt; yet He worked in and with and through it, till they cast Him out. III. THE TIME. He preached on the Sabbath. He used holy time for holy work. His work was always holy, always appropriate to time and place. But He honoured the Sabbath in its true meaning as the day of worship. IV. THE SUBJECT. It was a text from the Bible. No one ever expounded the Scriptures as He did. He was Himself the Word. God had spoken through the prophets. His Word of old had been the revelation of Himself. Now the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. The living speech and living speaker revealed the mind of God. His words were spirit and life. But they never thrust into the background what had been already spoken. Those who would follow Christ will love the Bible, and will grow holy by receiving and obeying it, and will persuade others through it to believe on Jesus Christ. Without it we are defenceless against the attacks of the adversary. V. THE SOURCE OF THE PREACHER'S POWER. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him. It empowered Him to make known the gracious message of salvation, and Himself the Saviour. Before leaving the world He bestowed this Divine gift on His disciples, and it is promised to every one who believes on Christ and seeks it. He is ready to anoint every believer for service. Whoever empties himself of pride, self-seeking, all sin, and asks for that gift simply that he may glorify God, will receive it. VI. THE SERMON. He was Himself the explanation of His text. His presence spoke and made His words luminous. VII. THE RECEPTION OF THE SERMON. His hearers lacked the sense of the Divine presence. They were filled with worldliness

and pride, and could not appreciate the heavenly gifts which Christ brought. With no consciousness of inner want, they sought only outward things. They judged Him first by His personal appearance and manner, and the graciousness of His words; they were pleased. Then they remembered His humble position in society, and their impression began to change. Then they recalled the fame of His miracles, and they began to desire to be entertained by wonders. Then they saw that He was exposing their prevailing sins, and they were enraged. But the truth which He presented they could not discern, and they saw the frame not the picture; the vessel, not the contents. They sought entertainment, flattery, agreement with themselves, not truth. They thrust for ever salvation and their Saviour, with murder in their hearts. VIII. THE ESCAPE. The only wonder which they would be likely to remember was that by which He separated Himself from them for ever. A mob is always unreasoning. Some sudden feeling or event may change its purpose as quickly as it was started. Many times the courage and firmness of a single man has dispersed enraged multitudes. When Marius, once the honoured consul of Rome, was being dragged to execution by a yelling, cursing crowd, he fixed his eye on the man who came forward to kill him, with the words, "Slave! dost thou dare to kill Marius?" The soldier dropped his sword and fled, and with him the panic-stricken mob. When Napoleon came back to France from exile, and met the troops sent to oppose him, they, at the sight of him, changed their purpose, and welcomed him as their commander. Jesus, with the majesty of grace and truth, so awed His enemies, that their rage was restrained, and He passed through them unharmed. But oh! had they welcomed the Prince of Peace, even at that last moment, how different their destiny would have been. (*A. E. Dunning.*) *The new teacher*:—Jesus emerged from the desert to enter on His great career. The season was the spring. And within as without all was spring-time. He "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," and Galilee felt and owned the Spirit and the power. In the homes of its peasantry and the hamlets of its fishermen, on the shores of its beautiful sea, in the towns and villages that stood on its banks, and were mirrored in its waves, He preached His gospel. Only His own Nazareth refused to hear Him. Thither, indeed, He had gone, had entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, as His custom was, and had stood up to read. To Him the place was full of sacred associations. He had there, as boy and youth and man, listened for hours and days to the voice of God. But others had their associations as well as He, and theirs were not always as sacred as His. The synagogue was often the scene of strife. The conflict of opinion was not unknown there. The men of Nazareth had their personal rivalries and spites, and when One whom they knew, so far as the senses can know, rose and read, and applied to Himself the prophetic words, they received His gracious speech with incredulous wonder. But when He proceeded to speak with authority, to rebuke their unbelief, to quote against them their own proverbs, then they "were filled with wrath," &c. And He went His way, and found elsewhere men who heard gladly His words of power. The strange thing about the new Teacher was not His having been untaught and a carpenter. The great creative spirits of Israel had never been the sons of a school. The Rabbi was qualified rather than disqualified for his office by a handicraft. But the strange thing was the the new Teacher Himself. He stood distinguished from all the Rabbis who had been, or then were, in Israel. Of the points that made Him pre-eminent and unique, three may be here specified. 1. The relation between His person and His word. The Teacher made the truth He taught. His teaching was His articulated person, His person His incorporated teaching. 2. The consciousness He had of Himself and His truth; its authority and creative energy. 3. His knowledge of His truth and mission, throughout perfect and self-consistent. His first word revealed His purpose, expressed His aim. "Had Christ at first a plan?" is a question often discussed. "Plan" is a word too mechanical and pragmatic. Christ had at the beginning the idea He meant to realize. The evidence lives in the phrase most frequent on His lips, "the kingdom of heaven." (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*) *The gospel for the Gentiles*:—If I read this narrative for the first time I should pause at the words, "glorified of all," knowing that there would be a thunderstorm before long. Here is Christ, with more wisdom in Him than all the world besides; and yet, "as His custom was, He went into the synagogue," &c. What did He go there for? They could teach Him nothing. Men and women now, on the plea that they learn nothing, that there is nothing fresh to hear or know or learn at church, very seldom come. And many of you who come to hear me, come not to worship God. So I turn and read this history of how

Christ, who was the fountain of life, the wisest of the wise, went, "as His custom was," &c. "He stood up for to read." Here stands a teacher from whose teaching men shall date for all time, and He is about to choose a text. What it was you know. Who could wonder that the eyes of all were fastened upon Him. They had never heard the words read as He read them. "They wondered at the gracious words," &c. They found them gracious, and they said, some of them honestly, some of them meanly, "Is not this Joseph's son?" Now watch for the storm. He tells them a terrible truth which they don't like. As long as they thought He was going to preach all these things to the Jewish nation it was all right, but the moment they hear that these things are to be done to the Gentiles, oh! then the storm comes. You know what they had heard—that God's love was big enough to reach Sarepta. These people had sound right views. Think of that! And what did Christ do to anger them? He told them that God's love reached even to Sidon; that His heart was deep enough to take in the leprous Naaman. What shocking things to tell the people, weren't they? And what effect did they have? They were proud of Him ten minutes ago; but now they are going to throw Him headlong over the brow of the hill. Has there ever been any picture like that?—the sunny morning; the welcome Christ; the teacher kissed; the teacher thrown down the precipice. And what brought it about? He discussed of the largeness of God's love. I often see these things. It does not belong to this history only. (*George Dawson, M.A.*) *Habit and holiness*:—Here, in our text, is one case of Jesus conforming to a good common custom—perhaps not only following the custom, but getting help from it to promote His own spiritual life. From this one well-authenticated custom of Jesus in regard to Sabbath observance, I purpose, in connection with the text, to set before you the value and use of habit, as an aid to holy life and character, placed by God's providence within our reach, and which we are bound, as wise men, to turn to account. The capacity of forming habits is a very valuable part of human nature, as originally framed by God. By doing a thing often, we come to do it easily, and even to contract a liking and craving to do it. Sometimes this facility and inclination grow up before we are aware of it, in matters where we did not intend it. Moreover, it is a power as ready for bad uses as for good, so that it requires observation and guidance. It is by habit and use that workmen in the various arts and trades learn to manipulate skilfully the various tools and materials which they employ. Similarly, by gradual training, both animal and vegetable natures may be wonderfully modified—by more or less light, water, warmth, food, or motion. It is the alteration of these conditions that determines life and death, beauty and deformity, success and failure. Many of the evils that give us the greatest annoyance in society are largely the result of neglected or misdirected habits or customs. It is no new thing to employ the force of habit in connection with piety; it has already been done very systematically in past ages. In fact, it is only in comparatively recent times, and in connection with Protestant Churches especially, that the power of habit has been neglected. Under the Romish system there was both great use and abuse of habit and custom. At present we are in the midst of a reaction and protest against former abuses. All the details of rule and discipline, as laid down for monks and nuns, had for their aim the utilizing of habit on the side of virtue and holiness. But, in many cases, this was carried to excess, and rules became ridiculous when emphasized as important in themselves, whereas they were only means to an end. Such rules applied to dress, to hours of devotion, to repeating certain formulæ, to the period of sleep, to regulation of diet. When this was pushed beyond reasonable bounds, the system was open to ridicule, as an attempt to make virtue by machinery. But these ancient extravagances of certain branches of the Christian Church are no reason why habit should not be studied and utilized for the same purposes within proper limits. Habit, in excess, is formalism or routine, and is near of kin to hypocrisy. This was the besetting sin of the old Pharisees. In the same way, habit or custom, in excess, becomes a system of ceremony, or ritualism, which is just old Pharisaism renewing its youth, but in adaptation to the Christian System. Warned by these errors—but mindful that there is also in habit a mighty power for good—let us consider a few of those matters in which habit is desirable. 1. The instance in the text applicable to Jesus—the custom of being present at public worship every Sabbath. How great an aid is this to everything that is good! It puts us in the way of the chief means of grace; it puts us in the way of the best human companionship. 2. A habit of prayer. The prayer to which I refer specially at present is family and personal prayer. Public or common prayer is implied in Sunday observance and church-going. If there is no habit of family prayer, the prayer is not likely to be made at

all. All the details of family worship imply arrangement—a certain hour—a fixed place—books at hand—a person responsible for conducting the service. Family worship thus becomes one of the most beautiful features of domestic order in every house where it is duly attended to. Its omission becomes at once a mark and cause of disorder. Personal prayer no less depends on habit and custom for its maintenance. 3. Labour may be the subject of another of those good habits, in a religious point of view. At first sight it might seem as if a habit of labour, while good and useful in itself, had little to do with religion. These idle, aimless existences are the most unhappy condition possible for reasonable beings. Far better is it for a man to hold on steadily in his work to the end, and nobly wear out, than rust wearily and unprofitably. It is a calamity when a man cannot work by reason of old age or sickness. The man who has acquired the habit of labour has got possession of that honest power which will advance him alike in a worldly and moral point of view, and which will keep him out of many temptations. 4. A habit of learning may well form the sequel to a habit of labour. It is in always aiming to learn something new that we secure for ourselves real improvement and progress, carrying the purposes of youth and early manhood into advanced years. There are various ways in which this habit of learning may develop itself. The simplest, perhaps, is observation for one's self; and the next in simplicity, conversation with one's neighbours, so as to add their observation or information to one's own. But far more valuable are books and professed teachers, who have made a specialty of some subject. A habit of spending leisure time in careful, definite reading on matters useful in ordinary life, is one of the most noble exercises in which a man can train himself. 5. The last matter that I shall at present name as a fit subject for a good habit is charity. A custom of this noble sort could not be formed or maintained save by very deliberate effort and self-sacrifice. Thus have we considered the place and utility of habit from a Christian point of view. (*J. Rankin, D.D.*) *Our Lord's visit to Nazareth:*—I. HIS ARRIVAL AT NAZARETH. "He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up." A man of reflection and feeling piety will always be affected when he comes to the place where he was brought up. 1. What was Nazareth? It was a small town of the Zebulonites, in Galilee, seventy-two miles north of Jerusalem, and west of Mount Tamar. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" 2. How came He to be brought up here? 3. How was He brought up there? 4. How came He to Nazareth, since He was there brought up? Because He had been absent from the place: He had been to the baptism of John. For a considerable time He visited other places, where He performed His first miracles; and having thus gained a well-deserved renown, this would serve to favour His introduction to His townsmen and His relations: and thus He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up. II. HIS PRIVATE ENGAGEMENTS THERE BEFORE HE PREACHED—"And, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read." 1. The time was the Sabbath. 2. The place was the synagogue. Synagogues were scattered all over Judea, and were in every country where the Jews lived. They were places sacred to devotion and instruction. They were not expressly of Divine appointment, like the Temple, but they arose from the moral exigencies of the people; and were peculiarly serviceable in maintaining and perpetuating the knowledge of Moses and the prophets. They are supposed to have originated in the days of Ezra. 3. The action—"He stood up for to read." Bless God that you have the Scriptures in your own hand, and in your own language; and that you are allowed to read them, and that you are commanded to read them. III. This brings us to HIS PREACHING. "And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias; and when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." 1. This was the text. 2. But observe the attention of the audience—"And He closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down: and the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him." It is very desirable to see an audience attentive, as the mind follows the eye, and the eye affecteth the heart. 3. Then observe the sermon itself—"And He began to say, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." (1) First, He asserts His qualification for His mission—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me." (2) Then He asserts the design of His office—"He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor." IV. WHAT WAS THE EFFECT OF THE SERMON? They were struck with admiration; but admiration seems to have been all

that they felt—"And they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth; and they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" What reception does Jesus Christ meet with from us? (*W. Jay.*)

Vers. 18-22. **The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.**—*The acceptable year of the Lord*:—Every Christian would wish to know what were the first words spoken by Jesus as a preacher of good tidings. Two of the evangelists seem to gratify this natural curiosity. According to Matthew the Beatitudes were the inaugural utterances of the Galilean gospel; according to the third evangelist, not the sermon on the mount, but the sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth. There is reason to believe that neither of the sermons occupied the place of an inaugural discourse. Luke himself knows of things previously done, and we may assume *said* also, in Capernaum (ver. 23). Why then does he introduce this scene at so early a place in the narrative? He has selected it to be the frontispiece of his Gospel, showing by sample the salient features of its contents. Probable that for St. Luke's own mind the emblematic significance of the scene lay chiefly in these two features: the gracious character of Christ's discourse, and the indication in the close of the universal destination of the gospel. These were things sure to interest the Pauline evangelist. It is a worthy frontispiece, in respect both of the grace and of the universality of the gospel. 1. In the first place the text of Christ's discourse was a most gracious one; none more so could have been found within the range of Old Testament prophecy. Made more gracious than in the original by the omission of the reference to the day of vengeance, and by the addition of a clause to make the Messiah's blessed work as many-sided and complete as possible. 2. If Christ's text was full of grace, His sermon appears to have been not less so. That this was so the evangelist indicates when he makes use of the phrase "words of grace" to denote its general character. That phrase, indeed, he reckoned the fittest to characterize Christ's whole teaching as recorded in his Gospel, and on that very account it is that he introduces it here. 3. In respect of the universal destination of the gospel, the scene is also sufficiently significant. The attempt on the life of Jesus foreshadows the tragic event through which the Prophet of Nazareth hoped to draw to Himself the expectant eyes of all men. The departure of Jesus from His own town is a portent of Christianity leaving the sacred soil of Judea, and setting forth into the wide world in quest of a new home. 4. The two features most prominent in this frontispiece are just the salient characteristics of the Christian era. It is the era of grace, and of grace free to all mankind. And on these accounts it is the acceptable year of the Lord. It is acceptable to God. It should be acceptable to us. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *The interrupted sermon*:—In the course of His first preaching tour Jesus came to Nazareth. It was the Sabbath. He entered the synagogue "according to His custom." Observe—for the greatest revolutionist the world had ever seen the current forms and church services of the day sufficed. He was even willing to pour the new wine into the old bottles till the old bottles burst. He enters the village synagogue—His parish church. He offers to read the lesson; He ascends the pulpit; the clerk hands up a roll of the prophet Isaiah; before Him are a curious medley of faces—the eastern women veiled behind lattice-work on one side, the men of the village with a sprinkling of the tradesfolk and gentry on the other. He unrolls the scroll and finds the place, Isaiah lxi. 1. I wish our clergy would always take care to find the right place—the suitable text—the passage in season. In this case it was actually the lesson for the day. So out of routine the Lord brings life. He reads, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." Ah, without that spiritual concentration in the pulpit as well as in the pew, priest may preach and people may hear in vain: "He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor." Yes, you neglected, suffering people, the Saviour of the world places you on a level with the favoured of the earth. The permanent and the spiritual belongs to you as much as to them; the same Father; the same love revealed; the same heaven beyond—are for you. "To heal the broken-hearted." What a lift there is for the sorrowful in the sympathy of God, that steals like summer light into the darkened room; no despair can ever quite keep it out. "Recovery of sight to the blind." The mists of passion, the clouds of prejudice, the veil of selfishness, the pall of spiritual ignorance, lo, at a touch the scales fall off, you see yourselves as others see you, you know as you are known, your heart grows pure, you see God. "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." There He stopped. The next words of Isaiah are, "The day of vengeance of our God." He would not break into that new train of thought which might clash with the spirit of His sermon. The last words of the

text should be words of peace, though the end was to be tumult. "He closed the book, and sat down" to deliver His sermon. We shall never know what the sermon was. It began with a searching application; no beating about the bush. "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." It ended with that fierce storm of invective which was the Lord's dauntless reply to the rage of an envenomed minority. He has fascinated the majority. They "wondered at the gracious words," &c.; but the conceited gentry could not bear to be lectured by "a Carpenter," and they soon let Him know it. "Enough of that," they cried. "A sign! a sign! you can do wonders at Capernaum; give us a taste of your quality here. A miracle is worth all this talk—unwholesome, democratic talk about the poor, and a message for all men, and pray what is to become of us if we are to be mixed up with the rabble?" It was all over with the sermon. The knot of malcontents expressed their dissent loudly, and were resolved to break up the meeting. So Christ cast His bread upon the waters. The last words maddened His adversaries, but they struck the second key-note of His ministry. The first was "peace on earth; goodwill towards men." A gospel of healing, liberty, illumination, and comfort for all, beginning with the lowest of the people. The second key-note was an implacable opposition to bigotry, heartlessness, and formalism. "You want a sign? You shall have one. My signs are the seals of my teaching. Those who accept my teaching get my signs. You will have none of my message, you shall have none of my miracles. You are no better than your fathers, who persecuted the prophets. Were they not outcasts and rejected wanderers? There were many widows in Israel, but Elias only healed the Gentile's son at Sarepta. There were many lepers in those days, but Eliseus only healed Naaman the Syrian. Syrian lepers and Gentiles go into the kingdom before you." They would hear no more; they rose in their fury, hustled Him out of the building, hurried Him up the steep, rocky path to the summit of the hill, and would have cast Him down, but His friends, doubtless some of those sturdy Galilean fishermen, rallied around Him and got Him clear of the village. In one way or another He passed through the crowd, on His way back to Capernaum and the Galilean shore. He left Nazareth, never apparently to return. The secluded mountain village had indeed cast Him out—the world received Him. (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *The matter of Christ's preaching*:—I. I preach that the great atonement for sin has been offered. II. I preach that the guilty may be forgiven. III. I preach that the slave may be emancipated. IV. I preach that the lost inheritance may be regained. (*G. Brooks.*) *The Gospel and the poor*:—That our Lord's ministry was eminently a ministry for the poor is a commonplace which need not be insisted on. His relations were poor people, with the associations, the habits, the feelings of the poor. He passed among men as the carpenter's Son. He spoke, it would appear, in a provincial north-country dialect, at least commonly. His language, His illustrations, His entire method of approaching the understandings and hearts of men, were suited to the apprehension of the uneducated. When He spoke the common people heard Him gladly. When He was asked by what signs He could prove His claims, He replied, among other things, "The poor have the gospel preached to them." His first disciples were poor men. As they looked back upon it, the grace of His example was felt by His disciples and servants to consist pre-eminently in this:—"That, though He was rich," &c. 1. Notice the marked connection, in this and other passages, between the preaching of the gospel to the poor, and the gift of the Eternal Spirit. 2. The work of preaching the gospel to the poor is far from being either commonplace or easy. Notice two mistakes which have been made in undertaking it. (1) It has failed sometimes from a lack of sympathy with the mental condition and habits of the poor. (2) The other mistake has been in an opposite direction. Men who have sympathized warmly with the mental difficulties of the poor have endeavoured to recommend the Christian faith sometimes by making unwarranted or semi-legendary additions to it, and sometimes by virtually mutilating it. 3. These considerations, then, may lead us to reflect that the connection implied in the text between the presence of the Spirit and the task of evangelizing the poor, is not, after all, so surprising. To be sympathetic, yet sincere; true to the message which has come from heaven, yet alive to the difficulties of conveying it to untutored minds and hearts; sensible of the facilities which a few unauthorized additions or mutilations would lend to the work in hand, yet resolved to decline them—this is not easy. For such a work something higher is needed than natural quickness of wit or strength of will, even His aid who taught the peasants of Galilee in the upper chamber to speak as with tongues of fire, and in languages which men of many nations could understand. And the effort for which He thus equipped them

continues still; and His aid, adapted to new circumstances, is present with us as it was with them. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Ministry for the poor*:—To awaken a spiritual interest in the poor is my object. 1. The outward condition of the poor is a hard one, and deserving of our sympathy—though not necessarily wretched. Give them the Christian spirit, and they would find in their lot the chief elements of good. 2. The condition of the poor is unfriendly to the action and unfolding of the intellect—a sore calamity to a rational being. 3. I proceed to another evil of poverty—its disastrous influence on the domestic affections. 4. Another unhappy influence exerted by poverty is that it tends to breed discontent, envy, and hatred—hence crime. 5. I pass on to another sore trial of the poor—the temptation to make up for their anxieties and privations by resorting to debasing gratifications—drink, &c. Yet—6. The highest culture is in reach of the poor, and is sometimes attained by them. The great idea on which human cultivation especially depends is that of God. 7. We are solemnly bound, therefore, to cherish and manifest a strong moral and religious interest in the poor. Every man whom God has prospered is bound to contribute to this work. The Christian ministry is a blessing to all, but above all to the poor. If there be an office worthy of angels, it is that of teaching Christian truth. The Son of God hallowed it by sustaining it in His own person. (*W. E. Channing, D.D.*) *Christ the great Harmonizer*:—The gospel is the great harmonizer of all the conflicting interests of human society. It alone can elevate the "masses"; it alone can reclaim the fallen. Dr. Alexander M'Leod, in his "Christus Consolator," says that "when Orsted first exhibited to Frederika Bremer the beautiful and now familiar experiment of sand-grains upon a glass plate arranging themselves, under the influence of a musical note, in symmetrical and harmonious figures, this reflection passed through the mind of the lady: 'A human hand made the stroke that produced the note. But when the stroke is made by the hand of the Almighty, will not the note then produced bring into exquisitely harmonious form those sand-grains which are human beings, communities, nations? It will arrange the world in beauty, and there shall be no discord, and no lamentation any more.'" This is right. That divinely musical note is the preaching of the glorious gospel of Christ. *The power of Christ's sympathy*:—Some time ago, a Christian young lady was visiting a lunatic asylum, and her soul was filled with sadness and pity with the sights she saw. By and by she was led into a room where there was but one patient, a young girl of the same age as herself. She was standing in the corner of the room, her face almost touching the wall. In stony hopelessness she stood, immobile and rigid as a statue. She neither looked nor spoke. She might have been as dead as the statue she represented but that she still stood on. It was a heart-breaking spectacle. "Will you speak to her?" asked the doctor, "we can do nothing with her. She has been thus for days; but one like yourself might move her." The young lady, trembling with emotion, with one upward cry to heaven for help, stepped forward, gently laid her hand on the listless form and, with tears in her eyes, spoke one sentence of yearning sympathy and compassion. The poor patient turned, gazed for one moment, her form quivered, and she burst into tears! The doctor exclaimed, "Thank God, she may be saved!" The visitor could never recall the words she had used; but they had done their work. This poor, wrecked girl, who thought that nobody knew or cared for her, had felt the heart that pitied her, the hand stretched out to help her. O, the power of tears! the magic of sympathy! It is the sympathy of Christ that calls a mad, despairing world to itself—to its better self. (*Christian Journal.*) *The cold comfort of worldly philosophy*:—Some years ago (says Dr. M'Cosh) I had a call at my house in Ireland by a young nobleman with whom I was at that time intimate, and who has since risen to eminence as a statesman (I mean Earl Dufferin), who introduced to me his friend Lord Ashburton. The nobleman introduced took me aside and said, "You know that I have lately lost my dear wife, who was a great friend of Mr. Carlyle's; and I have applied to Mr. Carlyle to tell me what I should do to have peace, and make me what I should be. On my making this request he simply bade me read Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meister.' I did so, and did not find anything there fitted to improve me. I went back to Mr. Carlyle, asking him what precise lesson he meant me to gather from the book; and he said, 'Read "Wilhelm Meister" a second time.' I have done so carefully, but I confess I am unable to find anything there to met my anxiety; and I wish you to explain, if you can, what Mr. Carlyle could mean." I told him that I was not the man to explain Carlyle's meaning—if, indeed, he had any definite meaning. I told him plainly that neither Goethe nor Carlyle, though men of eminently literary genius, could supply the balm

which his wounded spirit needed; and I remarked that Goethe's work contained not a little that was sensual. I did my best to point to a better way, and to the deliverance promised and secured in the gospel. I do not know the issue, but I got an eager listener. Carlyle wished to persuade his mother, a woman of simple but devoted piety, that his advanced faith was the same as that which she held firmly, and so much to her comfort, only in a somewhat different form. But, in fact, the mother's faith was crushed in the form in which the son put it, when it became a skeleton, as different from the life which sustained her as the bones in our museums are from the living animal. (*Dr. M'Cosh's "Certitude, Providence, and Prayer."*) *Prayer helps emancipation:*—This instructive anecdote relating to President Finney is characteristic. A brother who had fallen into darkness and discouragement was staying at the same house with Dr. Finney over night. He was lamenting his condition, and Dr. F., after listening to his narrative, turned to him with his peculiar earnest look, and with a voice that sent a thrill through his soul, said, "You don't pray: that is what's the matter with you. Pray—pray four times as much as ever you did in your life, and you will come out." He immediately went down to the parlour, and taking the Bible, he made a serious business of it, stirring up his soul to seek God as did Daniel, and thus he spent the night. It was not in vain. As the morning dawned he felt the light of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon his soul. His captivity was broken; and ever since he has felt that the greatest difficulty in the way of men being emancipated from their bondage, is that they "don't pray." The bonds cannot be broken by finite strength. We must take our case to Him who is mighty to save. Our eyes are blinded to Christ the Deliverer. He came to preach deliverance to the captive, to break the power of habit; and herein is the rising of a great hope for us. *Christ the Emancipator:*—A doctrine with which the hearts of men are universally in sympathy. Men want the restrictions and limitations around them to be destroyed. It is not merely the few who are actually in dungeons that want it. Thousands are in dungeons, around whom no stone wall is reared. Men in general have a consciousness of being prisoners, without actually being under military rule and ward. Men are bearing bonds, and are bruised, who are not in the actual relation of service; the consciousness of circumscription, of limitation, and of suffering under various forms of bondage, is universal. 1. The first blow which Christ strikes for the enlargement of men's liberty wears the appearance of the opposite; it is at the tyranny of sense and sensuousness in the individual. Man cannot run away from himself. Christ emancipates him from this bondage by introducing him into the higher course of nature; into that sphere in which, in his relations to God, he is acted upon precisely as in a family children are acted upon by the living presence and power of a good father and mother. Then the Divine influence becomes more active in him than the flesh, and he achieves a victory over himself—the nobler nature having gained ascendancy over the lower. 2. Christ delivers us from our bondage to secular conditions. The light and life that we receive by faith make us superior to our circumstances, so that we can maintain our manhood, not only in spite of adverse surroundings, but even by reason of them; working out through adversity and trouble what men in prosperity and joy fail to find. 3. Christ is an Emancipator in another way also. There is a power given to men through faith in Him, to set themselves free from the great source of those cares, infirmities, and annoyances which chiefly afflict life. If pride be essential to a noble character—and it is; if the love of praise be one of the civilizing elements—and it is; if both of these influences conjoined under right directions and inspirations tend to ennoble, to soften, to sweeten, and to beautify human nature—and they do: on the other hand, pride and vanity in their corrupt forms tend to bring upon men in the most acute ways many sufferings which afflict them—for our troubles are mainly of our own making. He who is nervously sensitive to praise is in great distress when he fears the withdrawal of praise or popularity. He who has an intense consciousness of his own excellence and desert is continually harried and annoyed and irritated by a lack of that respect and appreciation of which he has himself so supreme a sense. All the world are over-proud, or over-vain, or both; but he who has subdued his pride, and, by the love of God shed abroad in his heart, has turned it to higher and nobler uses; he who, lacking nothing of sensibility to praise, yet believes in the presence of God, wants praise only for supernal things, and disdains the offering of praise for things meagre and mean and low and vile; because he sets his standard, not according to the current ideas of human society, and not according to the ways of men who are unillumined, but according to that higher and nobler man-

hood which was revealed in Jesus Christ—he is emancipated from this universal bondage. 4. Christ emancipates from the bondage which comes through ignorance and superstition. It is for men to choose whether they will govern themselves or be governed. It must be one or the other. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Christ's method of emancipation*:—How strangely Christ comported Himself! The Jewish people were at that time living under one of the worst forms of Roman despotism, and there was a universal desire all over Palestine that the land should be emancipated; yet He never said one word to that effect, or performed one act towards that purpose. The prisons of Judea were crowded, to be emptied by the executioner, and hundreds of thousands were lying in hopeless darkness; yet we do not hear of Him taking up a single case. There was slavery, with all its cursed attendant influences, spread through the civilized world; yet in all our Lord's discourses we do not find a single word of reference to this condition of affairs. When He died there was not one prison less in the land, nor one prisoner; there had been no casting away of chains or manacles, and the black darkness of the people had not been lightened. Nor did His apostles, when they took up His work after Him, disturb the order of society, or revolutionize government by the sword. On the contrary, they enjoin most explicitly, "Obey the magistrates; obey the powers that be; obey the laws that are meant for good, however badly they may be administered." And so men sometimes say that Christ did nothing at all, that He came on a fool's errand. But, remember, there are different ways of doing the same thing. Christ came to raise the human race, to develop it one step higher, to construct kingdoms, establish arts, rear manufactories, elevate knowledge—to make men happier, truer, more perfect everywhere. He came to do this, not by working outwardly, but by working inwardly. He did not come to found new institutions, or to overturn old institutions. He came to produce such a state of heart in man throughout the whole race, that the unavoidable outworkings of this new power would be ultimately to change all institutions and redeem the world from animalism, crime, and oppression. Look at this internal working of Christ. He deals with men, not in the mass, but one by one; and He deals with the moral sentiments, subjecting all the others to them. The whole order inside a man is changed by the influence of Christianity from lower to higher, from flesh-man to spirit-man. The sovereign and central force employed in this transformation is love. Christ undertakes to reconstruct the dispositions of men by bringing into supreme agency this transcendent love. 1. Christ's gospel was a more perfect disclosure of the great natural law as applied to men than had ever been understood, or is understood to-day. There is an unused principle in the human soul which, brought out by the stimulus of the Divine afflatus, can cleanse the whole lower nature of man and deaden the passions, not by direct attack, but by giving principle and authority to their opposites, and shape to the inspiration—the central principle—love. It was there before Christ came, only men did not know it; and so, until brought out by Christ, it was a dead thing. He has put life into it, and through it into men. 2. Christianity never has been, and never can be, contained wholly in the New Testament. The gospel is only a hint and a guide to a higher nature, which needs to be developed. If I take a handful of wheat from my granary, there is a promise of a hundred bushels in it—only a promise, however. It must be sown before the promise can be realized. So with the gospel. Everything of knowledge that tends to the elevation of the human family is an unfolding of Christianity. If there is anything good for man, capable of reconstructing his nature, it is part and parcel of that human nature which is broader than the earth and deeper than eternity; it is part of that Divine nature by which a man is raised up to the glorious florescence of manhood and carried up to the angels; and I hold and rejoice in everything that develops man, and assists in the building of the new world. 3. The progress of this new kingdom has been very much hindered by the materializing influences of man. (1) The incarnation of spiritual forces in outward institutions. Men are always apt to pay more attention to the form than to the spiritual reality it embodies. (2) The substitution of ideas for forces. What is being a Christian but to be the embodiment of tender-heartedness, generosity, self-denial, self-sacrifice—a desire for the welfare of others, even though at the expense of your own? What is Christianity, if not this? Names are nothing; being is everything. The power of the gospel is the promulgation of dispositions. It is the heart-life. The heart wears the crown, and the intellect is its servant, walking behind it, asking what it shall and shall not do. (3) The substitution of worship for morality. How can a man who is living in sin love God? How can a man be a partaker of the love of peace and joy if he has not the spirit

of long-suffering, gentleness, forgiveness, within him? Morality is God's method when developed to the uttermost. Men will not be accepted for being so obsequious to God, while they remain indifferent to their fellows. (4) The substitution of justice for Divine love. When we can open spring flowers by spring frosts, when we can ripen summer fruits by summer thunder-storms, and bring tranquillity by tempests, then you may by rigour and threat have God's work in the soul—God's humility, love, patience, self-sacrifice, forbearance, temperance. We hardly know our God under such doctrine. Oh, Sun of Righteousness! Thou art not known by the tempest, nor by the earthquake, but by the still, small voice—love; and religious truth will never be thoroughly understood until men are transformed into love, with that system which enthrones God as the universal cause, who knows how to suffer most because He loves. 4. The road to liberty is a very simple one. Once change the unit and you change the sum; begin with changing individuals, and you transform local public sentiment. Laws, customs, and institutions must take on the same form. No royal road to liberty, largeness, and freedom, except that which comes from the perfection and exaltation of human nature; no true nobility until mankind touch mankind, neighbourhood neighbourhood, nation nation. We are scattered here and there. When are we to collect in communities like bands of Christian graces all attuned to each other, working out a visible result? When that time comes men will say, "Human nature never was so beautiful before as it is here." That is gospel. It appeals to, and changes, the heart. (*Ibid.*) *The slavery of unrest*:—We do not require to be delivered from Egyptian bondage, or Grecian cruelty, or the Roman yoke; but we have lust, and we have passion, and we have the restlessness of care, and we have the fears of anxiety, and we have vanity and ambition, and a thousand other incendiaries and tyrants which abuse our bosom while yet under the bondage of sinful nature, and which still abuse the peace and welfare of all who have not been emancipated by the Cross of Christ. The captivity of sin seems no captivity to many. There are sleeping draughts of pleasure with which the devil serves his servants. There are vain shows of pride, and castle-buildings of ambition, and dreams of wealth, by which the spirits of people are charmed away from the thought of their condition. But it is a miserable trick played off on the immortal soul, and at every instant it is liable to a fearful exposure. It is a fabric of grandeur built over a horrid sepulchre, on which it totters and shakes, and at length falls on the ambitious wight who trusted thereto. It is a wretched bondage to be captive to sin, though you were at large without any on the earth to make you afraid. It is not the narrowness of the dungeon, or of his knowledge, wealth, or power, that makes a man a slave; it is the disrepose, the unrest of the mind, the coveting the things we cannot have, the fearing of things we cannot avoid, the meeting of things we cannot brook, the hoping for things we cannot have, the enjoying of things we cannot keep. Thus to be, is to be in slavery; and not to be thus, is to be free. . . . What unchristian man is there who is not thus? There is a discord between our spiritual man and this our earthly habitation, which nothing but the religion of Jesus can appease. (*E. Irving, M.A.*) *The acceptable year of the Lord: Jubilee year*:—If you turn to Leviticus xxv. you will see what the arrangements of the Jewish jubilee were. It was intended to cure four great political evils which oppressed that nation, and which have oppressed many nations since—viz., slavery, debt, chronic pauperism, and alienation of the land from the people. The Jewish jubilee was a system intended to abolish by anticipation all these four great evils. Every fiftieth year every man who had been a slave was set free; he could not be kept in slavery after that year of jubilee. Every one was then restored to freedom; the nation took a fresh start of freedom. Men became slaves for various reasons; they might have been captured in war, they might have sold themselves into slavery in the payment of debts, or in several other ways—but in the year of jubilee all were set free. There might have been an accumulation of debts which they were unable to pay off altogether, but at this jubilee debts were all cancelled. Chronic pauperism was to be cured by making certain provisions every seventh year and fiftieth year, by which those who had sunk through incapacity, or illness, or intemperance, or from whatever cause it might be—at this time they had an opportunity of starting again. It was not possible for any family to part with its hereditary property irrecoverably: at the year of jubilee all went back to its original owners. Such was the system; but there is no proof that it was ever carried out. Neither the Old Testament nor any other history affords the slightest evidence that these laws were ever observed as a whole. When they are examined, one can see such difficulties that it would require strong evidence to con-

vince us that such laws had worked at all. Still they remained on the statute-book, and therefore formed the ideal and the hope of the people; but the ideal never came. Why did it not come? Because these laws presupposed a condition of morality, of brotherliness, of good feeling among the people, which never existed. When laws are pitched in too high a key they become as it were dead laws. The laws do not precede morality; they follow it, they perpetuate, they register it. A nation has to raise its standard of morality; then the laws can be made which will perpetuate that morality; but you cannot make the laws first. It would be of no use for any Government now to make some law far above the standard of existing morality, because the law could not be worked. That was the case in Judah. It would presuppose a willingness to part with their property, a willingness to give up their slavery; it would presuppose willing industry again on the part of the people, and a greater level of mental and moral equality among them than ever existed; and so the law remained simply a dead letter. (*J. M. Wilson, M.A.*) *The jubilee spirit in Christianity*:—The Jewish jubilee was a legislation which never worked. Let us see what Christianity has done instead in the way of social reform. 1. Christianity has abolished slavery. Not by preaching direct political action, but by preaching the equality of all men as children of God. It has given men a new interest in one another, and a new relationship to one another, secretly transforming human character, so that slavery became impossible and melted away as ice—which will not melt under blows—melts before the sun. 2. If, again, you consider how cruelly debtors were oppressed, you will see how wonderfully that has been changed by the influence of Christ. Some of the best Romans that ever lived complacently consigned their debtors to slavery; and in other countries debtors were imprisoned and their lives rendered hopelessly miserable; but Christianity has greatly altered such things, and has compelled mankind to treat debtors with humanity. 3. The evil of chronic pauperism still faces us, and we can see no conceivable method of getting rid of it, except by a wider spread of true Christian feeling among the whole population. What else can we look to? Legislation? How can legislation do it? Legislation will not make people industrious, and skilful, and self-restraining. Nothing else but Christian principles of love and virtue will do that. 4. Alienation of land. Legislation could not completely get rid of this evil, for the simple reason that the nation is not yet good enough. If to-day there were three acres and a cow given to every man in England, before ten years, or even one year, had elapsed there would be some with thirty acres and ten cows, and the rest with none. The nation has not sufficiently advanced in morality, industry, and self-control for such an equality to exist, and the attempt to force it would only produce idleness. But reform will come in the way Christ indicated: it will come from the inner spirit. When men become better, then happiness and prosperity will naturally follow. There is no cure for the evils of this world—its competition, and crushing, and failure—except this inner reform of the spirit, the faith in Christ, and the love of God and of man. Like all God's laws, it works slowly; but it is sure, and in the end it will bring about that for which it was framed. (*Ibid.*) *The joy of acquiring liberty*:—In the dark days of American slavery, a very fine Mulatto woman and her nearly white boy were raffled for. Two kind men paid a share each for the woman and her boy, so that they might have two chances for their freedom. After all the others who had a share in that lottery had thrown the dice, the poor woman was so overpowered by hopes, fears, and solicitude, that she could not throw for herself. Her boy, therefore, threw for her, and was unsuccessful. Then the boy had to throw for himself, and there many hopes and prayers that he might win. And he did, and the joy of the mother and son, on acquiring their liberty, was indescribable. So Jewish parents and their children rejoiced in the year of jubilee as they went forth from bondage to liberty, and from poverty to posseses the inheritance of their fathers. But, when "Christ makes us free," by "the truth," from spiritual ignorance, sin, Satan, and evils, into "the glorious liberty of the children of God," with its precious and eternal heritage of blessings, we then feel—

> "A day, an hour of virtuous liberty,
> Is worth a whole eternity of bondage." (*Henry R. Burton.*)

Nazareth and its good news:—The Lord here, quoting Isaiah, states His mission to be the preaching of the acceptable year of Jehovah. Let us inquire what the acceptable year of the Lord is, and how He preached it. I. THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD. This expression corresponds to that of Paul, "the accepted time," "the day

of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2); and means that there is a time when God accepts or shows favour to the sinner. It is what Ezekiel calls "the time of love"; what our Lord calls "the time of visitation" (Luke xix. 44); and what we usually call "the day of grace." Every era has its character, and the character of this is "grace." In it the long-suffering of God gets full vent to itself, and His almighty love is pouring itself down upon an unworthy world. II. HOW CHRIST PREACHED THIS ACCEPTABLE YEAR. This preaching of the acceptable year was to run through His whole life and ministry. 1. In His person He preached it; for His mere presence upon earth among sinful men was an announcement of it. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 2. He preached it by what He did. He went about healing all manner of sicknesses, and all manner of diseases. 3. He preached it by what He did *not* do. He did no deeds of terror, and wrought no miracles of wrath or woe. 4. He preached it by what He said. His words were all of grace; and even the sharp rebukes against scribes and Pharisees were the warnings of grace, not of wrath. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The work of Christ*:—I. OUR FIRST INQUIRY SHALL BE RESPECTING THE CHARACTER OR CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PERSONS DESCRIBED IN MY TEXT. It seems clear that this whole passage is metaphorical! for, allowing that a literal sense may be applied to parts of it with propriety, yet there are other parts which will not bear that sense. These images serve only to present, under different aspects, the sad state of those whom Christ came to deliver, and the blessed effects of that deliverance. 1. Their actual condition is represented as very deplorable; for what image can express greater misery than that of captives treated with the barbarous rigour of those times; immured in dungeons; loaded with fetters; bruised with stripes; perhaps like Zedekiah, the unfortunate king of Judah, deprived of sight as well as liberty. Yet this is a very just image of every man's condition who is under the power of sin. 2. Yet it is possible that there may be this state of sin, comprehending all these awful circumstances of misery and danger, without any concern about it, or even any distinct perception of it. This, however, is by no means the case with the persons here represented. They are not only captives, but they are broken-hearted in their bondage. All such expressions denote the true Christian temper, that which our Lord inculcated under the names of humility and poverty of spirit; and which both Christ and His apostles meant by the more significant word, "repentance." It includes a consciousness of demerit; a due sense of the evil of sin. This frame of mind may comprehend different degrees, or even kinds, of uneasiness, on account of sin. The metaphors which are here used illustrate these. It is one kind of distress to feel the pressure of poverty; it is another to endure the yoke of bondage; and a third, to lose the organ of sight. II. BLESSED BE GOD, HOWEVER, THERE ARE SOME WHO KNOW THEIR UNWORTHINESS, AND ARE HUMBLED ON ACCOUNT OF IT. These are the persons intended in my text, and such will gladly hear the gracious office which the Redeemer sustains to save them. This office is here delineated under several views. Is the state of sinners described as a state of great suffering? Christ brings them deliverance. As a state of bondage? He grants them liberty. Under the image of a broken heart? He communicates peace and consolation. Or under that of poverty? He tells them of recovered birthrights, and of a glorious inheritance above. Let us briefly consider these several offices. 1. Christ takes away the sin of those who truly repent and apply to Him by faith. 2. They are freed also from the power of sin. 3. It is the office of the Saviour to impart peace to the soul. 4. The title to a glorious inheritance is also conferred by Him upon those that believe. As in the year of jubilee every inheritance which had been sold reverted to its original owners; as every debt was cancelled and every captive set free—in the same way does the gospel proclaim a jubilee to repenting sinners. It institutes a new order of things for them; with new resources, and hopes, and privileges, and prospects. (*J. Venn, M.A.*) *The gospel jubilee*:—Such is the tendency of Christianity; such are the gifts of the Holy Ghost poured out upon the Church; and such is the spiritual jubilee; such the acceptable year of the Lord which Christianity proclaims to the world and the misery thereof. I. CONSIDER THE JUBILEE OF THE GOSPEL AS REGARDS THE FIRST PROMULGATION by Christ and His apostles. II. THE PROGRESSIVE CONVERSION OF MANKIND. III. THE MISERY AND SORROW THIS DISPENSATION HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL FROM TIME TO TIME IN RELIEVING. The tendency of Christianity and the gospel is to infuse, in proportion as it is understood, brotherly love, and sympathy with every effort which is made for the relief of individual suffering, as well as for the emancipation of the world. It is directly opposed to oppression and cruelty; it abstains from questions of earthly politics and disputes about particular forms of

government; it avoids all factious and dangerous innovations, and goes to the support of existing order, which, although it may in some cases be defective, is infinitely better than the wild disorder of uncontrolled passion and fierce self-love. It therefore enjoins obedience to the magistrates, and calls upon its followers to "fear God and honour the king," giving thanks always for all things unto God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I apprehend the union of these two points shows the tendency of Christianity to dispose all governors, propagators of laws, and all in authority, towards all measures of relief, justice, equity, and the consideration of the poor. It is the means of communicating every blessing to society, and insensibly tends to break every yoke, and set right every disorder. (*Bishop Daniel Wilson.*) *Preaching the gospel:*—I. Let us notice that JESUS CHRIST BEGAN HIS WORK IN NAZARETH WITH A QUOTATION FROM THE BIBLE. The source of all Christian power is in "preaching the Word." II. It is well to keep in mind that WE HAVE A MUCH LARGER BIBLE THAN JESUS HAD. We have the New Testament as well as the Old Testament: what He spoke as well as what He expounded. It is not what we say about the truth that helps and saves souls, but the truth. III. When people come to us for help, the thing to do is simply to FIND SOMETHING IN THE WORD FOR THEM. IV. CURIOUS AND DIFFICULT QUESTIONS THAT CHRISTIANS ASK HAVE THE SIMPLEST SORT OF ANSWERS IN THE WORD. As to grounding our hope firmly, Matt. vii. 24 is better than anything we can say ourselves. To encourage a man who fears ridicule, Mark x. 48 is excellent and effective. Exodus ii. 1–10 is a far better illustration of God's care for children than that stock story of the "little child in the corn-field." Once a member of our Church came to me to ask what she ought to try to look at when she shut her eyes in prayer. And all I could think of was to read her two or three verses about Bartimæus. A smile ran over her whole face as she rose suddenly, and said, "Good morning." Then I asked whether her question had got the answer. "Oh, yes!" she replied, gratefully; "I ought to see what the blind man did before his eyes were opened; he saw he was blind, and he seemed to see Jesus there waiting to be prayed to." V. WE MUST BE EXCEEDINGLY FAMILIAR WITH GOD'S WORD in order to use it skilfully. The times arrive often very suddenly in which we are called to make answer or to give advice; and to work powerfully one must work ingeniously. The gifted authoress of "English Hands and Hearts" once saw a man close by the brink of a river, and believed he was going to commit suicide. It seemed perfectly clear to her that if she should appear to suspect his purpose, he would avoid her, and wait till she passed out of sight. So she quietly kept on her walk, but, as it approached the spot where he was watching, she said aloud, as if just to herself, Psalm xlvi. 4. It was all she could do. Two years afterwards a speaker in Exeter Hall related the incident in his own sad life, and told how the text saved him and converted him, and now he added the wish that he might some time know the Christian woman who had done him the favour. So they met and clasped hands, and thanked God together. But how did she happen to know the right verse, then? Such a thing did not *happen:* that lady knew her Bible thoroughly. VI. We should be PATIENT AND HELPFUL IN INSTRUCTING OTHERS how and where to find the proper passages for Christian effort. VII. We can find here the EXPLANATION WE SEEK FOR SOME FAILURES that appear so mysterious, AND FOR SOME SUCCESSES that are so admirable. Those Christians have done most service who have in every instance trusted the Word for the power of the truth in it. Dr. James W. Alexander put in one of his letters, near the end of his career, the statement that, if he were to live his public life over again, he would dwell more upon the familiar parts and passages of the Bible, like the story of the ark, the draught of fishes, or the parable of the prodigal son. That is, he would preach more of the Word of God in its pure, clear utterances of truth for souls. When the saintly Dr. Cutler of Brooklyn died, the Sunday School remembered that he used to come in every now and then during the years of his history and repeat just a single verse from the superintendent's desk; and the next Lord's Day after the funeral they marched up in front of it in a long line, and each scholar quoted any of the texts that he could recollect. The grown people positively sat there and wept, as they saw how much there was of the Bible in the hearts of their children which this one pastor had planted. Yet he was a very timid and old-fashioned man; he said he had no gift at talking to children; he could only repeat God's Word. Is there anybody now who is ready to say that was not enough for some good? (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Christ the fulfilment of prophecy:*—On an artist's table some colours are lying. You glance at them, and that is all, for to you they have no meaning. A month after you come in, and you

are attracted by a beautiful picture. The picture has been painted with the colours you saw before, but how different is it now when they are harmoniously blended. So Jesus Christ gathers into harmony in Himself the before ill-understood prophecies and types of the Old Testament; only then we see what they fully mean. It is like the children's picture-block puzzles. Take the pieces from the box, and you have a number of blocks of all sizes, colours, and shapes. Build them back, carefully fitting them into each other, and when each is in its proper place, you find you have a complete picture. So the types and prophecies are only understood when they are fitted into Christ. Jesus, then, takes some pictures from the Book of Isaiah, and declares that these show forth His mission. The first picture is that of a messenger bringing good news to the poor—news of a kingdom prepared for them; the next shows a message of consolation brought to those in sorrow; the third is the picture of one promising liberty to some men shut up in a narrow cell; in the fourth a blind man is receiving his sight at the healing touch of a prophet; in the fifth the bonds are being struck from the feet of men whose limbs have been bruised by the irons; and the sixth shows the open gate of heaven. (*Sunday School Times.*) *A full text*:—When we have once measured these words, we shall be reminded of the tent of the Arab chief: when folded it could be carried in his hand, but when spread it was wide enough to shelter his whole tribe. A study of the incident under which they were spoken in the synagogue of Nazareth is peculiarly rewarding, because it looks off in so many directions; into remote Jewish history, into present customs, to the nature of the gospel, to its manifold methods of working, to the heart of God, to the inspiration of Christ; and, finally, it discloses the weakness and evil of human nature when its prejudices and traditional thoughts are assaulted. It is as rich in material and association that a book could legitimately be made from it. It would be a book historical, ecclesiastical, political, theological, ethical, psychological, and the treatment would not be forced. (*T. T. Munger.*) *Deliverance both physical and moral*:—The peculiar feature of this quotation from Isaiah, which Christ makes His own, is its doubleness. "The poor"—but men are poor in condition and in spirit. "The captives"—but men may be in bondage under masters or circumstances, and also under their own sin. "The blind"—but men may be blind of eye and also in spiritual vision. "The bruised"—but men are bruised in the struggles of this rough world, and also by the havoc of their own evil passions. Which did Christ mean? Both, but chiefly the moral, for He always struck through the external forms of evil to the moral root, from which it springs, and of whose condition it is the general exponent. And He always passed on to the spiritual end to which external betterment points. He was no reformer playing about the outward forms of evil—hunger, poverty, disease, oppression—giving ease and relief for the moment. He does indeed deal with these, but He puts under His work a moral foundation, and crowns it with a spiritual consummation. Dealing with these, He was all the while inserting the spiritual principle which He calls "faith." Unless He can do this He is nearly indifferent whether He works or not. If you cannot heal a man's spirit, it is a small thing to heal his body. If you cannot make a man rich in his heart and thought, it is a slight matter to relieve his poverty. At the same time, Christ will not separate the two, for they are the two sides of one evil thing. Poverty and disease and misery mostly spring out of moral evil. They are not the limitations of the finite nature, but are the fangs of the serpent of sin. . . . And so Christ sets Himself as the Deliverer from each, the origin and the result, the sin at the root, and the misery which is its fruitage. (*Ibid.*) *Christ the true Liberator and Enlightener of the world*:—Bartholdi's gigantic statue of "Liberty Enlightening the World" occupies a fine position on Bedloes Island, which commands the approach to New York Harbour. It holds up a torch, which is to be lit at night by an immense electric light. The statue was cast in portions in Paris. The separate pieces were very different in appearance, and, taken apart, of uncouth shape. It was only when all were brought together, each in its right place, that the complete design was apparent. Then the omission of any one would have left the work imperfect. In this it was an emblem of Holy Scripture. We do not always see the object of different portions; nevertheless each has its place, and the whole is a magnificent statue of Jesus Christ, who is the true "Liberty enlightening the world," casting illuminating rays across the dark rocky ocean of time, and guiding anxious souls to the desired haven. (*Freeman.*) *Christ alone can heal the broken-hearted*:—I could build a Corlears engine, I could paint a Raphael's "Madonna," I could play a Beethoven's "Heroic Symphony" as easily as this world can comfort

a broken heart. And yet you have been comforted. How was it done? Did Christ come to you and say: "Get your mind off this; go and breathe the fresh air; plunge deeper into business"? No. There was a minute when He came to you, perhaps in the watches of the night—perhaps in your place of business, perhaps along the street—and He breathed something into your soul that gave peace, rest, infinite quiet, so that you could take out the photograph of the departed one and look into the eyes and face of the dear one and say: "It is all right; she is better off; I would not call her back. Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast comforted my poor heart. I thought I should go crazy for a while, but the rough sea has become the smooth harbour. Oh, how hard it was for me to give her up, and I shall never be the man that I was before; but the Lord gave and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." There are Christian parents here to-night who are willing to testify to the power of this gospel to comfort. Your son had just graduated and was going into business, and the Lord took him. Or your daughter had just left the young ladies' seminary, and you thought she was going to be a useful woman and of long life; but the Lord took her, and you were tempted to say: "All this culture for nothing." Or the little child came home from school with the hot fever that stopped not for the agonized prayer, or for the skilful physician, and the little child was taken. Or the babe was lifted out of your arms by some quick epidemic, and you stood wondering why God ever gave you that child at all, if so soon He was to take it away. And yet you are not repining, you are not fretful, you are not fighting against God. What has enabled you to stand all the trial? "Oh," you say, "I took the medicine that God gave my sick soul; in my distress I threw myself at the feet of a sympathising Saviour, and when I was too weak to pray, or to look up, He breathed into me a peace that I think must be the foretaste of that heaven where there is neither tear, nor a farewell, nor a grave." Come, all ye who have been out to the grave to weep there—come, all ye comforted souls, get up off your knees. Is there power in this gospel to soothe the heart? Is there power in this religion to quiet the worst paroxysm of grief? Tell me. There comes up an answer to comforted widowhood, and orphanage, and childlessness, saying: "Ay, ay, we are witnesses!" (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Christ the Healer of the broken-hearted:*—I. THE CONDITION OF THE PERSONS SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT is one of extreme distress and misery. They are broken-hearted. All their happiness is gone. All their hopes are blasted. Nothing is left to them but wretchedness and despair. 1. It implies that they have a sorrowful consciousness of the existence of this evil within them. 2. They are also dissatisfied with their condition, and earnestly desire deliverance from it. Like men oppressed with sickness, they are not in a state in which they can be at ease. 3. They are sensible likewise of the deadly nature of the disease under which they are suffering. They know that it is a mortal disease; not merely painful and loathsome, but dangerous and fatal. 4. To this sorrowful consciousness of their sinfulness, this dissatisfaction with their condition, and this dread of futurity, is added a despair of healing their spiritual diseases by any means of their own. II. But why does the Physician of souls thus deal with us? Why cannot He apply His healing balm at once to our wounds? WHY MUST WE BE BROUGHT INTO SO DISCONSOLATE A STATE, BEFORE WE ARE MADE ACQUAINTED WITH PARDON AND PEACE? 1. In answer to this inquiry we may observe, that God thus afflicts His penitent children, in order that sin may be embittered to them; that they may have a heartfelt knowledge of the misery and shame which it is able to produce, and thus learn to regard it with hatred and fear. 2. The sinner is made broken-hearted, that he may be willing to be healed by Christ in His way and on His terms. 3. A further reason why the returning sinner is thus torn and smitten, may be, that the deliverance vouchsafed to him may be more highly valued. 4. It may also be the will of God to give the penitent a deep sense of his wretchedness, in order that the great Physician of his soul may be more warmly loved. III. Let us proceed to consider THE ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH THE DECLARATION BEFORE US IS CALCULATED TO AFFORD TO EVERY BROKEN-HEARTED MOURNER. 1. It plainly implies that it is the will of God that the broken-hearted should be healed. He has sent a Messenger from heaven to bring peace to them. 2. The declaration in the text teaches us also, that God has given to Christ authority and power to heal the broken-hearted. 3. The declaration before us assures us, too, that Christ is willing to heal all the broken-hearted who apply for His aid; that He is ready to exercise the authority and power which He has received. Here, then, is a rich source of encouragement to every mourner. The God against whom he has sinned, has sent a Messenger from heaven to heal him; and He whom

He has sent, rejoices to bind up the broken-hearted. He has infinite compassion to pity, as well as infinite power to relieve. A review of our subject points out to us, first, the persons to whom the ministers of the gospel are to administer comfort. 2. The text affords us, secondly, a test by which we may try our spiritual comfort. 3. We may infer also from the text, that true contrition of heart is one of the greatest blessings which God can bestow on man. 4. The text reminds us, lastly, of the sin and folly of despair. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*)

Vers. 22–24. **Ye will surely say unto Me this proverb, Physician, heal Thyself.**—*The treatment of Christ by the Nazarenes*:—1. No man should be undervalued on account of humble parentage. If a man behave well himself, even the sins of his parents ought not to be imputed to him as a fault, much less ought their lowly condition in life. Indeed, the greater the obscurity from which a man has emerged, and the more numerous and formidable the difficulties with which he has had to struggle, the more praise is due to him for aiming at honourable distinction. Let us be ready to acknowledge ability, and to esteem worth, wherever found. And let not those who have risen in life be ashamed of their humble parentage, or undervalue or forget their kindred and early friends. 2. We should not neglect the lessons taught in the proverb, "No prophet is accepted in his own country, or of his own kindred." Honourable exceptions there may be to this; but it states what is generally the case among men. (1) Prejudice against those who have risen above the station in which they were born. (2) Envy at their rising above one's own position. (3) Curiosity, and desire for novelty influence men against those they are well acquainted with. What comes from a great distance is generally reckoned of great value. 3. The sinfulness of objecting to the more extensive diffusion of religious privileges, and of refusing to rejoice in the good of other countries, under the pretence that all our exertions should be limited to our own country. Home has the first, but not the only claim. We ought not to shut our hearts against any call to attend to the spiritual welfare of men. There is a tide in the affairs of men and of the Church—a tide, not of chance, but of providential influence and arrangement; that tide of favourable circumstances we cannot command; it is our duty, therefore, to avail ourselves of its flow, lest it ebb away, and the opportunity be lost. And as neither at Nazareth, nor at Capernaum, was the ministry of our Lord without some success, so may we hope that no Scriptural attempts, whether at a distance or at our own door, will ultimately prove altogether in vain. 4. Let us beware of resembling in any way the Nazarenes in their more violent hatred of Christ, and of the truth, here described; and beware also of the causes which led to that hatred. They began by cavilling at His plans, and ended by raging and setting themselves against the Lord and His anointed. They were too proud to submit to the righteousness of God. This spirit is rife still. Let us remember we have no "rights" with respect to God; let us gladly fall in with His plans, and thankfully accept of His offered mercy. Submission to free grace is the only way of safety, and of holiness and comfort; it changes the slavish and mercenary spirit into the spirit of the freedman and child; and the obedience of the life will be secured as the cheerful homage of the reconciled and grateful heart. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *The preaching of Christ a pattern for His ministers*:—I. THE CHARM OF CHRIST'S PREACHING. 1. He was not simply a human teacher. Hence the tone of authority which He alone might assume. 2. Preaching was in His hands altogether a new thing. 3. A singular gracefulness in His manner. 4. Popular style of discourse. 5. Evangelical doctrine, suited to men's needs. He spoke of those Divine truths which are the hope of guilty captives, and the balm of the broken-hearted; He brought tidings of great joy, messages of mercy suited to their nature as intelligent, immortal, responsible creatures, and at the same time to their circumstances as lost sinners. II. Some of the chief QUALITIES REQUISITE TO SECURE SUCCESS to a human ministry. 1. It should give a prominent exhibition to the great peculiarities of the gospel. Redemption through the Cross of Christ must be the preacher's constant theme. 2. This prominent exhibition of the Cross should always be combined with a tender solicitude for the salvation of souls. Eternal consequences are at stake. With all earnestness the message, therefore, must be urged. 3. Simplicity of style. Brilliant images and pompous language may excite wonder, but will not instruct or convince. Plain truths should be conveyed in plain words. Illustrations may be used, but only such as add clearness to the discourse. III. BY WHAT MEANS SUCH A MINISTRY MAY BE FORMED AND SUSTAINED. 1. A profound acquaintance with the gospel, in its adaptation to all the

varieties of human character and condition. 2. Entire consecration to the ministerial office. 3. Eminence in personal piety. 4. The habitual recognition of scriptural encouragements and motives, and especially the anticipation of the final results of the ministry, will not fail to exert a beneficial influence on the mind of the minister. (*E. Steane.*) *The rejection of God's prophets and its results*:—I. 1. The spirit of detraction is the surest sign of a small and vulgar soul. 2. Jesus goes on to anticipate the objection with which His opponents will meet this announcement of Himself, and in which they will demand a miracle as proof of His claim. To such a spirit He could vouchsafe no sign; indeed, miracles would have been no sign to such. 3. At the same time He would warn them that God ever finds work for His prophets to do. If their own countrymen will not receive them, there are others who will. The widows and the lepers of Israel may not care to be comforted or healed by them, but there are widows in Sarepta and lepers in Syria who enter upon the blessings which are despised by the children of the kingdom. 4. The passive rejection of the Christ cannot for long remain passive. They who reject Him passively are miserably conscious that it is He who is rejecting them. Roused to anger (which is, in reality, terror), they actively rebel against Him, and seek to destroy Him. II. Not infrequently we are conscious that the voice of God is speaking to us through one whom we have known familiarly, who, it may be, is inferior to us in age or worldly position, or whom in past years we ourselves have patronized. There is a temptation to weaken the force of the call by depreciating the instrument through which it comes. (*Canon Vernon Hutton, M.A.*) *Self-healing*:—In one of his familiar epistles to Rome's greatest orator, then dejected at the loss of Tullia, Sulpicius made this appeal: "Do not forget that you are Cicero; one who has been used always to prescribe for and give advice to others; do not imitate those paltry physicians who pretend to cure other people's diseases, yet are not able to cure their own; but suggest rather to yourself the same lesson which you would give in the same case." Dr. South asks in one of his sermons, adverting to the study of physic, "Do not many shorten their days, and lose their own health, while they are learning to restore it to others?" But the proverb invites to a larger than merely professional application. Selden, in his Table-talk, says, "Preachers say, Do as I say, not as I do. But if a physician had the same disease upon him that I have, and he should bid me do one thing, and he do quite another, could I believe him?" The practice of men, says Sir Thomas Browne, in his "Religio Medici," holds not an equal part with, yea, often runs contrary to, their theory: "we naturally know what is good, but naturally pursue what is evil; the rhetoric wherewith I persuade another cannot persuade myself." Byron chuckled crowingly over Beccaria, when he was told in Italy of that philosopher, who had published "such admirable things against the punishment of death," that as soon as his book was out, his servant, "having read it, I presume," stole his watch, and the master while correcting the proofs of a second edition, did all he could to have the man hanged. Angelo, in "Measure for Measure," with all his fair show in the flesh, of superiority to it, was no such perfect practitioner. Rather he was to be consigned to the category of those "ungracious pastors" of whom Ophelia spoke, when she thanked Laertes for his excellent counsel and hoped withal he would abide by it in his own life and conversation.

> "But, good my brother,
> Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
> Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
> Whilst, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
> Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
> And recks not his own read." (*Francis Jacox.*)

The art of healing:—Our Lord's choice of this proverb in reference to Himself was peculiarly appropriate, when we remember how large a portion of his work consisted of healing the sick. It is probable that already His fame had gone abroad, not only as a teacher but as a healer, and that the wonderful cures which He had effected caused His name to be in all men's mouths, and led to the expectation in Nazareth to which He referred, that He would do in His own home what He had already been doing elsewhere. All through His career He represents Himself as the great physician. He is the wise physician who can combine with his knowledge of the body the more subtle knowledge of the soul. Few men depend for effective work more upon their character than doctors. Perhaps the only class of persons whose labour becomes useless when character is departed, to a more marked

degree than that of physicians, is that of ministers of religion. Of course there have been cases, well-known to fame, of physicians failing utterly in the moral side of their nature, and yet, by reason of a peculiar genius and indomitable energy, still gaining a name, and becoming wealthy and influential. But such persons are rather the marks and beacons whereby we must direct our way, and avoid the dangerous places where we may become utterly wrecked. As a general, almost universal rule, the reputation of the physician must be spotless. He must know no fear and be subject to no reproach. Where can be found a better strength and inspiration for such noble life than in the religion of Jesus Christ? (*Ll. D. Bevan, LL.D.*) *The proverb applied to our relation to foreign missions*:—Is it not a fact, and is not the slow progress of mission-work among the heathen to be accounted for, to some extent, by the fact, that we, and other so-called Christian nations supply in our relations to heathen peoples, and in the aspect which much of our own national and social life presents to them, the very worst commentary imaginable upon the truths which our missionaries teach them? Can we expect to be able to win the world for Christ so long as it is evident that we have not submitted ourselves to His gracious yoke, and do not carry into practice the precepts He enjoined? Have not many of these heathen nations a right to turn round upon us, when we send them missionaries, attack their systems of religion, and make long prayers for their conversion, and to address us in the words of our text, "Physician, heal thyself"? 1. Take first the figure we cut in the matter of our international relations. 2. Are we as a mercantile community possessed of clean hands in the matter of the fabrics we send out into the markets which these people's necessities provide. 3. What do Chinese, and Hindoos, and Japanese, find among us, in our own land, when they visit us? Should we have any right to resent the taunt, if, when we bid them embrace our religion, they should point the finger of scorn at us, and say, "Physician, heal thyself"? 4. But it may be said, "It is a merely nominal Christian nation or society which exhibits these wide and gross departures from the spirit and practice of the Christian religion. It is the Christian Church which sends out missionaries to the heathen. Well, what is likely to be the feeling with which intelligent heathens regard the attempts of the Christian Church to convert them? Are they not sure to smile at our efforts, and to say to us, "Heal yourselves before you undertake to cure us. Apply the knife to the cancer which festers at the heart of your own society, before you undertake the amelioration of the condition of ours; convert your own countrymen first and then shall you have free access to ours; then will you prove to us, in the most convincing way, that your religion is all that you profess it to be"? 5. Have not our denominational rivalries been often transplanted, and set in operation among peoples who cannot understand the merits of our disputes, or the grounds of our contending polities; and have they not inclined them, confused and confounded as they must be by distinctions and claims which are to them incomprehensible, to wash their hands of the responsibility of deciding between so many conflicting opinions, and to say to us, "Learn to agree among yourselves as to what your religion is: learn, above all, to manifest more of its spirit in your relations to one another, before bringing it to *us*, and trying to persuade *us* to accept it"? 6. What, then, is the practical outcome of all this? Not that we should withdraw a single missionary from his work, or relax a single aggresive endeavour, or reduce by a single penny the amount of our contributions to the missionary cause. No! let us rather redouble our zeal and multiply our gifts. But above all let us see to it, that as a people, as Churches, as members of Christ's Church, we no longer belie our teachings and profession by our example and our life. (*J. R. Bailey.*) *To the inconsistent Christian*:—I. BY WHOM ARE THE INCONSISTENCIES OF CHRISTIANS CHIEFLY DENOUNCED? 1. By infidels. 2. By rationalizing believers. 3. By eminent Christians. II. FOR WHAT PURPOSE ARE THE INCONSISTENCIES OF CHRISTIANS DENOUNCED? 1. To invalidate the evidence of the Divine origin of Christianity. 2. To bring discredit on evangelical religion. 3. To elevate the standard of Christian attainment. III. CHRISTIANS ARE NOT SO INCONSISTENT AS THEY ARE REPRESENTED TO BE. 1. All are not Christians who usurp the name. 2. All Christians are not responsible for the shortcomings even of genuine Christians. 3. All Christians are men, and in trying them by the standard of their religion, the same allowance must be made for them as for other men. 4. Christians should be judged by their general conduct, and not by individual actions. 5. Christians should be compared with men who are their peers in everything except their religion. IV. THE INCONSISTENCIES OF CHRISTIANS FURNISH NO VALID OBJECTION AGAINST THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. It does not recommend,

or palliate, or defend them. 2. It makes ample provision for their removal by the doctrines it teaches, by the precepts it delivers, by the motives it presents, by the spiritual influence it promises. 3. It has produced many of the finest specimens of human character the world, throughout the whole course of its history, has ever witnessed. 4. It has exercised an indirect influence, of a most elevating description, on multitudes who are strangers to its saving power. 5. It has exercised on its most inconsistent disciples an ameliorating efficacy, to which no system of philosophy or religion can adduce parallels. V. THE INCONSISTENCIES OF CHRISTIANS FURNISH NO VALID OBJECTION TO THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE, AS THEY ARE CALLED. 1. These doctrines leave all the usual arguments for a holy life untouched. 2. They remove that invincible obstruction to a holy life which arises from a sense of guilt, and from a self-righteous and superstitious attempt to earn, by personal merit, pardon and acceptance. 3. They furnish, in the love of God in Christ, the most powerful motive to a holy life that has ever been urged. 4. They secure an adequate supply of the influence of the Holy Spirit. VI. THE GRIEF WHICH THE INCONSISTENCIES OF CHRISTIANS SHOULD AWAKEN IN FELLOW-CHRISTIANS. 1. Because inconsistent professors bring dishonour on the names of God and of the Saviour. 2. Because inconsistent professors lower the general standard of Christian attainment. 3. Because inconsistent professors hang as a dead weight on the energies of the Church. 4. Because inconsistent professors are little likely to be brought to a saving acquaintance with Christ. VII. THE DUTIES WHICH THE INCONSISTENCIES OF CHRISTIANS IMPOSE ON THE FRIENDS OF CHRIST. 1. A habitual watchfulness over their conduct. 2. A conscientious discharge of relative duty. 3. A foregoing of certain rights and privileges for the good of others. 4. Thorough adoption of the great principles of Christianity. 5. Prayer. VIII. REAL INCONSISTENCIES OF CHRISTIANS. 1. It is inconsistent to live in the wilful and habitual practice of known sin. 2. It is inconsistent to pursue a doubtful course of action, without seeking to ascertain whether it is right or wrong. 3. It is inconsistent to conform to worldly habits of thinking and acting. 4. It is inconsistent to be chargeable with vices which respectable men of the world abhor. 5. It is inconsistent to be indifferent to the progress and prosperity of the cause of Christ. (*G. Brooks.*)

Ver. 26. **Save unto Sarepta.**—*Description of Sarepta* :—The ruins of Sarepta are scattered over the plain, at intervals, for more than a mile: one group is on the coast, and may be the remains of the ancient harbour. These lie on a tongue of land which forms a small bay, and pleasantly varies the monotony of the otherwise unbroken coast line. Fine crops brighten part of the plain around, though only the small village of Surafend, the modern representative of the ancient town, is actually surrounded by green. Sarepta was famous for its wine in the early Christian centuries, but it got its name in the Hebrew Bible—Zarpath—from its being in still older days a chief centre of the glass works of Phœnicia—the word meaning "melting-houses." It belonged to the territory of Sidon, and must have been a large place, if we may judge from the number of rock-tombs at the foot of the hills. Its supreme interest, however, to all Bible readers lies in its connection with the great Prophet Elijah. A place is still shown at the old harbour where a Christian Church once stood, on the alleged site of the widow's house in which the prophet lived. But no value is to be attached to such a localization, though the spot is still called "The Grave of Elijah," in the belief that he finally died there. During the reign of the Crusaders, Sarepta was strongly fortified, and made the seat of a bishop, who was subject to the Archbishop of Sidon; but as early as the end of the thirteenth century it had sunk into utter desolation. Legend has tried to identify it with the home of the Syrophœnician woman whose daughter Christ healed, but there is no ground for this fancy. Its fame must always rest, for Christians, on the noble lesson of faith in God taught by the prophet on the one hand, and by the great-hearted widow on the other. (*C. Geikie, D.D.*) *All men are thought of by God* :—There is a place in each mother's heart for every child that is given her, and do you not suppose there is a place in God's heart for every child that He has created? Do you not suppose that all men stand before Him plain, and individual, and distinct? Yes, you stand before God as if there were not another man in the universe. As men stand before us without mistake of identity, and as all that we think and feel of them we think and feel of them as individuals, so we stand before God, and all that He thinks and feels of us He thinks and feels of us as individuals. He calls every one of us by name, and He does it a great deal more than we know. How much does the child know of the

thoughts of the mother who sings and rocks its cradle while it sleeps, and breathes its name? When the child is gone from home for a visit or for school, how much does it know of the thoughts that are beaded and strung, pearl-like, before God, on its account, or of the frequency with which its name is uttered? If the child could follow its father's and mother's voice, in the closet and elsewhere, how often would it hear its own sweet name sounding all the way up to heaven! And if this is so with earthly parents, may we not suppose, when we remember the boundlessness of God's love, that there is not a child of His on which He does not bestow special thought and attention? (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Vers. 28, 31. **And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath.**—*Nazareth; or, Jesus rejected by His friends*:—I. WHO WERE THESE REJECTORS OF CHRIST? They have their types and representatives now. 1. They were those who were nearest related to the Saviour. They were the people of His own town. 2. They were those who knew most about Christ. The whole story of the wondrous Child was known to them. 3. They were people who supposed that they had a claim upon Christ. They no doubt argued, "He is a Nazareth man, and of course He is in duty bound to help Nazareth." II. WHY THEY THUS REJECT THE MESSIAH. 1. I should not wonder but what the groundwork of their dissatisfaction was laid in the fact that they did not feel themselves to be the persons to whom the Saviour claimed to have a commission. Observe, He said, in the eighteenth verse, that He was "anointed to preach the gospel to the poor." Now, the poorest ones in the synagogue may have felt pleased at that word; but as it was almost a maxim with the Jewish doctors that it did not signify what became of the poor—for few but the rich could enter heaven—the very announcement of a gospel for the poor must have sounded to them awfully democratical and extreme, and must have laid in their minds the foundation of a prejudice. Did not some of them say, "We have worn our phylacteries, and made broad the borders of our garments; we have not eaten except with washen hands; we have strained out all gnats from our wine; we have kept the fasts, and the feasts, and we have made long prayers, why should we feel any poverty of spirit?" Hence they felt there was nothing in Christ's mission for them. When He next mentioned the broken-hearted, they were not at all conscious of any need of a broken heart. They felt heart-whole, self-satisfied, perfectly content. What is the acceptable year of the Lord to us, if it is only for bruised captive ones? We are not such. At a glance you perceive, my brethren, the reason why in these days Jesus Christ is rejected by so many church-going and chapel-going people. 2. I entertain little doubt but what the men of Nazareth were angry with Christ because of His exceeding high claims. He said, "The spirit of Jehovah is upon Me." They started at that. And so men now reject Christ because He sets Himself too high, and asks more of them than they are willing to give. 3. Another reason might be found in the fact that they were not for receiving Christ until He had exhibited some great wonder. They craved for miracles. Their minds were in a sickly state. A young man yonder has said to himself, "If I had a dream, as I hear So-and-so had, or if there should happen to me some very remarkable event in providence, which should just meet my taste; or if I could feel to-day some sudden shock of I know not what, then I would believe." Thus you dream that my Lord and Master is to be dictated to by you! You are beggars at His gate, asking for mercy, and you must needs draw up rules and regulations as to how He shall give that mercy. 4. Again, and perhaps this time I may hit the head of the nail in some cases, though I suppose not in many in this place, part of the irritation which existed in the minds of the men of Nazareth was caused by the peculiar doctrine which the Saviour preached upon the subject of election. He laid it down that God had a right to dispense His favours just as He pleased, and that in doing so He often selected the most unlikely objects. They did not like this. The doctrine of free grace to the needy is ever a stumbling-block to men. 5. They loved not such plain personal speaking as the Saviour gave them. 6. They could not bear to hear Him hint that He meant to bless the Gentiles. III. And now, WHAT CAME OF IT? 1. They thrust the Saviour out of the synagogue, and then they tried to hurl Him down the brow of the hill. These were His friends, good, respectable people: who would have believed it of them? You saw that goodly company in the synagogue who sang so sweetly, and listened so attentively, would you have guessed that there was a murderer inside every one of their coats? It only needed the opportunity to bring the murderer out; for there they

are all trying to throw Jesus down the hill. We do not know how much devil there is inside any one of us; if we are not renewed and changed by grace, we are heirs of wrath even as others. 2. But what came of it? Why, though they thus thrust Him out, they could not hurt the Saviour. The hurt was all their own. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Men seldom see the great in what is about them*:—We ride without eyes under Greylock, and go to the White Mountains for sublimity. The moon in Venice, and the sky in Naples, have more charm than here at home. The weeds of other climates become our flowers, and our flowers seem to us but weeds. There is little heroism, little devotion and nobility on our square mile; there are no epics or lyrics of human deed and feeling sung in our streets; the great, the beautiful, the excellent, is at a distance. Why we think thus it may be hard to tell, unless it is from instinctive reverence on the one hand, and on the other because the realization of greatness makes us aware of our own littleness, and so provokes us to every danger. So that what we read of here is no strange history, but only an illustration of a daily fact: a great spirit rejected by friends and neighbours; it is only the carpenter's Son, the boy who grew up in the midst of us, and now, forsooth, claiming to be a prophet! And so they drive Him out of their city. (*T. T. Munger.*) *Cause of the Nazarenes' wrath*:—What was actually the cause of the sudden upboil of these men's wrath? It was that their self-esteem was wounded. Christ declared that only the humble and meek would be able to receive Him. Elijah was persecuted, and received only by one poor widow. Naaman was unworthy to be healed till he humbled himself to dip in despised Jordan. The men of Nazareth understood the inference. It was not flattering to their pride; they could not be fed and healed unless they became humble, and submitted to the Lord's Christ. This they would not do—and they cast Him out of their city. As with Christ, so with His Church, and with His messengers. As long as they preach a gospel which does not touch man's pride and lower his self-esteem, they wonder at the graciousness of the gospel; but the moment it bids them not to be wise in their own conceits, insists on submission of body, soul, and reason to Christ, and calls to a lowly walk and self-abasement, then men rise up against the Church, and its ministers, and against the true gospel of Christ, and would, if they could, cast it out of their city, and hurl it from their thoughts. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *Capernaum*:—It lay on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, and was, in Christ's day, a thriving, busy town. The highway to the sea, from Damascus to Ptolemais—now Acre—ran through it, bringing no little local traffic, and also opening the markets of the coast to the rich yield of the neighbouring farms, orchards, and vineyards, and the abundant returns of the fisheries of the lake. The townsfolk thus, as a rule, enjoyed the comfort and plenty we see in the homes of Peter and Matthew, and were even open to the charge of being "winebibbers and gluttonous," which implied generous entertainments They were proud of their town, and counted on its steady growth and unbounded prosperity, little dreaming of the ruin which would one day make even its site a question. (*Dr. Geikie.*) Dr. Robinson, Captain Conder, and others place the site of Capernaum at Khan Mingeh, a spot of unique interest and beauty. Captain Conder certainly adduces strong reasons in favour of this hypothesis. (*L. Oliphant.*) Not far from the banks of the Jordan stands Capernaum (now Tell-Hūm), and here we find ourselves in the very centre of the Lord's Galilean ministry. It was at Capernaum that He dwelt. This was the starting-point of His journeys, and to this He returned after going about from place to place doing good. (*E. Stapfer, D.D.*) *Blindness of prejudice*:—A lady who excelled in making wax flowers and fruit was often criticised severely by her friends, and her work decried, as she thought, unjustly. She convicted them by showing an apple, which they as usual found fault with, one as to the shape, another as to colour, and so on. When they had finished, the lady cut the apple and ate it. (*Baxendale's Anecdotes.*) *Overawed by the Spirit*:—The Rev. Charles G. Finney gives, in the words following, an account of the effects of a Christian look on a certain occasion:—"I once preached, for the first time, in a manufacturing village. The next morning I went into a manufacturing establishment to view its operations. As I passed into the weaving department, I beheld a great company of young women, some of whom, I observed, were looking at me and then at each other, in a manner that indicated a trifling spirit, and that they knew me. I, however, knew none of them. As I approached nearer to those who had recognized me, they seemed to increase in their manifestations of lightness of mind. Their levity made a peculiar impression upon me; I

felt it to my very heart. I stopped short and looked at them, I know not how, as my whole mind was absorbed with their guilt and danger. As I settled my countenance upon them, I observed that one of them became very much agitated. A thread broke. She attempted to mend it; but her hands trembled in such a manner that she could not do it. I immediately observed that the sensation was spreading, and had become universal among that class of triflers. I looked steadily at them, until one after another gave up, and paid no more attention to their looms. They fell on their knees, and the influence spread throughout the whole room. I had not spoken a word, as the noise of the looms would have prevented my being heard if I had. In a few minutes all work was abandoned, and tears and lamentations filled the room. At this moment the owner of the factory, who was himself an unconverted man, came in, accompanied, I believe, by the superintendent, who was a professed Christian. When the owner saw the state of things, he said to the superintendent, 'Stop the mill.' What he saw seemed to pierce him to the heart. 'It is more important,' he hurriedly remarked, 'that these souls should be saved than that this mill should run.' As soon as the noise of the machinery had ceased, the owner inquired, 'What shall we do? We must have a place to meet where we can receive instruction.' The superintendent replied, 'The mule-room will do.' The mules were run up out of the way, and all the hands were notified, and assembled in that room. We had a marvellous meeting. I prayed with them, and gave them such instructions as at the time they could bear. The Word was with power; and within a few days, as I was informed, nearly every hand in that great establishment, together with the owner, had hope in Christ." (*Bate's Influence of Mind on Mind.*) *Remarkable change in the conduct of a mob*:—A missionary who had been sent to a strange land to proclaim the "gospel of the kingdom of God" and who had passed through many hardships and was often in danger of losing his life, through the persecutions excited against him, came to a place where he had often before, at no small risk, preached Christ crucified. About fifty people who had received good impressions from the Word of God, assembled: he began his discourse; and after he had preached about thirty minutes, an outrageous mob surrounded the house, armed with different instruments of death, and breathing the most sanguinary purposes. The preacher then addressed his little flock to this effect, "These outrageous people seek not you but me, if I continue in the house, they will soon pull it down and we shall be all buried in its ruins, I will therefore in the name of God go out to them and you will be safe. As soon as the preacher made his appearance the savages became instantly as silent and as still as night: he walked forward and they divided to the right and to the left, leaving a passage about four feet wide for himself and a young man who followed him to walk in. The narrator who was present on the occasion goes on to say, This was one of the most affecting spectacles I ever witnessed, an infuriated mob without any visible cause (for the preacher spoke not one word) became in a moment as calm as lambs. They seemed struck with amazement bordering on stupefaction; they stared and stood speechless, and after they had fallen back to right and left to leave him a free passage, they were as motionless as statues. They assembled with the full purpose to destroy the man who came to show them the way of salvation, but he, passing through the midst of them, went his way. (*Dr. Adam Clarke.*)

Ver. 32. **For His word was with power.**—*The word and power*:—Witness the ministry of Chalmers. It is said that Professor Young, who occupied the chair of Greek in the university, on one occasion "was so electrified that he leaped up from his seat upon the bench near the pulpit, and stood, breathless and motionless, gazing at the preacher, until the burst was over, the tears all the while rolling down his cheeks." Dr. Wardlaw describes one scene he witnessed as follows:—"It was a transcendently grand, a glorious burst. The energy of the Doctor's action corresponded. Intense emotion beamed from his countenance. I cannot describe the appearance of his face better than by saying, as Foster said of Hall's, it was 'lighted up almost into a glare.' The congregation—in so far as the spell under which I was allowed me to observe them—were intensely excited, leaning forward in the pews like a forest bent under the power of the hurricane, looking steadfastly at the preacher and listening in breathless wonderment. One young man, apparently by his dress a sailor, started to his feet and stood till it was over. As soon as it was concluded there was (as invariably was the case at the close of the Doctor's bursts) a deep sigh, or rather a gasp for breath, accompanied by a

movement through the whole audience." (*Bishop Simpson.*) *His word was with power:*—We remember having heard a departed friend tell how, when a boy, he was taken by his father, one still, summer evening across the Northamptonshire fields—I believe it was to the little village of Thrapstone—to hear Robert Hall. It was one of those old village chapels, with the square galleries. As in the instance of Chalmers, the place was crowded with plain farmer folk and a sprinkling of intelligent ministers and gentry from the neighbourhood. The minister came in, a simple, heavy, but still impressive-looking man, one whose presence compelled you to look at him. In due course he announced his text, "The end of all things is at hand; be sober and watch." Quite unlike Chalmers, his voice was not shattering, but thin and weak. There was no action at all, or only a kind of nervous twitching of the fingers; more especially as the hand moved and rested upon the lower part of the back, where the speaker was suffering almost incessant pain. As he went on, beneath the deepening evening shades falling through the windows of the old chapel, his voice first chained and then charmed and fascinated his hearers one after another; the whole place seemed as if beneath a great spell. As he talked about "the end," the spell upon the people seemed to begin to work itself out into an awful, fearful restlessness; first one, then another, rose from their seats, and stood stretching forward with a kind of fright and wonder. Still there was no action, only the following on of that thin voice, with a marvellous witchery of apt and melodious words, but through them "the end of all things" sounded like some warning bell. More people rose, stretching forward. Many of those who rose first, as if they felt some strange power upon them, they knew not what, got up and stood upon their seats until, when the great master ceased, closing his passionate and pathetic accents, the whole audience was upon its feet, intensely alive with interest, as if each one had heard in the distance the presages and preludes of the coming end, and felt that it was time to prepare. My friend used to speak of that never-forgotten moment, that summer evening in the old chapel as one of the most memorable of his life. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *Spiritual power known only by its effects:*—Nor is it the only exhibition of power. Consider the chemical affinity that draws together the acids and alkalies. Think of the magnetic power which makes the steel filings, though in the midst of dust and rubbish and clippings of tin and brass, leave them all and fly up and kiss the magnet. It touches the pivoted needle, and men and treasures are secure upon the stormy ocean by its unerring guidance. The winds blow ever so fiercely; the waves roll ever so furiously; the vessel pitches as though it would founder; and yet that strange influence, unseen, unheard, unfelt, holds the needle in its place. Who can tell what is power? We see it in its effects; we measure it in its results. (*Bishop Simpson.*) *The presence of Christ a source of power:*—There is a beautiful legend of St. Chrysostom. He had been educated carefully; was a man of culture, and devoted to his calling; and yet in his earlier ministry he was not remarkable for his success. At one time he had what seemed to be a vision. He thought he was in the pulpit, and in the chancel and round about him were holy angels. In the midst of them and directly before him was the Lord Jesus; and he was to preach to the congregation assembled beyond. The vision or the reverie deeply affected his spirit. The next day he ascended the pulpit he felt the impression of the scene. He thought of the holy angels as if gathered around him; of the blessed Saviour as directly before him—as listening to His words, and beholding His Spirit. He became intensely earnest; and from that day forward a wonderful power attended his ministrations. Multitudes gathered around him wherever he preached. Though he had the simple name of John while he lived, the ages have called him Chrysostom, the "golden-mouthed." (*Ibid.*) *The causes considered that made our Lord's word with power:*—I shall endeavour to show, therefore, that the word of our blessed Lord was always attended with power—I. From the truth and disinterestedness of His doctrines, and the superior excellence of His sentiments. II. From the gracious manner in which those sentiments were delivered. III. From the openness and sincerity of His reproof; and—IV. From His example. (*J. Hewlett, D.D.*)

Vers. 33–37. **And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil.**—*The expulsion of the unclean spirit:*—I. Observe THE CONFESSION THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT MADE concerning the Redeemer. Here Christ's righteousness and purity are admitted. 1. He is declared to be "the Holy One of God." (1) God's Son—God's Servant. (2) Having God's holy nature and attributes. (3) Formed

as to His manhood by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. (4) Coming into the world to exhibit in all its complete excellency God's holy law. (5) On the holy mission of redeeming men from sin, and bringing them to the blessedness of personal holiness. (6) In the world for the express purpose of setting up a holy kingdom—a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. 2. This confession was bold and public. 3. It was deprecatory. The language of dread. The demons knew their time was limited, their power circumscribed, and that their hellish rule and dominion was to be overthrown by the Son of God. II. Observe THE COURSE CHRIST ADOPTED. 1. Rebuke. 2. Expulsion. III. Notice THE RESULTS WHICH FOLLOWED. 1. The unclean spirit gives a last struggle to injure his victim. 2. He came out of the man. 3. The people gave homage and glory to Christ. 4. The fame of Christ was spread abroad. Application: 1. The unrenewed mind is under the power of the unclean spirit. 2. Those who are thus influenced are in circumstances of misery and peril. 3, Christ alone has power to save and deliver. 4. In the gospel this deliverance is proclaimed. (*Jabez Burns, D.D.*) *Demoniacal possession*:—Should the possessed mentioned by the evangelists be regarded simply as persons afflicted after the same manner as our lunatics, whose derangement was attributed by Jewish and heathen superstition to supernatural influence? Or did God really permit, at this extraordinary epoch in history, an exceptional display of diabolical power? Or, lastly, should certain morbid conditions, now existing, which medical science attributes to purely natural causes, either physical or psychical, be put down, at the present day also, to the action of higher causes? These are the three hypotheses which present themselves to the mind. Several of the demoniacs healed by Jesus certainly exhibit symptoms very like those which are observed at the present day in those who are simply afflicted; *e.g.*, the epileptic child (Luke ix. 37). These strange conditions in every case, therefore, were based on a real disorder, either physical or physico-psychical. The evangelists are so far from being ignorant of this, that they constantly class the demoniacs under the category of the sick, never under that of the vicious. The possessed have nothing in common with the "children of the devil." Nevertheless these afflicted persons are constantly made a class by themselves. On what does this distinction rest? On this leading fact, that those who are simply sick enjoy their own personal consciousness, and are in possession of their own will; while in the possessed these faculties are, as it were, confiscated to a foreign power, with which the sick person identifies himself. How is this peculiar system to be explained? Josephus, under Hellenic influence, thought that it should be attributed to the souls of wicked men who came after death seeking a domicile in the living. In the eyes of the people the strange guest was a demon, a fallen angel. This latter opinion Jesus must have shared. Strictly speaking, His colloquies with the demoniacs might be explained by an accommodation to popular prejudice, and the sentiments of those who were thus afflicted; but in His private conversations with His disciples, He must, whatever was true, have disclosed His real thoughts, and sought to enlighten them. But He does nothing of the kind; on the contrary, He gives the apostles and disciples power to "cast out devils" (Luke ix. 1), and to tread on "all the power of the enemy" (Luke x. 19). In Mark ix. 29 He distinguishes a certain class of demons that can only be driven out by prayer and fasting. In Luke xi. 21 He explains the facility with which He casts out demons by the personal victory which He had achieved over Satan at the beginning. He therefore admitted the intervention of this being in these mysterious conditions. If this is so, is it not natural to admit that He who exercised over this, as over all other kinds of maladies, such absolute power, best understood its nature, and that therefore His views upon the point should determine ours? Are there not times when God permits a superior evil power to invade humanity? Just as God sent Jesus at a period in history when moral and social evil had reached its culminating point, did not He also permit an extraordinary manifestation of diabolical power to take place at the same time? By this means Jesus could be proclaimed externally and visibly as the conqueror of the enemy of men, as He who came to "destroy the works of the devil" in the moral sense of the expression. As to the present state of things, it must not be compared with the times of Jesus. Not only might the latter have been of an exceptional character; but the beneficent influence which the gospel has exercised in restoring man to Himself, and bringing his conscience under the power of the holy and true God, may have brought about a complete change in the spiritual world. Lastly, apart from all this, is there nothing mysterious, from a scientific point of view, in certain cases of mental derangement, particularly in

those conditions in which the will is, as it were, confiscated to, and paralyzed by, an unknown power? And after deduction has been made for all those forms of mental maladies which a discriminating analysis can explain by moral and physical relations, will not an impartial physician agree that there is a residuum of cases respecting which he must say: *Non liquet?* Possession is a caricature of inspiration. The latter, attaching itself to the moral essence of a man, confirms him for ever in the possession of his true self; the former, while profoundly opposed to the nature of the subject, takes advantage of its state of morbid passivity, and leads to the forfeiture of personality. The one is the highest work of God; the other, of the devil. (*F. Godet, D.D.*) *The demoniac in the synagogue:*—Strange men in strange places! Think of a devil being in the synagogue! It is the same to-day. The sanctuary draws into itself all sorts of human character; not only the rich and the poor, but the best and the worst are there. Evil knows good and hates it. Evil is not so powerful in reality as goodness, though apparently much mightier. Jesus is greater than all evil spirits. "Art Thou come to destroy us?" is a significant inquiry. "For this purpose was He manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The King casting out evil spirits:*—The superstition which connects demons with a wilderness has been used to explain our Lord's temptation. That explanation has nothing to do with the story given us by the evangelists. They describe the encounter of the Spirit of Christ with the spirit of evil; the test of their veracity lies in the experience of human beings in cities as much as in deserts, in one period as much as another. It seems to me, then, most reasonable, not only for the sake of anything which may have been peculiar to that time, but for the sake of every time, that the evangelist should give these victories over demons a prominent place in the history of Redemption. The impression produced in the synagogue of Capernaum is the simplest testimony to the nature of such a sign. "What a word is this?" they said. There was the sense of One who did not charm away evils by a look or a touch. The calm Divine energy with which He declared that the kingdom of God was indeed among men—that God's power was manifesting itself as of old in breaking fetters, in setting captives free—this came forth in the command that the unclean spirit should depart. The evil spirit was not the man's lord. The kingdoms of this world and the glory of them were not his. Holiness was mightier. (*F. D. Maurice.*) *Possessed by the devil:*—An affecting case was that of William Pope, of Bolton, in Lancashire. At this place there is a considerable number of deistical persons, who assemble together on Sundays to confirm each other in their infidelity. The oaths and imprecations that are uttered in that meeting are too horrible to relate, while they toss the Word of God upon the floor, kick it round the house, and tread it under their feet. This William Pope, who had been a steady Methodist for some years, became at length a professed Deist, and joined himself to this hellish crew. After he had been an associate of this company some time, he was taken ill, and the nature of his complaint was such, that he confessed the hand of God was upon him, and he declared he longed to die, that he might go to hell, many times praying earnestly for damnation. Two of the Methodist preachers, Messrs. Rhodes and Barrowclough, were sent for to talk to and pray with the unhappy man. But he was so far from being thankful for their advice and assistance, that he spit in their faces, threw at them whatever he could lay his hands upon, struck one of them upon the head with all his might, and often cried out, when they were praying, "Lord, do not hear their prayers!" If they said, "Lord, save his soul!" he cried, "Lord, damn my soul!" often adding, "My damnation is sealed, and I long to be in hell!" In this way he continued, sometimes better and sometimes worse, till he died. He was frequently visited by his deistical brethren during his illness, who would fain have persuaded the public he was out of his senses, which was by no means the case. The writer of this account saw the unhappy man once, but never desired to see him again. Mr. Rhodes justly said he was as full of the devil as he could hold. (*Simpson's "Plea for religion."*) *The testimony of the evil spirit to Christ, and His refusal to accept it:*—Earth has not recognized her King; but heaven has borne witness to Him, and now hell must bear its witness too. But what could have been the motive to this testimony, thus borne? It is strange that the evil spirit should, without compulsion, proclaim to the world the presence in the midst of it of the Holy One of God, of Him who should thus bring all the unholy, on which he battened, and by which he lived, to an end. Might we not rather expect that he should have denied, or sought to obscure, the glory of Christ's person? It cannot

be replied that this was an unwilling confession to the truth, forcibly extorted by Christ's superior power, seeing that it displeased Him in whose favour it professed to be borne, and this so much that He at once stopped the mouth of the utterer. It remains, then, either to understand this as the cry of abject and servile fear, that with fawning and flatteries would fain avert from itself the doom which, with Christ's presence in the world, must evidently be near; or else to regard this testimony as intended only to injure the estimation of Him in whose behalf it was rendered. There was hope that the truth itself might be brought into suspicion and discredit, thus receiving attestation from the spirit of lies; and these confessions of Jesus as the Christ may have been meant to traverse and mar His work. The fact that Christ would not allow the testimony goes some way to make this the preferable explanation. Observe it is not here as elsewhere, "The Lord rebuke thee," but He rebukes in His own name and by His own authority. (*Archbishop Trench.*) *Christ at Capernaum*:—I. HIS PREACHING—"He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for His Word was with power." 1. Observe the place—Capernaum. 2. The season—"The Sabbath days." Not that He forebore on other days; His lips always "dropped like an honey-comb." 3. Then the impression. II. LET US PASS FROM HIS TEACHING TO HIS MIRACLE. 1. Let us glance at the subject of this miracle. It was "a man who was possessed of a spirit of an unclean devil." Satan has much to do in the synagogue—much more than in many other places. In Macgowan's "Dialogues of Devils" there is this relation. Two infernal spirits having met, one of them very warm and weary, and the other cool and lively; after a little explanation it was found that he who was cool and lively, had been at the playhouse where he had nothing to do, where they were all with him, where they were all of one mind, all doing his work: whereas the other who was warm and weary, said, "I have been at a place of worship, and I had much to do there; to make some sleep; to induce some to hear for others instead of themselves; to lead the thoughts of some, like the fool's eye, unto the ends of the earth; to pick up as fast as I could the seed which was sown in the heart; and to turn away the point of the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, lest it should pierce even to the dividing of soul and body, and of the joints and marrow, and be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." I hope, none of *you* employ him thus. (1) First, aversion. "Let us alone"—as it is in the margin,—"away"; be off. Satan wished to have nothing to do with Christ. (2) Then it expressed fear—"Art Thou come to destroy us?" (3) It expressed commendation—"I know Thee, who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Here, you see, the devil not only believed much, but talked well. 2. Let us look at the Author of this miracle, and we shall see how the enemy of souls is under the dominion of the Lord Jesus; that though an adversary, yet he is restrained, he is chained. 3. Then, as to the spectators—"They were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a Word is this! for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out." Oh! if they had but improved as well as admired! III. THEN HERE IS HIS FAME—"And the fame of Him went out into every place of the country round about." Who does not rejoice in this spread of His fame? Who does not wish His fame everywhere spread abroad? Gratitude requires you to be thus employed. For benevolence requires you to be thus employed. Many are perishing; and they are perishing for lack of knowledge, and the knowledge of Him; for "to know Him is eternal life." (*W. Jay.*)

Ver. 37. **And the fame of Him went out into every place of the country round about.**—*The fame of Jesus*:—I. Now, you will plainly perceive that my drift is as usual this morning. I want all my time, and strength, and power to spread the fame of Jesus in every place throughout the country. Well, then, WE WILL NOTICE THREE OR FOUR THINGS IN WHICH HE IS AND MUST BE FAMED. First of all, His fame is spread abroad with regard to the majesty of His Person. Moreover, He is famed for the offices which He sustains. Here a multitude will rush on my attention, but I will limit myself to the three which are well known and constantly dwelt upon. He is far-famed as a Prophet. And is He not famed as a Priest? Moreover, He is far-famed in His office as a Potentate. But we hasten on just to mark that our precious Christ is famed in the relative ties which He condescends to own. He is not ashamed to call His Church brethren. But let me just touch upon the extraordinary works which seem to have been the cause of the expression—"His fame was spread in every place of that country round about." What had He done? He had cast out

devils, He had raised the dead, He had restored Simon's wife's mother from the fever, He had removed the uncleanness of those who were possessed by an unclean spirit, He had wrought prodigies and miracles; and yet, though He had done so many mighty works among them, the enemies believed not on Him. And yet this caused Him to be far-famed. Moreover, His fame was not only to be published on account of the mighty works which He had done, but they were only typical, though real in their instances, of the greater work pertaining to His errand upon earth. And here I must limit myself to three things He does for sinners, that has spread His fame down to this hour, and shall do it while I have a voice to utter it, and to all eternity. He has redeemed sinners, He has rescued sinners, and He has received sinners, and all these acts publish his fame. II. NOW LET US GLANCE, IN THE SECOND PLACE, AT THE AGENTS EMPLOYED TO SPREAD HIS FAME. I cannot help mentioning, in the first place, His kindred, when He was sought for among His kinsfolks, and could not be found. And so in many other instances of His literal history which we now pass over to come to the point spiritually. It is His kindred that publish His fame. That is, those who are allied to Him by grace. Moreover, I beseech you to mark that no partaker of life Divine can consider it a matter of little importance in his life, that the fame of Jesus should be spread by him. And if you are doing nothing or saying nothing to spread the fame of Jesus, do not tell me you are related to Him. But not only do His kindred spread His fame; even His enemies must do it. I put this in contrast. You will recollect the Apostle Paul rejoiced in this: "There are some that preach Christ of good-will, and some that preach Christ out of envy and strife." Further, mark that this precious, glorious, far-famed Jesus is exalted, and His fame is spread by the objects of His attention, for whom He wrought so much. III. But I must hasten to a close with A WORD OR TWO RELATIVE TO THE RESULTS. And I will only mention two—the results among the wicked surrounding Him, and the results among the objects of the Father's love given to Him. (*J. Irons.*)

Vers. 38, 39. **And He arose out of the synagogue and entered into Simon's house.** —*Simon's wife's mother*:—Suffering is to be found everywhere, in the public synagogue and in the private house. Even Peter's house was not exempt. The chosen ones are tried as by fire, and the rod proves their election. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Simon's house*:—How came Peter to have a house at Capernaum? Poor fishermen do not often have two houses. May it not be that, finding the Lord Jesus was frequently at Capernaum, Peter thought it best to have a dwelling there, that he might be always present when the Master was preaching, and that he might do his best to entertain Him between whiles? I like to think that the servant changed his place of abode for the Master's sake. Would it not be well if many Christian people had some little consideration when they are choosing a house, as to whether it will be convenient for the hearing of the Word? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Sickness produces seriousness*:—Professor Henry Drummond, the author of "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," has been very earnestly at work in the revival in the Edinburgh University. His addresses have been intensely evangelical, and have been wondrously powerful in their effects on the students. One anecdote seemed to have touched them deeply. Substantially it was to this effect:—Some years ago, in the University, there was a fine, manly fellow, a medical student, a very Hercules in strength, but as gentle and lovable as he was strong. He was immensely popular, the captain of the football club, and not a cricket match was considered complete without him. He was a man of good intellectual gifts as well. He caught typhoid fever while attending the Royal Infirmary, and soon he lay dying in a private ward. One of the house physicians, an earnest Christian and successful soul-winner, spoke to him about God and eternity. The dear fellow listened, became anxious, and eagerly heard the story of redeeming love. "Will you give yourself to Jesus?" asked the doctor. He did not answer for a space, and then, earnestly regarding the man of God, he said, "But don't you think it would be awful mean just to make it up now, at my last gasp, with One I have rejected all my life?" "Yes, it would be mean; but, dear fellow, it would be far meaner not to do it. He wants you to do it now, for He has made you willing, and it would be doubly mean to reject a love that is pursuing you even to death." The dying man saw the point, and apprehending the greatness of that exceeding love, he cast himself upon the Eternal Heart of Mercy and passed away in sweet peace and blessedness. *Blessed results of sickness*:—When God would rescue a man from that unreal world of names and mere knowledge, He does

what He did with Job—He strips him of his flocks, and his herds, and his wealth; or else, what is the equivalent, of the power of enjoying them—the desire of his eyes falls from him at a stroke. Things become real then. Trial brings man face to face with God—God and he touch; and the flimsy veil of bright cloud that hung between him and the sky is blown away; he feels that he is standing outside the earth with nothing between him and the Eternal Infinite. Oh! there is something in the sick-bed, and the aching heart, and the restlessness and the languor of shattered health, and the sorrow of affections withered, and the stream of life poisoned at its fountain, and the cold, lonely feeling of utter rawness of heart which is felt when God strikes home in earnest that forces a man to feel what is real and what is not. This is the blessing of affliction to those who will lie still and not struggle in a cowardly or a resentful way. It is God speaking to Job out of the whirlwind, and saying: "In the sunshine and the warmth you cannot meet Me; but in the hurricane and the darkness, when wave after wave has swept down and across the soul, you shall see My Form, and hear My Voice, and know that your Redeemer liveth." (*F. W. Robertson.*) *The ministry of gratitude*:—I. The fact that this restored woman began at once to minister to Christ and to His disciples proves THE CERTAINTY OF HER CURE; and there are no better ways of proving the thoroughness of our conversion than by conduct similar to hers. Suppose the patient had lain there and had begun to talk about how she felt, how much better she was, what a strange sensation passed through her when the Saviour rebuked the disease, and how strangely well she felt; yet if she had not risen up, but had lain there still, there would have been no evidence of her restoration, at any rate none that you or I could judge of. So when persons tell us that they have felt great changes of heart, we must see their outward ministerings for Christ. If their actions be holy, if their lives be purified, then shall we know, but not till then, that their nature is renewed. Suppose this good woman, still lying upon her bed, had begun to say, "Well, I hope I am healed," and had begun to express some feeble expectation that one day she would be able to exercise the functions of health, we could not have known that she was restored. Something more was wanted than mere hopes and expectations. Note the nature of the acts which this restored woman performed, because they are symbolical of the best form of actions by which to judge of a person being renewed. 1. Her duties were humble ones. She was probably the head of the household, and she began at once to discharge the duties of a housewife: duties unostentatious and commonplace. Attention to humble duties is a better sign of grace than an ambition for lofty and elevated works. 2. Remember, too, that this good woman attended to home duties. She did not go down the street a hundred yards off to glorify Christ; she, I daresay, did that afterwards; but she began at home: charity begins there, and so should piety. That is the best religion which is most at home at home. Grace which smiles around the family hearth is grace indeed. 3. She attended to suitable duties, duties consistent with her sex and condition. She did not try to be what God had not made her, but did what she could. 4. One other point before leaving this; these things become a conclusive proof of grace in the heart, when they are voluntarily rendered as this good woman's ministry was. I do not read that she was asked to do anything for Christ, but it suggested itself to her at once, without command or request. Her work was done promptly, for "*immediately* she arose" and did it. Promptness is the soul of obedience. II. This woman's ministry showed THE PERFECTION OF HER CURE. And, beloved, it is one mark of a work of grace in the soul when the converted man becomes at once a servant of Christ. The human theory of moral reformations makes time a great element in its operations. If you are to reclaim a great offender you must win him from one vice first, and then from another; you must put him through a process of education by which he gradually perceives that what he has been accustomed to do is bad for himself, and wakes up to the conviction that honesty and sobriety will be the best for his own profit. Time is required by the moral reformer, or he cannot develop his plans. He ridicules the idea of effecting anything in an hour or two. III. Peter's wife's mother, in ministering to Christ proved HER OWN GRATITUDE. Her acts of hospitality were an exhibition of her thankfulness. Brethren, if we want to evidence our gratitude to Christ we had better do it in the same way as she did. IV. This woman's ministering to Christ proved THE CONDESCENSION OF THE PHYSICIAN. He who healed her of the fever did not need her to minister to Him; He who had power to heal diseases had certainly power to subsist without human ministry. If Christ could raise her up, He must be omnipotent and Divine; what

need, then, had He of a woman's service? Yet He condescended to accept it. What condescension that He should accept ministry from His own creatures; what gentleness that He so often chose woman's ministry. He came to earth, and the first garments of His infancy were wrapped about Him by a woman's hands, and here He dwelt till at last He died, and holy women bound Him up in the cerements of the tomb and laid Him in the sepulchre. It seems easy enough to believe that the Blessed Virgin and Mary Magdalene and other holy women were honoured of God; but that you, dear sister, should be allowed to take a part in His service—is not this marvellous? Will you not bless Him, and minister with the utmost cheerfulness because you feel it to be so great a grace? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *All may minister for God:*—On our birthdays our little children love to give their father something, if it is only a bunch of flowers out of the garden, or a fourpenny piece with a hole in it; they like to do it to show their love; and wise parents will be sure to let their children do such things for them. So is it with our great Father in heaven. What are our Sunday-school teachings and our preachings, and all that, but these cracked fourpenny pieces? Just nothing at all; but the Lord allows us to do His work for His own love's sake. His love to us finds a sweetness in our love to Him. I am most thankful that in the Church there is room for such a variety of ministries. Some brethren are so queerly constituted that I cannot tell what they were made for; but I believe if they are God's people there is a place for them in His spiritual temple. A man who was accustomed to buy timber and work it up, on one occasion found a very crooked stick of wood in his bargain, and said to his son as he put it aside, "I cannot tell, John, whatever I shall do with it; it is the ugliest shaped piece I ever bought in my life"; but it so happened while building a barn that he wanted a timber exactly of that shape, and it fitted in so thoroughly well that he said, "It really seems as if that tree grew on purpose for that corner." So our gracious Lord has arranged His Church, so that every crooked stick will fit in somewhere or other, if it be only a tree of His own right hand planting: He has made it with a purpose, and knows when it will answer that purpose. How this ought to rebuke any who say, "I do not see what I can do." Dear friend, there is a peculiar work for you; find it out—and methinks it will not be far off: the exercise of a little reflection will soon enable you to discover it. Be grateful that this is a certain fact, without exception, that every child of God who has been healed has some ministry which he can render to Christ, and which he ought to render at once. Bless God, dear brother, that He counts you worthy to suffer for His name's sake. You know the old story of Sir Walter Raleigh. When Queen Elizabeth, one day, came to a miry place in the road, he took off his cloak for her to walk upon. Did he regret it? No, he was delighted at it, and half the court wished for another muddy place that they might be able to do the same. Oh, you that love your Lord, be willing to lie down for Christ's sake, and pave the miry parts of the way by being despised for His name's sake. This honour you should covet, and should not shun. Arise and minister, ye healed ones; and as for you who are not healed, may you believe in Him who is able to restore you with His touch. He is mighty to save. Believe in Him and you shall live. (*Ibid.*) *A sympathetic physician:*—The pious, good-natured Dr. Heim had no time, as he was wont to say, "to get ill." Always busy, ever pleased to visit the cottage of the poorest as the mansions of the rich, all classes of Berlin joined to do honour to the good old man on the jubilee of his fiftieth year of service. The festivities lasted three days. The constant noise and excitement had made the doctor more than usually tired. Late at night a poor woman came to beg him to visit her child, who was taken suddenly ill. The servants had orders to send all applications away, as the doctor felt he needed rest; but the woman, knowing the house, managed to get to the doctor's private room to plead her cause. Still Dr. Heim said he could not go. After all had retired to rest Madame Heim said to her husband, "What is the matter with you, doctor? Why don't you sleep?" "Because I can't," he said; "it's a curious thing with my conscience; I must go and see that child." He rang the bell, and forgetting his fatigue, ran to the sick child, whom he was the means of restoring to health. After the visit he returned and slept soundly. (*Baxendale's Anecdotes.*)

Vers. 40, 42. **Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick.**—*Now when the sun was setting:*—When the sun set another sun arose. The eventide of nature brought the morning of restoration. Nature perishes: Grace is eternal. Come to Christ when you can—early in the day, or in the shades of evening—He

is ever ready. In ver. 42 mark an attempt to *localise* Christ. This is often done even now. But He is not to be parochially or congregationally shut in. He is the light of every life. He must gather His sheep from every hill, and call His own from unexpected places. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The miracles of healing at Capernaum* :—These words form a very vivid contrast with what is recorded in the former part of this chapter. In Nazareth He did no mighty works. Could not, not would not. It was not because the people there didn't want help. It was as bad to be sick up there as in Capernaum. But it was because of their unbelief. Then in wonderful contrast comes this story of Capernaum. That contrast we can still make. We may have this Nazareth, Jesus in the midst with all His healing power, and yet our hearts unblessed; or it may be to us Capernaum, and Jesus moving in and out amongst us, laying His hands on every one of us and making us whole. I. THE SCENE HERE PICTURED. The sun was setting; the mountains were lifting up their heads into the golden crimson, and the lake was bathed in the sunset hues. Across the rocky paths came wearied ones from the inland villages with withered limbs; blind men groping their way and asking piteously if they were right; deaf men trying to read the signs of His coming in everybody's face; and, across the lake, boat-loads of sick ones, the glassy surface of the lake just broken by the ripple of the oar; and thus they came, until what a sight it was about the gate of the city! II. FOLLOW THE MASTER THROUGH THE WARDS OF HIS HOSPITAL. Now the whisper runs through the crowd, "He comes." He comes—those eyes of His all filled with compassion; and moving about amongst them, "He laid His hands on every one of them." No poor woman was thrust away outside; no poor little child was forgotten. 1. Notice that the power of the Lord is a healing power—"not to condemn the world." And 2. See how the Lord uses this power—with what gentleness. 3. Notice how the Lord deals with men in their individuality—"every one of them." III. LOOK AT THE SICK ONES. First, here is a heathen woman. Here stands a sturdy Roman soldier who has been maimed in some fight, &c. In Christ's hospital every case is peculiar. (*New Outlines of Sermons on New Testament.*) *God's Kingdom* :—Which kingdom? There is (1) the kingdom of nature; (2) that of providence; (3) that of glory. But none of these is the kingdom I am going to talk about. There is another kingdom, the kingdom of His grace, the kingdom in the hearts of men, called the kingdom of God in my text. I. THIS KINGDOM IS ONE; THE KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH ARE MANY. The kingdom of God does not resemble any of these. It is a spiritual kingdom. II. THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD ARE NOT HAPPY, THE KINGDOM OF GRACE IS. III. THE KINGDOMS OF EARTH ARE MAINTAINED BY FORCE; THE THRONE OF GOD'S KINGDOM IS ESTABLISHED IN THE AFFECTIONS OF ITS SUBJECTS. III. THE KINGDOMS OF EARTH DECAY; THE KINGDOM OF GOD NEVER. IV. Practical questions: 1. Are we members of this kingdom? 2. If not, are we willing to become members? (*E. G. Gange.*) *Imposition of hands* :—This rite is a symbol of any kind of transmission, whether of a gift or an office (Moses and Joshua, Deut. xxxiv. 9), or of a blessing (the patriarchal blessings), or of a duty (the transfer to the Levites of the natural functions of the eldest son in every family), or of guilt (the guilty Israelite laying his hands on the head of the victim), or of the sound, vital strength enjoyed by the person who imparts it (cures). It is not certainly that Jesus could not have worked a cure by His mere word, or even by a simple act of volition. But, in the first place, there is something profoundly human in this act of laying the hand on the head of any one whom one desires to benefit. It is a gesture of tenderness, a sign of beneficial communication such as the heart craves. Then this symbol might be morally necessary. Whenever Jesus avails Himself of any material means to work a cure—whether it be the sound of His voice, or clay made of His spittle—His aim is to establish in the form best adapted to the particular case, a personal tie between the sick person and Himself; for He desires not only to heal, but to effect a restoration to God, by creating in the consciousness of the sick a sense of union with Himself, the organ of Divine grace in the midst of mankind. This moral aim explains the variety of the means employed. Had they been curative means (of the nature of magnetic passes, for example) they could not have varied so much. But as they were addressed to the sick person's soul, Jesus chose them in such a way that His action was adapted to its character or position. In the case of a deaf mute, He puts His fingers into his ears; He anointed the eyes of a blind man with His spittle, &c. Thus their healing appeared as an emanation from His person, and attached them to Him by an indissoluble tie. Their restored life was felt to be dependent on His. (*F. Godet, D.D.*) *The Great Physician* :—We have here a picture of Jesus as the Great Physician of soul and body, the Divine restorer of

health to both body and mind. It is never to be forgotten how He thus met the sufferings of humanity, and brought effective deliverance as none other ever could or ever will bring, to a world ever groaning and travailing in pain. And what He did then, He is doing still. We cannot now see His earthly Form, nor do we look for miracles to be wrought upon us; but each of us has his own peculiar care or trouble, and needs the Divine Physician to relieve his distress. 1. True, there are earthly reliefs, and it is our duty to make proper use of them; but they are all more or less temporary and fleeting. (1) For the body: medical relief and advice, &c. Yet these can give no immunity from disease. And most remedies soon lose their power. (2) For the mind: distraction, pleasure, &c. These also are but the results of the experience of others, but they have no last in them, and they may only make the pain worse to bear than before. 2. True also, that if present relief is not to be had, we may still be buoyed up by earthly hope. But alas! how often is this but "hope deferred," which "makes the heart sick"; and how often is the miserable and weary sufferer brought to such a state that the only earthly hope left him is the hope that he may soon be done with earth altogether, and his poor pained body be laid to rest in the grave! Oh, how vain are all earthly hopes, and how doomed to disappointment are those who trust in them. But, thank God! our Christian philosophy is not so cold. We have more than this. I. A PRESENT HELP. We have learned that present, earthly, personal comfort is not such a grand object after all; that there are higher things, and better things, within our reach. What are these? Growing better, being sanctified, making this life not an end but a beginning and preparation for a higher and better life. Not only so, but we can go to Jesus as truly as could the friends at Capernaum, and help to take our sufferers there. Nor have we far to go. He is always at hand, and always accessible. Moreover, He is unchangeable; not like earthly friends and comforts, but always the same; the truest help in any and every kind of suffering—whether of mind, body, or estate, as many a soul has proved, in sickness, poverty, anxiety, loneliness. II. A FUTURE HOPE. If, in spite of every aid, the burdens of life press heavily on us, we have more than the silence of the grave to look for; we know that while our body sleeps, our soul is with Christ in paradise, and that one day there will be a happy reunion. Conclusion: Let us first find the way ourselves to this present help and future hope, and then we shall be able to point our friends to it and to Jesus who is indeed our only help and our only hope. And then, one word more for our comfort. You will remember that our blessed Lord was not done with the sufferers when He laid His hands upon them and conferred present relief in trouble. They might go home with glad hearts, and enjoy the blessing of God, but a time would come when they might again suffer in body or in mind, and when they would at last have to give up all hope of earthly remedy. But Jesus was not forgetting them. Tired and wearied as He was, He rose up a great while before day, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. He was blessing them even more in His absence than while with them in bodily presence. Even so is it still with the sufferers and with the healed. Jesus is not only ever blessing us with divine comfort and strength, but He is pleading for us with the Father. He knows the pain of each heart, and He will bless us and it for our good if we will but go to Him. (*George Low, M.A.*)

Ver. 42. **That He would not depart from them.**—*How to prolong the gracious visits of Christ*:—I. WHAT MEANS SHOULD BE EMPLOYED TO PROLONG THE GRACIOUS VISITS OF CHRIST? I answer, generally, we must endeavour to render His continuance with us agreeable to Himself; and to avoid or banish from among us everything which tends to render it otherwise. When we wish to induce an earthly friend to reside with us as long as possible, we naturally endeavour to render his residence with us agreeable; for no person will voluntarily continue long in a disagreeable place, or in unpleasant society. But more particularly; if we would prolong our Saviour's gracious visits, either to ourselves, to our habitations, or to the place in which we reside, we must show Him that we greatly desire and highly value His presence. No person will consent to stay long with those by whom his presence is not desired. Least of all will those consent to this who are sensible of their own worth, and who know that there are other places where they would be more welcome. Now our blessed Saviour is perfectly sensible of His own worth. He knows that, great and powerful as He is, He can confer no favour upon a Church or upon individuals more valuable than His gracious presence. He, therefore, justly expects that we should prize it accordingly, and consider every-

thing else as nothing in comparison with this. The fact is, that, when we prefer any object to Christ, we make an idol of that object, and set up that idol in His presence. And can we expect that He will continue long with those who prefer an idol before Him? 1. The more He seems to depart from us, the more earnestly must we follow Him with our prayers and supplications, saying, with Jacob, We will not let Thee go, except Thou bless us; and, like the persons mentioned in our text, staying Him that He may not forsake us. 2. With prayer we must unite penitence. Especially must we repent of those sins which have been the probable cause of His beginning to withdraw. Without this, even prayer will not avail, as is evident from the case of Joshua, when his army was repulsed before Ai. 3. If we would prevent the Saviour from depriving us of His gracious visits, we must receive them with profound humility and a deep sense of our unworthiness of such a favour. 4. If we would prevent the Saviour from leaving us, we must assign sufficient reasons why He should prolong His stay. The glory of His Father, the honour of His great name, the welfare of His people, the prosperity of His cause, are each of them reasons of sufficient weight to influence His conduct; and while either of these reasons requires His stay we may be sure that He will not leave us. 5. If we would prevent Christ from leaving us, we must furnish Him with employments, and with such kind of employments as are suited to His character. Now the ruling passion of our Saviour is the love of doing good. "My meat," says He, "is to do the will of My Father and to finish His work." And again He says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Agreeably, we find that, when on earth, He went about doing good, and, where He found opportunities of doing the most good, there He always made the longest stay. II. SOME OF THE REASONS WHICH SHOULD INDUCE US TO EMPLOY THESE MEANS. 1. We ought to employ these means, because a neglect of them will infallibly grieve and offend our Redeemer. 2. The blessed effects which result from the gracious visits of Christ, furnish another reason why we should employ all proper means and make every possible exertion to induce Him to prolong them. 3. Another reason which should induce us to employ these means, may be found in the evils which result from the Saviour's departure. These evils are in full proportion to the benefits which result from His presence. 4. The conduct of impenitent sinners affords another reason why we should do this. (*E. Payson, D.D.*)

Ver. 43. **I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities.**—*A precedent for preachers*:—Christ thus admired and desired to stay in Capernaum, would not so do, as having an eye to His ease or conveniency there, but must be at the pains to preach elsewhere. Teaching us that we must not measure our services from ourselves or conveniences, nor in them seek our own ease or acceptance among men; but so carry them as may be most for God's glory and our own sound comfort. Our Saviour Christ admitted not their motion, but made them this answer in the words of the text, "Surely I must also preach." Wherein consider five points. 1. The work which Christ must do—He must "preach." 2. The necessity of it—"I must." 3. The matter what He must preach—"the kingdom of God." 4. The object or people to whom—"to other cities also." 5. The bond of this necessity—"For therefore I am sent." I. THE WORK IS PREACHING. Thus preaching is called the setting out of the mystery of Christ, and a publishing of the mystery of the gospel, and the revealing of a mystery hid since the world began. Hence observe the greatness of the work of preaching, and the great estimation of it, for which end the Son of God Himself came from heaven. The great work of God considered in the means seems vile and base, and nothing more stunneth the minds of carnal men than the baseness of the means, compared with the magnificence of the effects. It might seem ridiculous to the men of Jericho that the blast of rams' horns and sound of trumpets should batter down stone walls, and no marvel but that they smiled at such unlikely means; but yet it was so: so this work of preaching in the eye of a carnal man is but foolishness, as 1 Cor. i. 21, but yet "to them that are called, it is the power of God to salvation." Here behold weakness encountering and overmastering strength, simplicity overreaching policy, and God's power prevailing in His own weak means. II. The second part of the text is THE NECESSITY OF PREACHING—"I must preach." It depends not upon His will, or left to His discretion; but He must do it. Now, much more necessity lieth on us His ministers. Now if we be bound to preach, ye are bound to hear; if we be bound to deliver the Word, ye are bound to receive the Word, not as the word of man; but as it is indeed the Word of God, with all reverence, duty,

and piety. III. The third point is THE MATTER OF THIS PREACHING: the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is twofold. 1. Of grace. 2. Of glory. In the former God reigneth in us. In the latter we reign with God. The former is in this life, the latter in the life to come. The one issuing into the other, and both of them becoming one: for we read not of God's kingdoms in the plural, but of His kingdom, which is but one. This is that tabernacle of God which is with men. To this kingdom God calleth us by preaching, and here it must be begun by righteousness, repentance, mortification, and shall have fulness hereafter. All men desire to partake in the kingdom of Christ and glory, but few will be subject to his Father in the kingdom of grace. We to whom God hath committed the preaching of His Word must have care to further this kingdom and bring in many to be subjects of it, expecting that glorious recompense of shining as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever. IV. THE PERSONS TO WHOM CHRIST MUST PREACH—"to other cities." As the sun compasseth the world and stayeth in no one part, so Christ the Sun of Righteousness never settleth in any one place, but seeketh to disperse everywhere His blessed light. It had been in Christ's power Himself to have kept one place always, and have sent His disciples to all other, but He would not: that we should by His example learn not to shun labour, but employ our pains and diligence in building the kingdom of God, and in seeking and saving that which is lost. Thus was Christ as a compassionate Physician, who not being sent for, offereth His care and pains, as willing to save such as are in danger. V. The bond of this necessity—"for therefore am I sent." He should betray the end of His coming if He should not preach. The point we must here learn is that every man must serve the end and use that he is called unto, and carefully discharge the trust committed unto him (Rom. xii. 7, 8). The heathen held it as shameful and dangerous to fail in matter of trust, as if the party had committed theft. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*)

CHAPTER V.

VERS. 1, 3. **And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God.**—*The gospel and the masses*:—What could have been the wonderful secret power by which the great Prophet of Galilee drew all men after Him? 1. One simple and very intelligent element in it was the way in which he recognized the wholeness of human nature, that, at the bottom, peer did not differ from peasant, nor monarch from villager. 2. And not only did He recognize the wholeness of human nature, but also its many diversified needs. 3. He was sinless, and yet He never had a harsh word for the sinners—provided they were not hypocrites. 4. He had the tenderest feelings for those who enjoyed fewest opportunities. 5. He recognized the natural or social wants which are common to all men. Feeding five thousand; making wine at wedding. 6. He disdained no man. APPLICATION. Oh that God would give us grace to preach fully, faithfully, wisely, lovingly this gospel in the spirit, and with the simplicity and abounding sympathy with which it was first preached in the cities and on the mountain slopes and by the lake shores of Galilee; and then I believe the people would be found pressing to hear it as they pressed then. (*Bishop Fraser.*) *The Word of God*:—I. THE WORD OF GOD THAT IS NOW PREACHED AMONG US. II. THE EXISTING URGENCY TO HEAR IT. Of diffusive religion we have abundance; a concentrative Christianity is what we require. III. THE PEOPLE WHO ARE ITS FAVOURED, AND TOO OFTEN ITS FORGETFUL HEARERS. Two great classes; those who know the revelation of the will of God through Christ as a mass of doctrines and commands demanding from our understandings a simple assent to their truth; and those who know it in such a sense and degree, as that it becomes the pervading principle of all their actions. Beware of the Christianity of the formalist. When rightly received, "the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." (*W. A. Butler, M.A.*) *To hear the Word of God*:—One of the finest conceivable pictures presented in this verse—people pressing to hear the Word of God! They often pressed to see Christ's miracles, and to listen to His parables, with more or less of mere curiosity; but in this case the motive was spiritual and pure. Why do people attend the sanctuary? To hear the word of *man*? Then will there be

debate, opposition, doubt, or at best, admiration, fickle and selfish. The remedy is partly in the hands of ministers themselves. When they insist upon delivering the message of God without any admixture of human speculation, their spiritual reverence and earnestness may carry a holy contagion amongst the people. God's Word should always be supreme in God's house. "Them that honour Me, I will honour." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The Lake of Gennesaret:*—It is the centre of the ministry of our Lord; it is not too much to say of it what Dean Stanley has said, "It is the most sacred sheet of water that the earth contains." The Rabbins say, "I have created seven seas, saith the Lord, but out of them I have chosen none but the sea of Gennesaret." In the day of our Lord, it was a scene of teeming life as well as the centre of a peculiarly hushed and hallowed solitude. No doubt, as compared with many quarters of the globe, it was secluded; but still its shores and its waves were the way of traffic. It was situated in the midst of the Jordan valley, or the great thoroughfare from Babylon and Damascus into Palestine; hence it was "the way of the sea beyond Jordan." Along its banks a wondrous vegetation spread, and full of especially beautiful birds and flowers and fruits. What a scene it must have presented—fishermen by hundreds on the Lake; in hamlets arouud the numerous shipbuilders; and the sails and boats of pleasure flying before the frequent gusts from the mountains. There was no other spot which would so instantly have been a conductor to the words of our Lord. There is a Divine providence in even the very spot itself. The dwellers of the Sea of Galilee were free from most of the strong prejudices which, in the south of Palestine, raised a bar to Christ's reception. There were the people of Zabulon and Nephthalim, by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. They had sat in darkness; but for that very reason they saw more clearly the great light when it came to them in the region of the shadow of death. There He came, to that spot, to preach the gospel to the poor, the weary, and the heavy laden, to seek and to save that which was lost. Where could He find what He sought so readily as in the ceaseless turmoil of those busy waters and teeming villages? Roman soldiers, centurions quartered with their slaves; here, too, the palaces of the princes. Hardy boatmen, publicans, and tax-collectors sitting at the receipt of custom, women who were sinners from neighbouring Gentile cities and villages. Thus all was prepared to concentrate and give effect to the power of His teaching by the Lake. (*E. Paxton Hood.*) *Description of the lake:*—The Sea of Galilee is shaped like a pear, with a width at the broadest part of 6¾ miles, and a length of 12¼ miles; that is, it is about the same length as our own Windermere, but considerably broader, though in the clear air of Palestine it looks somewhat smaller. Nothing can exceed the bright clearness of the water, which it is delightful to watch as it runs in small waves over the shingle. Its taste, moreover, is sweet, except near the hot springs and at Tiberias, where it is polluted by the sewerage of the town. There is much more level ground on the eastern side than the western, yet the western side was always, in Bible times, much more thickly peopled by the Hebrews than the other; partly from the fact that "beyond Jordan" was almost a foreign country; partly because the land above the lake on the east was exposed to the Arabs; and in some measure also because it always had a large intermixture of heathen population. (*Geikie's "Holy Land and the Bible."*) *Description of the surrounding scenery:*—The original population of the shores of the lake was Sidonian, and when Tyre and Sidon were founded on the shores of the Mediterranean they moved westward, but the town of Bethsidon still retained the name given it by its first inhabitants. The richest part of the shores was at the north-west, where is a luxuriant plain of half-moon shape, walled out from the north and west winds by mountains, and exposed to the sun. This was where the princes and the nobles had their country residences, and the gardens were filled with all kinds of flowers and fruit. The lake was called by its first colonists, Cenuereth, or the Harp, from its shape. The Jews thought so highly of its beauty that they said, "God created seven seas—but for Himself He elected but one, and that the Lake Gennesareth"; and again, "It is the Gate of Paradise." Josephus says, "It is a district where Nature seems to have constrained herself to create an eternal spring, and to gather into one spot the products of every one." To the present day the date-palm, citrons, pomegranate, indigo, rice, sugar-cane, grow there; cotton, balsams, vines, thrive; the purple grapes are as big as plums, and the bunches weigh twelve pounds. Here also the fig-tree yields her fruit throughout the year, ripening every month. The Jews call Gennesareth the Garden Lake, and if there were any place in Palestine that could recall the lost Paradise, it was this

fruitful, beautiful tract, watered with its five streams. At Chammath, about two miles south of Tiberias, are hot springs, of old much used for baths, and half an hour's walk above Tiberias a cold spring of beautiful water bursts out of the mountain side, and pours down to the lake in five or six streams. At Tabigha also are hot springs, that gush streaming down into the blue waters of the lake. Now the neglect of mismanagement of the Turkish Government have led to the devastation of this beautiful corner of the world, and many of the foreign plants once introduced into it have died out, or are disappearing. We can only guess what a garden of delight it must have been in the time of our Lord, when the aqueducts were in working order, and canals carried water to all the gardens and fields. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *Attractiveness of the true preacher*:—Let a man be a true preacher, really uttering the truth through his own personality, and it is strange how men will gather to listen to him. We hear that the day of the pulpit is past, and then some morning the voice of a true preacher is heard in the land, and all the streets are full of men crowding to hear him, just exactly as were the streets of Constantinople when Chrysostum was going to preach at the Church of the Apostles, or the streets of London when Latimer was bravely telling the truth at St. Paul's. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *The personal power in preaching*:—The nameless and potent charm of intense personality cannot all go down into a dead book. Truth in personality is where the hidings of power are. We look in vain along the pages of Whitefield for the secret of his mighty effectiveness. We search the famous sermon of Edwards, and wonder what there was in it that moved men so. It was not the sermon on the printed page; it was the sermon in the living preacher. While men are men, a living man before living men will always be more than white paper and black ink. And therein will for evermore lie the supremest possibilities of pulpit power, which no competing press, however enterprising and ubiquitous, can rival. The Founder of Christianity made no mistake when He staked its triumphal progress down through all ages, and its victorious consummation at "the end of the world," on "the foolishness of preaching." He chose the agency in full view of the marvels of these later centuries, and the pulpit is not therefore likely to be despoiled of its peculiar glory and made impotent to its work by any device born of the inventive genius of man. (*Dr. Herrick Johnson, of Chicago.*) *A remarkable pulpit*:—I have seen in different countries some very wonderful pulpits, some of them exquisitely carved in stone or wood, some of them richly inlaid with the choicest mosaics, some of them illustrating scenes from the Bible. Perhaps the loveliest pulpit I have ever seen is in a place where you would least expect to find it. In Italy you often see places that are called Baptisteries—that is, places built specially for the baptism of children. In the old city of Pisa there is a most lovely Baptistery, and in it the most beautiful pulpit, which every one who sees greatly admires; but, strange to say, it cannot be used, because there is such a wonderful echo in the building that the preacher's voice could not be heard. If you speak quite softly in it you hear a sound as of a great choir right up in the roof, and so the pulpit can only be admired and not used. But the pulpit from which Christ preached on this occasion was a very simple one; it was not richly carved, nor beautifully decorated, nor of massive form. It was only a tiny boat resting upon the bosom of a lake. (*W. A. Horder.*) *The preaching of Christ*:—The form of the preaching of Jesus was essentially Jewish. The Oriental mind does not work in the same way as the mind of the West. Our thinking and speaking, when at their best, are fluent, expansive, closely reasoned. The kind of discourse which we admire is one which takes up an important subject, divides it out into different branches, treats it fully under each of the heads, closely articulates part to part, and closes with a moving appeal to the feelings, so as to sway the will to some practical result. The Oriental mind, on the contrary, loves to brood long on a single point, to turn it round and round, to gather up all the truth about it into a focus, and pour it forth in a few pointed and memorable words. It is concise, epigrammatic, oracular. A Western speaker's discourse is a systematic structure, or like a chain in which link is firmly knit to link; an Oriental's is like the sky at night, full of innumerable burning points shining forth from a dark background. Such was the form of the teaching of Jesus. It consisted of numerous sayings, every one of which contained the greatest possible amount of truth in the smallest possible compass, and was expressed in language so concise and pointed as to stick in the memory like an arrow. Read them, and you will find that every one of them, as you ponder it, sucks the mind in and in like a whirlpool, till it is lost in the depths. You will find, too, that there are very few of

them which you do not know by heart. They have found their way into the memory of Christendom as no other words have done. Even before the meaning has been apprehended, the perfect, proverb-like expression lodges itself fast in the mind. (*James Stalker.*) *Attention to the Word of God:*—I. The circumstance mentioned in the first verse of the text was A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE OF OUR LORD'S OFFICE AND CHARACTER. "The people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God." Jesus Christ was "that Prophet which should come into the world." He brought down a message of mercy from heaven to earth; a message of pardon for the guilty, of life to the dead, and of salvation to those who were utterly and eternally lost. They were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority. They "pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God." And surely it is not too much for us to expect to witness a continuance of the same spirit. If God has indeed sent His Son and His servants to communicate an authentic revelation of His will to man, these teachers must be listened to by all who understand their own character and circumstances, and the great ends for which they live. II. SUCH AN ATTENTION TO THE WORD OF GOD IS MATTER OF ABSOLUTE AND UNIVERSAL DUTY AND OBLIGATION. We are all bound to receive Divine instruction, and to receive it in the mode contemplated in the text. The law of Moses directed that, at stated seasons, there were to be holy convocations of the people; when they were to be collected in masses, to engage in holy duties, to enjoy holy delights, to receive holy light and power, and thereby to be filled for those high and holy ends for which they existed as a separate people. In the gospel, Christians are commanded not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. They are to "exhort one another." Along with these commands, there are "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises." "In all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Exod. xx. 24; Matt. xviii. 20). We are bound to give this attendance on the word and worship of God, because He requires it. We are bound to do this, because we ourselves have need of it. If the highest archangel in heaven were commanded to frequent religious assemblies, as a learner, and as a worshipper, he would not refuse. This was done by Him who has received "a name which is above every name." As the Mediator, Jesus Christ was subject to the Father; and He testified that subjection by a devout regard for His ordinances. He was a stated attendant on the services of the Temple. But we are not merely creatures: we are also sinners. We are not only subject to our Maker's authority; we need our Maker's mercy. If we would obtain His blessing, we must seek it in the way of His own appointment. In any other way He has not promised it; in any other way we have no right to expect it. It does not mean that the vulgar and illiterate must go to Church, but that men of science and literature are at liberty to stay away. A man may be as great a philosopher as Socrates or Plato; but then he is a creature and a sinner. He must therefore attend to his Creator's word; he must kneel at his Creator's feet. Neither can political rank at all free us from this great obligation. A man may be a lord, a duke, a king, or an emperor; yet he must imitate the example of Him who is Lord of lords, and King of kings. No man is excused on the ground of poverty and meanness. It may mortify him excessively to exhibit his rags before a large and respectable congregation; but Christ hath left us an example that we should tread in His steps. His piety and poverty were great and manifest. The plea of a high and refined spirituality of mind will be equally unavailing. It is useless to say, "I have no need to observe the mere forms of piety, since I enjoy its spirit and its power." III. The men of bustle and business are sometimes disposed to look upon all this attendance on the Word of God AS SO MUCH LOST TIME, AND AN INCONVENIENT INTERFERENCE WITH THE CONCERNS OF LIFE. If such excuses could ever be seasonable, they might have been urged by the fishermen of Galilee, on the occasion referred to in the text. They had toiled all the night before, and caught nothing. They were now in the act of washing their nets, in order at the earliest opportunity to go to sea again and make another attempt. Several of them, it is probable, had families dependent on their industry and success. Under such circumstances they might have said, "Lord, we have no time to hear sermons now. It is impossible for us to comply with your request, and to spare our boat for preaching purposes at present. We must follow our employment, or our debts cannot be paid, nor our children's wants supplied." But not a word of objection or excuse was heard. What follows proves that in the end they suffered no loss. Know, therefore, that there is a providence; a blessing of the Lord which maketh rich. IV. THE WORD OF GOD DESERVES TO BE IMPLICITLY BELIEVED AND OBEYED. We may always venture to carry out its instructions into

practical effect in the face of every difficulty and discouragement. But Peter reasoned on a different principle, and came to a different conclusion. He called Jesus "Master," and was consistent with himself. Many of us talk like servants while we act like masters. We say, "Lord, Lord," but do not the things which He enjoins. But Peter understood his duty better. When the Master commands, the servant's business is, not to argue, but to obey. V. THAT WORD DESERVES OUR ATTENTION ON ACCOUNT OF ITS POWER TO REACH AND CONTROL THE HUMAN HEART. The Author of the Bible knows what is in man. He can speak to the heart of His own creatures. His Word touches the hidden springs of thought and feeling, and thus turns us about whithersoever He will (Heb. iv. 12). Peter found this by experience. The sermon was heard, and such was the silent and secret but powerful effect of Divine truth upon his heart, that he saw his unutterable guilt and depravity as in the light of open day; and became so agitated with grief and terror, that, in the end, he fell down at Jesus' knees, exclaiming, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (ver. 8). You will soon be brought to the same temper, if you listen to the same Teacher. VI. IT IS NOT INTENDED, HOWEVER, TO INTIMATE THAT THIS MATCHLESS WORD WILL INTRODUCE US TO A REST AND PEACE, WHICH IMPLIES AN EXEMPTION FROM WORLDLY CALAMITIES. When the disciples were favoured with the immediate presence of Christ, and were in the very act of receiving a miraculous blessing at His hands, we scarcely expected to hear anything of a broken net and a sinking boat. Yet both these inconveniences were experienced on this memorable occasion. The afflictions of a good man only tend to heighten his gratitude, by more abundant displays of the Divine faithfulness and love. It was wonderful that the net should be suffered to break; but it was more wonderful that, after this accident, the fishes were not lost. It was wonderful that the boat should be suffered to begin to sink; but it was more wonderful that, in such a state, they should all come safe to land. God often reduces His people to the last extremities, and then shows them His salvation. The vessel which bears the saints to glory is often in a leaky and sinking state. All hope of being saved is not unfrequently taken away. Yet, while they have an ear to hear, and a heart to obey, they continue to float. VII. THE BENEFITS ARISING FROM AN ATTENTION TO THE WORD OF GOD ARE NOT CONFINED TO OURSELVES: THEY EXTEND TO OTHERS. While attention to the Word of God teaches us the duty of instructing others, it also gives us the disposition to make the attempt. Piety and charity are inseparably connected. (*Samuel Jackson.*) *The attractive power of the gospel:*—Jesus as a preacher "drew." What was the attraction? He used no rhetorical device to produce an effect. His method was startling in its novelty. He did not follow the customs of His age. Though claiming to be a religious teacher, He did not adopt the conventional *rôle* of a priest or scribe. But to really appreciate the spirit of the Preacher we must understand His doctrine. The message He brought men made it imperative that His attitude towards them should be that of large-hearted sympathy. Now, there are some things I want you to see as the result of this exposition. 1. The first is that the gospel of Christ, when proclaimed in the proper spirit, never fails to touch the heart. In a sermon of Bishop Fraser's I read the following story: A well-known Anglican Bishop was announced to preach in a certain church. A tradesman in the parish, the leader of a set of Atheists, made up his mind to go and hear him. He listened attentively, and after the sermon he said to some one, "If that bishop had argued, I would have fought with him; but there was no arguing about him; he preached to us simply about the love of God, and that touched me." Let the gospel be preached with the simplicity and sympathy with which it was first preached in Galilee, and people will still be found pressing to hear. 2. The next thing I want you to see is, that the gospel and spirit of Christ are the powers that have been refining and elevating society ever since He lived and taught. Slowly, almost insensibly, the gospel has been making its way in society. 3. The last thing I want you to see is, that the gospel and spirit of Jesus alone have the power to make humanity noble and good. What a principle this is on which to base individual, social, and political life—God is the Father of all men and has given His Son to redeem them from death; all men are the sons of God, bound to obey Him with loving and filial spirit; each man owes to every other man the duties of a brother. Were that principle realized the happiness of the world would far surpass the dreams of the most ardent socialist. Getting rich by methods that injure others would be unknown. (*S. H. Hamilton, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. **Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.**—

Out of the deep:—I. RECALL THE HISTORIC EVENT. 1. It is not work that tries men and women, half as much as it is the disappointment which unsuccess brings. 2. The best and only real recreation which any soul can find is that which comes from resting in the Lord, and in abiding patiently upon Him, in the faith that He doeth all things well, even when He asks us to labour on without finding any immediate reward. II. CHRIST TAKES HIS PEOPLE INTO THE DEEP. There was in the crisis-hour of St. Peter's personal history a striking coincidence between his outward and his inward experience—a parable of all Divine dealings with men. 1. Think of the present attitude of the world towards revealed truth. It shrinks from launching out into the deep. The prevailing tendency is towards the superficial rather than the substantial. We aim at greatness instead of thoroughness. Men have pushed their investigations in every direction; but they are disposed to stop just where the problem deepens into anything like mystery, and where faith must take the place of sight. Whenever I meet with one of these flippant retailers of modern objections to Holy Scripture, and hear him making light of revealed truth, and ventilating with imperiousness his opinion that the Bible is largely a myth, I always feel like asking such a man: "My friend, have you ever pushed out from the shallow into the depth of these questions? Have ever your knees touched the waters of God's mighty sea? Have you ever gone, alone with Christ, away from the shore and its noisy multitude, to where His waves are mountains?" 2. In the workings and leadings of His providence, God sometimes takes us out of the region of shallow, everyday experiences, into those which are very deep and solemn. There are depths of sorrow, of affliction, and doubt and depression, of poverty and bodily sickness, of temptation, of penitence and shame, and of spiritual weakness; and some of them are mysterious, unfathomable. There is, in such cases, no use in trying to see bottom. Now and then the soul is tempted to think that chance, or accident, or lack of foresight, or an enemy of some kind, has lured him out there, just to drown him or to fill him with terror. Nay, it was a loving Guide who led you thither. (*E. E. Johnson, M.A.*) *Advancement in prayer*:—Prayer has small beginnings; but it should be progressive, never stationary. It is a science needing practice, and practice in it, as in other sciences, will make perfect. Our Lord bade St. Peter thrust out a little from the land; then He made him launch out into the deep. Our first prayers are a thrusting out a little from the land, a little disengagement of the thoughts, of the affections, from earth. But if we would gain anything, we must not rest satisfied with this, but must, at Christ's word, launch forth into the deep of spiritual communion with God. I. Prayer, to be efficacious, must be RECOLLECTED. All the powers of the mind must be drawn off from other matters, and concentrated on Him whom you are addressing. The wandering imagination has to be recalled from those objects about which it plays, like a butterfly round garden flowers, that it may rest on God. The memory is called away from the affairs of ourselves, that it may be used to supply food for the meditation in which we are engaged. The understanding is withdrawn from musing and irrelevant objects, that it may reason and reflect on the matter of our prayer and on the nature of Him to whom we pray. Finally, the will, which runs after a thousand objects which it desires, loves, and takes pleasure in, is fixed on God, and strives to conform itself to the Divine will, producing affections and forming resolutions such as the subject of meditation and devotion exacts. II. Prayer should be DISENGAGED. After St. Peter had received Jesus into his vessel, he thrust out a little from the land. So, in prayer, the thoughts which are attached to earth, like the moorings of a boat, must be flung loose, or the vessel cannot put to sea. III. Prayer must be EARNEST. While disengagement resembles a sportsman raising his gun to his shoulder, and recollection represents him sighting his object, earnestness is the charge of powder with which his gun is loaded. IV. Prayer must be DEFINITE. Vague prayer without a purpose is never very earnest, nor can it be effectual. A good plan is to take one grace at a time, and ask for that, then another, and so on. Definiteness is the bullet to hit the mark. V. Prayer must be PERSEVERING. This proves that we are in earnest, that we really desire that for which we ask. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *Launching out into the deep*:—We have toiled in the narrows too long, and have taken little by our toil. Look round you in this nineteenth century of Christendom, and survey what ought to be a kingdom of heaven. We must launch out into the deep, the great human deep, which is in Christ's dominion, and not in the devil's, and let down our nets for a draught. We have learnt wisdom perhaps from our faults, our follies, our failures. The Church has toiled in the shallows surrounding her coasts,

among the souls she could get within her pale. But rarely has man, in his simple human relations and activities, been suffered to feel that as man he was dear to Christ, and a subject of His kingdom. The great evangelical movement began with a noble attempt to fulfil this command. The evangelists saved our State. Voltaire wrote to d'Alembert, when the revolutionary yeast was beginning to work: "We have never pretended to enlighten the cobblers and the maid-servants; we leave that to the apostles." In a few years those cobblers and maid-servants were flooding the gutters of Paris with the best blood of France; while in England the apostles had tamed them. But the evangelical movement, as the years passed on, shut itself up more and more to its Churches, and treated the great human world, the world of secular thought, activity, and interest, as quite outside its pale. Christ points us to the broad ocean, the great human deep—the relations, the energies, the industries, and the interests, the thoughts, and the sympathies of men, in their physical, intellectual, social, and political life; these we claim for His kingdom, these be it ours to win to His love. Instead of saving souls out of the world, let us save the world with the souls in it. (*J. Baldwin Brown, B.A.*) *Encouragement to work for God, though unsuccessful*:—1. Have we to contend in our work with a feeling of its having been fruitless? In the case of sensible labour, there always is some result. How different, on the contrary, is the case of the labourer in the world of mind! Does the feeling of the fruitlessness of our spiritual work oppress and summon us to conflict, or do we bear it lightly? There are men who know this feeling very well, but, in a certain measure, feel comfortable in it. 2. If the feeling of dejection is now threatening to overcome us, let us not indulge it; let us ask rather how to change it into the joyful confidence of success! And whither shall we go? Where Peter went; with Jesus we find help. The same Peter who now complains, "Lord, we have toiled," &c., how differently he had, a few moments after, to judge! But still more. Had he not laboured in vain, the Lord had not found him, nor he the Lord. We see here, in a very evident example, how deceitful the feeling of fruitlessness is, and how we should not let ourselves be taken in by it. But not only that—we have also a security for it that labour for spiritual purposes can never be in vain. (*Professor Rothe.*) *Fishing too near shore*:—"Launch out into the deep." I. This Divine counsel comes, first, to all those who are paddling in THE MARGIN OF BIBLE RESEARCH. My father read the Bible through three times after he was eighty years of age, and without spectacles; not for the mere purpose of saying he had been through it so often, but for his eternal profit. John Colby, the brother-in-law of Daniel Webster, learned to read after he was eighty-four years of age, in order that he might become acquainted with the Scriptures. There is no book in the world that demands so much of our attention as the Bible. Yet nine-tenths of Christian men get no more than ankle-deep. Walk all up and down this Bible domain! Try every path. Plunge in at the prophecies, and come out at the epistles. Go with the patriarchs, until you meet the evangelists. Rummage and ransack, as children who are not satisfied when they come to a new house, until they know what is in every room, and into what every door opens. Open every jewel-casket. Examine the sky-lights. For ever be asking questions. Put to a higher use than was intended the Oriental proverb, "Hold all the skirts of thy mantle extended when Heaven is raining gold." The sea of God's Word is not like Gennesaret, twelve miles by six, but boundless; and in any one direction you can sail on for ever. Why, then, confine yourself to a short psalm, or to a few verses of an epistle? The largest fish are not near the shore. Sail away, oh ye mariners, for eternity! Launch out into the deep. II. The text is appropriate to all CHRISTIANS OF SHALLOW EXPERIENCE. Doubts and fears have in our day been almost elected to the Parliament of Christian graces. Doubts and fears are not signs of health, but festers and carbuncles. You have a valuable house or farm. It is suggested that the title is not good. You employ counsel. You have the deeds examined. You search the record for mortgages, judgments, and liens. You are not satisfied until you have a certificate, signed by the great Seal of the State, assuring you that the title is good. Yet how many leave their title to heaven an undecided matter! Christian character is to come up to higher standards. We have now to hunt through our library to find one Robert M'Cheyne, or one Edward Payson, or one Harlan Page. The time will come when we will find half a dozen of them sitting in the same seat with us. The grace of God can make a great deal better men than those I have mentioned. Christians seem afraid they will get heterodox by going too far. III. The text is appropriate to all WHO ARE ENGAGED IN CHRISTIAN WORK. The Church of God has been fishing along

the shore. We set our net in a good, calm place, and in sight of a fine chapel, and we go down every Sunday to see if the fish have been wise enough to come into our net. We might learn something from that boy with his hook and line. He throws his line from the bridge: no fish. He sits down on a log: no fish. He stands in the sunlight and casts the line: but no fish. He goes up by the mill-dam, and stands behind the bank, where the fish cannot see him, and he has hardly dropped the hook before the cork goes under. The fish come to him as fast as he can throw them ashore. In other words, in our Christian work, why do we not go where the fish are? It is not so easy to catch souls in church, for they know that we are trying to take them. With the Bible in one pocket, and the hymn-book in another pocket, and a loaf of bread under your arm, launch out into the great deep of this world's wretchedness. IV. The text is appropriate TO ALL THE UNFORGIVEN. Every sinner in this house would come to God if he thought that he might come just as he is. People talk as though the pardon of God were a narrow river, like the Kennebec or the Thames, and that their sin draws too much water to enter it. No; it is not a river, nor a bay, but a sea. I should like to persuade you to launch out into the great deep of God's mercy. I am a merchant. I have bought a cargo of spices in India. I have, through a bill of exchange, paid for the whole cargo. You are a ship-captain. I give you the orders, and say, "Bring me those spices." You land in India. You go to the trader and say, "Here are the orders"; and you find everything all right. You do not stop to pay the money yourself. It is not your business to pay it. The arrangements were made before you started. So Christ purchases your pardon. He puts the papers, or the promises, into your hand. Is it wise to stop and say, "I cannot pay for my redemption"? God does not ask you to pay. Relying on what has been done, launch out into the deep. (*Dr. Talmage.*)

Ver. 5. **Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at Thy word.**—*Obedience to the word of Christ*:—How very much may simple obedience partake of the sublime! Peter here appeals, quite naturally, to one of the grandest principles which rule among intelligent beings, and to the strongest force which sways the universe. Great God, it is "at Thy word" that seraphs fly and cherubs bow! Acting in conformity with "Thy word," we feel ourselves to be in order with all the forces of the universe, travelling on the main track of all real existence. Is not this a sublime condition, even though it be seen in the common deeds of our everyday life? I. "At Thy word" should apply TO ALL THE AFFAIRS OF ORDINARY LIFE. 1. I mean, first, as to continuance in honest industry (1 Cor. vii. 20). Be diligent. Labour on in hope. Your best endeavours will not of themselves bring you prosperity; still, do not relax those endeavours. God has placed you where you are; move not till His providence calls you. Do not run before the cloud. Let not despondency drive you to anything rash or unseemly. 2. As to seeking for employment, if you have none. Go on seeking. Let men see that a Christian is not readily driven to despair; nay, let them see that when the yoke is made more heavy the Lord has a secret way of strengthening the backs of His children to bear their burdens. 3. It may be that you have been endeavouring in your daily life to acquire skill in your business, and you have not succeeded, or you have tried to acquire more knowledge, so that you could better fulfil your vocation, but hitherto you have not prospered as you could wish. Do not, therefore, cease from your efforts. Christians must never be idlers. Our Lord Jesus would never have it said that His disciples are a sort of cowards who, if they do not succeed the first time, will never try again. At His word let down the net once more: He may intend largely to bless you when by trial you have been prepared to bear the benediction. II. IN MATTERS OF SPIRITUAL PROFITING we must at the word of Christ let down the net again. III. The great principle of our text should be applied TO OUR LIFE-BUSINESS—soul-winning. Our method of catching men is by letting down the net of the gospel. Each believer has a warrant to seek the conversion of his fellows. The word of the Lord is a warrant which justifies the man who obeys it. It will leave us guilty if we do not obey. This warrant from Christ is one which, if we be in the state of heart of Simon Peter, will be omnipotent with us. It was very powerful with Simon Peter. 1. He was under the influence of a great disappointment. Yet he let down the net. 2. This command in Peter overcame his love of ease. 3. The command of Christ was so supreme over Peter that he was not held back by carnal reason. Reason would say, "If you could not catch fish in the night, you will certainly not do so in the day." But when Christ commands, the

most unlikely time is likely, and the most unpromising sphere becomes hopeful. 4. The lesson to you and me is this: Let us do as Peter did, and let down the net *personally*, for the apostle said, "*I* will let down the net." Cannot you do something yourself—with your own heart, lips, hands? 5. And you had better do it at once. You may never have another opportunity; your zeal may have evaporated, or your life may be over. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The power of God's word:*—"At Thy word"—here is the cause of causes, the beginning of the creation of God. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made," and by that word was the present constitution of this round world settled as it stands. When the earth was fruitless and dark, Thy voice, O Lord, was heard, saying, "Let there be light," and "at Thy word" light leaped forth. "At Thy word" day and night took up their places, and "at Thy word" the waters were divided from the waters by the firmament of heaven. "At Thy word" the dry land appeared, and the seas retired to their channels. "At Thy word" the globe was mantled over with green, and vegetable life began. "At Thy word" appeared the sun and moon and stars, "for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." "At Thy word" the living creatures filled the sea, and air, and land, and man at last appeared. Of all this we are well assured, for by faith we know that the worlds were framed by the word of God. Nor is it in creation alone that the word of the Lord is supreme, but in providence, too, its majestic power is manifested, for "the Lord upholdeth all things by the word of His power." Snow and vapour and stormy wind are all fulfilling His word. His word runneth very swiftly. When frost binds up the life-floods of the year, the Lord sendeth forth His word and melteth them. Nature abides and moves by the word of the Lord. So, too, all matters of fact and history are beneath the supreme word. Jehovah stands the centre of all things, as Lord of all He abides at the saluting-point, and all the events of the ages come marching by at His word, bowing to His sovereign will. "At Thy word," O God, kingdoms arise and empires flourish; "at Thy word" races of men become dominant, and tread down their fellows; "at Thy word" dynasties die, kingdoms crumble, mighty cities become a wilderness, and armies of men melt away like the hoar frost of the morning. Despite the sin of men and the rage of devils, there is a sublime sense in which all things from the beginning, since Adam crossed the threshold of Eden even until now, have happened according to the purpose and will of the Lord of hosts. Prophecy utters her oracles, and history writes her pages, "at Thy word," O Lord. (*Ibid.*) *Peter and nature in harmony:*—It is wonderful to think of the fisherman of Galilee letting down his net in perfect consonance with all the arrangements of the ages. His net obeys the law which regulates the spheres. His hand consciously does what Arcturus and Orion are doing without thought. This little bell on the Galilean lake rings out in harmony with the everlasting chimes. "At Thy word," saith Peter, as he promptly obeys, therein repeating the watchword of seas and stars, of winds and worlds. It is glorious thus to be keeping step with the marchings of the armies of the King of kings. (*Ibid.*) *"At Thy word" the watchword of the saints:*—"At Thy word" has been the password of all good men from the beginning until now. Saints have acted upon these three words, and found their marching orders in them. An ark is builded on dry land, and the ribald crowd gather about the hoary patriarch, laughing at him; but he is not ashamed, for, lifting his face to heaven, he saith, "I have builded this great vessel, O Jehovah, at Thy word." Abraham quits the place of his childhood, leaves his family, and goes with Sarah to a land of which he knows nothing, crossing the broad Euphrates, and entering upon a country possessed by the Canaanite, in which he roams as a stranger and a sojourner all his days. He dwells in tents with Isaac and Jacob. If any scoff at him for thus renouncing the comforts of settled life, he lifts also his calm face to heaven, and smilingly answers to the Lord, "It is at Thy word." Ay, and even when his brow is furrowed, and the hot tear is ready to force itself from beneath the patriarch's eyelid, as he lifts his hand with the knife to stab Isaac to the heart, if any charge him with murder, or think him mad, he lifts the same placid face towards the majesty of the Most High and saith, "It is at Thy word." At that word he joyfully sheathes the sacrificial knife, for he has proved his willingness to go to the utmost at the word of the Lord his God. If I were to introduce you to a thousand of the faithful ones who have shown the obedience of faith, in every case they would justify their acts by telling you that they did them "at God's word." Moses lifts his rod in presence of haughty Pharaoh, "at Thy word," great God! Nor does he lift that rod in vain at Jehovah's word, for thick and heavy fall the plagues upon the children of Ham. They are made to know that God's word returneth not to Him void, but fulfilleth

His purpose, whether it be of threatening or of promise. See Moses lead the people out of Egypt, the whole host in its myriads! Mark how he has brought them to the Red Sea, where the wilderness doth shut them in. The heights frown on either side, and the rattle of Egypt's war-chariots is behind. How came Moses so to play the fool and bring them here? Were there no graves in Egypt that thus he brought them forth to die on the Red Sea shore? The answer of Moses is the quiet reflection that he did it at Jehovah's word, and God justifies that word, for the sea opens wide a highway for the elect of God, and they march joyfully through, and with timbrels and dances on the other side they sing unto the Lord who hath triumphed gloriously. If in after days you find Joshua compassing Jericho, and not assailing it with battering rams, but only with one great blast of trumpets, his reason is that God has spoken to him by His word. And so right on, for time would fail me to speak of Samson, and Jephthah, and Barak: these men did what they did at God's word; and, doing it, the Lord was with them. (*Ibid.*) *A net for each one to let down*:—Peter only let down one net, and there was the pity of it. If John and James and all the rest had let down their nets, the result would have been much better. "Why?" say you. Because, through there being only one net, that net was overstrained, and broke. If all the nets had been used, they might have taken more fish, and no net would have been broken. I was reading some time ago of a take of mackerel at Brighton; when the net was full, the mackerel sticking in all the meshes made it so heavy that the fishermen could not raise it, and the boat itself was in some danger of going down, so that they had to cut away the net and lose the fish. Had there been many nets and boats, they might have buoyed up the whole of the fish; and so they might have done in this case. As it was, many fish were lost through the breaking of the net. If a Church can be so awakened that each individual gets to work in the power of the Holy Spirit, and all the individuals combine, then how many souls will be captured for Jesus! Multitudes of souls are lost to the blessed gospel because of our broken nets, and the nets get broken because we are not well united in the holy service, and by our unwisdom cause loss to our Master's cause. Ministers need not become worn out with labour if all would take their share: one boat would not begin to sink if the other boats took a part of the blessed load. (*Ibid.*) *Many are in need through their own fault*:—"We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." This complaint is often heard nowadays, also. Although many poor people may assert, with perfect truth, that they have laboured hard, yet there are many others whose poverty is through their own fault. Some of the faulty occasions are the following. I. LAZINESS. Many show neither zeal nor industry in the discharge of the duties of their calling. Poverty is the necessary consequence. 1. According to the testimony of Scripture (Prov. xviii. 9; xxi. 5). 2. Reason and experience. How can he catch fishes who will not let down his net? II. LAVISHNESS. 1. Many dissipate their property through folly. (1) They have not learned how to save. (2) They do not live according to their means. (3) They attempt rash speculations, through greed of gold. 2. Through extravagance in food and dress (Prov. xxi. 17; xxiii. 11). III. WANT OF FEAR OF GOD. 1. God deprives those who do not fear Him of His blessing. 2. He visits them with sickness, and all kinds of misfortune. (*J. J. Haubs.*) *Christ's words, and not our own judgment, are our law*:—"Sir," said the Duke of Wellington to an officer who urged the impossibility of executing the directions he had received, "I did not ask your opinion; I gave you my orders, and I expect to have them obeyed." Such should be the obedience of every follower of Jesus Christ. The words which He has spoken are our law, not our judgment or fancies. *Perseverance necessary*:—The fishermen at Mentone keep on fishing with their great net; ay, by the score these fishermen take it out and haul it in again, and frequently they get no more than one little sardine for their pains. Many and many a time no more than they can hold in their hand is the produce of the casting of a net which covers acres of the sea. But why do they go on? Because they are fishermen, and cannot do anything else. Now, we are praying men, and there is nothing else we can do but wait upon the Lord. So if, after many a throw of the net of prayer, we get but one small answer, we will try again, for this is all we can do. Let us continue instant in prayer. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *At Thy word*:—These fishermen are not the men who could be charged with originating the gospel. Yet let us not suppose that there was no fitness in them for the work they had to do. Their very occupation was one which bred and nourished those very qualities which would stand them in good stead as the apostles of Christ. Their calling was one which demanded observation, that they

might discern the times most favourable. They had to scan narrowly the sky, and discern whether there were signs of a coming tempest, for the Sea of Galilee was treacherous, and would often rise into fury in a few moments. Hence they needed both prudence and courage. And they needed both patience and perseverance too. The previous night had been one of no new experience to them. The new day was to be the greatest in their lives. They were to be clothed with a new mission, and strengthened for it by a new experience. The secret of their success was to be revealed to them by a miracle, the memory of which would nerve and strengthen them in the days to come. The command, "Launch out," &c., was a strange one, but still it was the command of the Lord. I. OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF CHRIST. Wise to have authority for every work we undertake. Enough for the soldier that he has the authority of his officer, for the officer that he has the authority of his general, for the ambassador that he has the authority of his king, and for the Christian labourer that he has the authority of Christ. "Nevertheless," said Peter —that is, not because of success, but in spite of failure—"at Thy word I will let down the net." And still the word "nevertheless" is on the lips of the Church. Difficulties in the way of missionary enterprise. Arguments of those who hold that heathen races should be allowed to remain undisturbed in their religions. The slow progress we are making. "Nevertheless, at Thy word," &c. We must walk by faith, not by sight, not only in our own personal life, but in looking at the progress of the kingdom of Christ. "It is not given to you to know." These are the Saviour's words. It is enough for us to feel assured that patient labour cannot, will not, fail, and to say, amid all discouragement and delay, "Nevertheless," &c. II. THE RESULT OF THIS OBEDIENCE. It had in it not much of cheerfulness, nor perhaps, any faith, but it was obedience under trying circumstances, and as such it was crowned with success. The failure of the previous night was not unforeseen or unarranged. Christ was in that failure as much as in the success that followed it. The lesson was—empty nets without His blessing and full nets with it. And this lesson they were to remember henceforth when they should become fishers of men. Be sure that Peter would remember that morning on the day of Pentecost, when at the first casting of the gospel-net he enclosed 3,000 souls; and a few days after, when, on casting the net again, there were added to the Church 5,000 souls. The night of failure was not without its lesson and benefit. We can do worse than fail—we can succeed and be proud of our success, and burn incense to our net, and despise those who fail, and forget the Hand whose it is to give or to withhold. (*E. Mellor, D.D.*) *The spiritual fishing*:—First, the state of the world, which is as the sea. Secondly, the state of the Church, which is as a ship or boat in the sea. Thirdly, the state of men by nature, who be as fishes, ranging after their own disposition uncaught. Fourthly, the state of ministers, who be as fishers. Fifthly, the state of the gospel preached, which is the hook, or bait, or net to take souls. I. AND THE STATE OF THE WORLD IS AS THE SEA IN A FOUR-FOLD RESPECT. 1. Because of the general unstableness of the things thereof. The unsettledness of that vast creature, the sea, is well known. It is in a continual motion (it cannot rest), it ebbs and flows perpetually: sometimes (at a spring tide) it swells to that bigness that the banks cannot contain it; sometimes, again, it falls back so low, that a man must go far from the bank before he can come near it. It is (under God) chiefly governed by the moon, the which there is no one thing more subject unto chance, it being never beheld two nights together in one proportion. Thus is the world, whether we look upon the general states of kingdoms or the personal estates of particular men, either for their goods or for their bodies, we see nothing but a continual alteration. Crowns are translated from head to head, and sceptres pass from one hand to another; fenced cities are made heaps, and walled towns become as the ploughed fields; they which were once fastened as with a nail in a sure place, and having set their nests on high, dreamed of nothing but perpetuities for them and theirs, are suddenly thrown out of all, and rolled and turned like a ball. 2. Because of the tumultuousness of it. Who is ignorant of the storms and grievous tempests which are at sea? 3. The world resembles the sea by the oppression that is in it. At sea the lesser fishes are a prey to the great ones; and in the world the rich and mighty swallow up the poor; one man bites and devours another. 4. In respect of the sway the devil bears in it. Observe what is in the Psalm, "The sea is great and wide, there is that leviathan whom the Lord hath made to play therein." Now, look how this monster domineers in the sea, so doth Satan here in the world; therefore he is called the god of this world. II. The next thing is touching the Church. THE STATE THEREOF IN THE WORLD IS LIKE THE STATE OF A SHIP OR BOAT UPON THE SEA; and that especially in this respect—because

it is subject to continual tossings. 1. The troubles of His Church and the afflictions of His people do make His power and mercy to be known; even as the skill of a pilot is most to be seen in a storm: "My power is made perfect through weakness." 2. For their good. First, it makes them to look upward with the greater fervency. The second use serves to teach us (because the Church of God is as a ship in this sea of the world) the necessity of furnishing ourselves with such things as appertain to this spiritual voyage. Not to insist upon many, two things especially must be looked to. III. THE THIRD THING IS CONCERNING THE STATE OF MEN. The fish to be catched out of this sea and to be brought into this ship are men. "Thou shalt catch men from henceforth." And well in this are we compared unto the fish. For as the fishes skip and play and take their pleasure in the sea and are unwillingly taken in the net, and labour to get out, and, being in the boat, would fain, if they could, leap back into the sea, so naturally we take pleasure in our sinful ways. IV. THE FOURTH THING IS OF THE STATE OF THE MINISTER. Here are two things. 1. The state of the minister. 2. The labour, business, and work of the minister. Of the first thus we see: That is no superfluous or needless function, but a calling of great necessity for the winning and saving of men's souls. Secondly, thus: That the calling of the minister is no idle calling, but a calling of labour, a calling of much business and of great employment. V. The last thing is, THAT THE NET IN WHICH MEN MUST BE TAKEN IS THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL. The comparison agreeth fitly after this manner. The preaching of the gospel is like to a net—1. In the general drift and use. The use of a net is to take fish, the drift of preaching is to bring in souls. 2. In the ordering of it. It is not that net lapped up together that bringeth in the draught, but hailed out at length, and spread forth, that closeth the fish; it is the opening and unfolding of the gospel, the stretching it out by preaching, which doth encompass souls. There may a fish or two hang in the net, being let down on a heap, but that is a chance, and is no wise adventuring. The Word read, and so brought in (as it were) in gross, may (by the mercy of God) take some; but we have no warrant from thence to make a rule general. Again, it is need that the net be strong, otherwise the greater kind will break through and make all the labour and charge to be in vain; so it is meet that the doctrine be well strengthened out of the Word of God, that it it be well proved, that it be well pressed and applied, that the consciences of the hearers may be convicted, and that they may see it is God and not man with whom they have to do: for, a man shall meet with many froward and wilful and violent natures that will not be held in, but when they feel themselves within the net will cry, "Let us break their bands, and cast their cords from us": so that even a kind of violence may be used to keep them from destruction. 3. In the success of it. Many a draught the poor fisherman makes and taketh nothing, yet he leaveth not off. Many a time is the net of preaching shot forth, and yet none converted thereby; so it pleaseth God to exercise the patience of His servants. Yet still the work must be followed, and the Lord's leisure must be waited for. Often doth the net enclose many which yet after break away, and many are at first drawn in by the power of the gospel which yet afterwards slide back and return again to their own profaneness. (*S. Hieron.*)

Unsuccessful fishing persevered in:—I. CONSIDER THE FAILURE INDICATED. 1. They had "toiled." Everything in this world comes to be a "toil" after a time. Any kind of labour, whether of mind or body, and even pleasure, is devoid of permanent satisfaction. 2. "All the night." Incessant labour, with no result but failure. The process is familiar—(1) In personal life. After all our efforts and struggles, we confess with a sigh that we do not seem to grow any better. (2) In work for God in various spheres. Only failure seems to meet us. No decrease in moral evil; little advance. II. THERE MUST BE REASON FOR SUCH FAILURE. The general reason is the absence of Divine blessing. "Except the Lord build the house," &c. He alone is the Author of all good. But there are further considerations to be taken into account. 1. Perhaps God has not been present in our efforts. They may have lacked—(1) Simplicity of motive. (2) Earnestness of devotion. (3) Humble dependence and prayerfulness. 2. Human perversity may for a time be permitted to have its way. The reason for this is hidden now; we shall know one day why it is so. Or—3. God may have withheld His blessing—(1) To try our faith. (2) To teach us how better to labour. (3) In order to some greater and more blessed result, *e.g.*, Jacob. III. NOTE THE PERSEVERING OBEDIENCE OF FAITH. In spite of failure the apostles did not despair. So should it be with us. 1. The command of Christ is our warrant for labour. 2. And suggests the better performance of work. (1) Better preparation—"cleaning nets." (2) Greater skill and

care. (3) Deeper humility. Thinking less of our own part in the work. (4) More perseverence. (5) Stronger faith in the Great Worker whose instruments we are. 3. Such labour is bound to be ultimately successful. Because of His Word and our obedience. When, and how, we know not. In His time and way. But surely and certainly. (*George Low, M.A.*) *The disappointed seamen*:—Now, if we search into the grounds and reasons of these disappointments by the hand of Providence, we shall find them reducible to a threefold cause and reason. 1. The sovereign pleasure of God so disposes it. 2. The good of the people of God requires it. 3. The manifold sins of men in their callings provoke it. 1. The sovereign pleasure of God so disposes it. He is the Rector of the universe, and as such will still assert His dominion. If Providence had alike prospered every man's designs, and set them upon a level, there had been no occasion to exercise the rich man's charity or the poor man's patience. Nay, without frequent disappointments, itself would scarcely be owned in successes, nor those successes be half so sweet to them that receive them, as now they are. The very beauty of Providence consists much in these various and contrary effects. 2. And if we consider the gracious ends and designs of God towards His own people, it appears needful that all of them, in some things, and many of them in most things (relating to their outward condition in this world), should be frustrated in their expectations and contrivances. For if all things here should succeed according to their wish, and a constant tide of prosperity should attend them—(1) How soon would sensuality and earthliness invade their hearts and affections! Much prosperity, like the pouring in of much wine, intoxicates, and overcomes our weak heads and hearts. Can a Christian keep his heart as loose from the smiling, as from the frowning world? (2) How soon would it estrange them from their God, and interrupt their communion with Him! He had rather you should miss your desired comforts in these things, than that He should miss that delightful fellowship with you which He so desires. (3) How loth should we be to leave this, if constant success and prosperity should follow our affairs and designs here! 3. And as disappointments fall out as the effects of sovereign pleasure, and are ordered as preventive means of such mischief, which prosperity would occasion to the people of God; so it comes as a righteous retribution and punishment of the many evils that are committed in our trading and dealings with men. It is a hard thing to have much business pass through our hands, and no iniquity cleave to them and defile them. And, from among many, I will here select these following evils, which have destroyed the estates and hopes of many. (1) Irreligious and atheistical neglect and contempt of God and His worship, especially in those that have been enlightened and made profession of religion. (2) Injustice and fraud is a blasting sin. A little unjust gain mingled with a great estate will consume it like a moth. (3) Oppression is a blasting sin to men's estates and employments. (4) Falsehood and lying is a blasting sin to our employments; a sin which tends to destroy all converse and disband all civil societies. (5) Perjury, or false swearing, is a blasting sin. The man cannot prosper that lies under the guilt thereof. It now remains that we apply it. Inference 1. Doth God sometimes disappoint the most diligent labours of men in their lawful callings? Then this teacheth you patience and submission under your crosses and disappointments. Consideration 1. And, in the first place, if thou be one that fearest God, consider that disappointments in earthly things fix no mark of God's hatred upon thee. The bee makes a sweeter meal upon two or three flowers, than the ox that hath so many mountains to graze upon. Consideration 2. And what if by these disappointments God be carrying on the great design of His eternal love upon thy soul? This may be the design of these providences; and if so, sure there is no cause for thy despondencies. Consideration 3. Be patient under disappointments; for if you meekly submit and quietly wait upon God, He can quickly repair all that you have lost and restore it by other providences double to you. Consideration 4. And why should it seem so hard and grievous to you for God to disappoint your hopes and purposes, when you cannot but know that you have disappointed His expectations from you so often, and that in greater and better things than these? Inference 2. If it be so, then labour to make sure of things eternal, lest you be eternally disappointed there also. (*J. Flavel.*)

Vers. 6, 11. **And when they had thus done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes, and the net brake.**—*The desponding encouraged*:—I. IN DISCHARGING THE DUTIES OF LIFE OUR BEST ENDEAVOURS MAY APPEAR FRUITLESS. Always discouraging to toil without success: in learning, business, religion. Our failures often arise—

(1) through inexperience; (2) through indolence; (3) through impatience. None of these the case with Peter however. An experienced fisherman, and had toiled all the night. Continued fruitlessness ought to awaken candid investigation. Are we in a right sphere of labour? Are we labouring in a right spirit? We may be, and yet our best endeavours appear fruitless. II. IN DISCHARGING THE DUTIES OF LIFE, WE MUST OBEY THE COMMANDS OF CHRIST. 1. In obeying Christ, Peter's faith rose above natural difficulties. 2. In obeying Christ, Peter's faith rested on Christ's command—"At Thy word." No one else could have persuaded him to let down the net. 3. In obeying Christ, Peter's faith led to decisive action—"I will let down the net." Cultivate the habit of decision. The decisive man will catch his fish while the negligent man is preparing his nets. III. IN DISCHARGING THE DUTIES OF LIFE, WE SHALL ULTIMATELY BE SUCCESSFUL. Success may be delayed for a time; but it will come. At the very moment of our failure God purposes to fill our nets. (*J. Woodhouse.*)

"The livelong night we've toiled in vain,
But at Thy gracious word
I will let down the net again:
Do Thou Thy will, O Lord."

So spake the weary fisher, spent
With bootless, darkling toil,
Yet on his Master's bidding bent,
For love and not for spoil.

So day by day, and week by week,
In sad and weary thought,
They muse, whom God hath set to seek
The souls His Christ hath bought.

Full many a dreary, anxious hour
We watch our nets alone
In drenching spray and driving shower,
And hear the night-bird's moan.

At morn we look and nought is there
Sad dawn of cheerless day!
Who then from pining and despair
The sickening heart can stay?

There is a stay—and we are strong;
Our Master is at hand,
To cheer our solitary song,
And guide us to the strand.

In His own time; but yet awhile
Our bark at sea must ride
Cast after cast, by force or guile
All waters must be tried.

Should e'er Thy wonder-working grace
Triumph by our weak arm,
Let not our sinful fancy trace
Aught human in the charm.

Or, if for our unworthiness,
Toil, prayer, and watching fail,
In disappointment Thou canst bless,
So love at heart prevail. (*J. Keble.*)

Weariness and faith:—I. It is A VOICE OF FATIGUE AND LASSITUDE TRYING TO STEADY ITSELF FOR FRESH EFFORT. II. It is THE VOICE, ALSO, OF DEFEAT AND DISAPPOINTMENT TRYING TO RALLY ITSELF FOR FRESH ENTERPRISE. III. The word "Nevertheless" introduces THE GRAND CONTRAST AND ANTITHESIS OF THE TEXT. Gather into one all the heads and threads of discourse—we are weary of the monotony of life, weary of

the perpetual round of doing and being, disappointed with the result of life, with what we are to-day in Thy sight—beings occupying a point and not more, between two eternities. Nevertheless, at Thy word, because Thou speakest in our ears to-day and sayest, "Launch out into the deep, the inscrutable future, the future of time and of eternity"; yes, at Thy word—otherwise we were languid and depressed and disappointed and could not—at Thy word we will once again, to-day, let down the net. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The Galilean fishers:*—Our subject is perseverance in duty in the absence of seeming success. 1. Illustrate it by the circumstances of our earthly life. Let duty always take precedence of pleasure; let recreation never be thought of till it is fairly earned: let no engagements be entered into beyond what can be met, and no expenditure be indulged in beyond a man's income. Let no neglect of our own prudence, and our own duty, be excused by the idle plea of relying upon God's providence without ourselves exercising the self-help on which God's providence is conditional. On such principles, as a general rule, success will reward effort, and the net judiciously cast will not fail to enclose the fish. There are, of course, exceptions. Without any fault on the part of the workman his labour may be in vain. What shall those do who may truly say, "we have toiled all night," &c.? Give up in despair? Nay. Let down the net again. 2. Apply this to higher industries. The case of a soul seeking heaven. The work of preacher, Sunday-school teacher, Bible-woman, tract-distributor, Christian missionary. (*Newman Hall, LL.B.*) *Faith triumphant in failure:*—Miracles of our Lord are parables. Because the record is literally true that it is spiritually instructive. The terms success and failure have a large range in human life. Some men are born, we say, to succeed. Nothing that man possesses can, however, guarantee results. Circumstances which man controls not, changes which he cannot foresee, have a wide operation, and under their influence it is seen again and again that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Failure comes where success was certain; success where every one foresaw failure. If a man has found heaven he may bear to have lost earth. But is it not true that failure has place also in spiritual things? Is there no such thing as a toiling all the night and taking nothing in the matters of that world which is of the soul and of eternity? The history of the Church of Christ is full of answers to that question. What long dark nights has it had to toil through! But of this we are sure, that the long toil of the night, however little rewarded, was essential to the marvellous success of the morning. The attitude of the true Church on earth has ever been characterized by the brief words selected as the topic of this sermon, "Faith triumphant in failure." And how shall we say that the case stands now for us? Are we living in a night or in a morning? It is far better to be labouring in the blackest night, than to fancy ourselves gathering with Christ when we are indeed scattering without Him. But for ourselves, and for others, let faith triumph over failure. I know that every failure is a proof of the want of faith. I know that if faith were present, failure could not be. But there is such a thing as faith, after defeats, returning to the charge, and it is in *that* that the test of our Christianity lies. A man who can come back to Christ, and say, "Lord, I have slept at my post; I have let my oars drop; I have often left my net unmended until it could enclose nothing; I have suffered weariness to make me indolent, and long disappointment to make me hopeless. I have done all this, but yet—even now—even thus late—I will, once again, at Thy word, let down my net, and wait Thy blessing," that man may have many faults, he may be much behindhand, he may be full of infirmity and of sin, but he has the root of the matter in him; he has a little faith, and according to that faith shall it be to him. That man knows something, however little, of a faith triumphant in failure. Christ stands, as of old, upon the shore, and asks us of our welfare. He enters, as of old, into the little vessel which contains our fortunes: He feels for its frailness, He will guide its flittings, He will steer it for us into the haven where we would be. Hitherto we may have toiled and taken nothing; but if, at His word, we will now let down the net, He will bring into it that which shall be sufficient for us, and man's failure shall be Christ's success. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *A night of toil: the philosophy of failure:*—The sea-shore was often the Lord's retreat. By the shore lines of Galilee He wandered, and amid the voiceful hush of nature His soul found rest. Our scene opens in the morning on that sea made so sacred with associations of our Lord. On the beach, drawn up a little, were two fishing-boats. They had been out all night, trying, but unsuccessfully, all waters. The fishermen were washing their nets some little distance away with disconsolate faces. A night spent in toiling, and the morning dawning upon no fruit of effort,

might well make them sad. These men had apparently failed, but there were elements in their failure which led to success. I. CHRIST CAME TO THEM WHEN THEY WERE FEELING THEIR FAILURE. But He found them working. II. THEIR WORKING THUS IN FAILURE AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO TRY AGAIN SHADOWED THEIR FITNESS FOR HIGHER WORK. The Lord was choosing gospel-pioneers. There was in these men —1. Natural aptitude. 2. Industry. 3. Foresight. 4. Willinghood. III. LET US HEAR CHRIST'S WORDS OF COMMANDING EFFORT AS ADDRESSED TO US—"Launch out into the deep." 1. There are prayers unanswered and we are weary. You have, perhaps, been hugging the shore of self—throw yourself and yours more upon the deep of God's unfailing faithfulness and mercy. 2. You have been fishing in shallow waters, teaching your children, your scholars, your people, with that which was cheaply got and therefore little worth. Launch out into the ocean of God's truth. 3. You have had your religious crotchets. Launch out into broader spiritedness, deeper sympathies, more catholic charity.

"O, stirring words of living power,
Ye speak to every heart;
Ye bid all selfishness away,
And slothful ease depart.
Where'er there is a soul to cheer,
Where'er the mourners weep,
There, bear the healing balm of love,
'Launch out into the deep!'

O, watchword brave for those who sail
Across the sea of life,
Steer far away from every rock
With awful dangers rife.
Leave all the shallows and the neap;
Far in the distance keep;
Strike boldly right amid the waves—
'Launch out into the deep!'" (*W. Scott.*)

Gospel for the fifth Sunday after Trinity :—This was the final call of the disciples. Notice with what exquisite skill it is managed. I. There is THE CROWD PRESSING UPON CHRIST TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD. To a shepherd they might seem sheep to be folded; to a gardener, plants to be tended; but to a fisherman they would suggest swarming fish, ready to be swept into a net. Then comes the miraculous draught, the "great multitude of fishes" corresponding with the multitude of the people. What could be more appropriate? II. Then we have THE DIVINE POWER OF CHRIST OVER THE DENIZENS OF THE DEEP, SYMBOLIZING HIS POWER OVER THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF MEN. Probably Peter (whom we may take as representative of the rest) may have smiled when he heard the command (ver. 4). But he obeyed. And when he saw the draught of fishes, and caught a glimpse of hundreds and thousands of human beings drawn into the meshes of the gospel-net. III. THE EFFECT OF THE MIRACLE WAS TO REVEAL THE TRUE CHARACTER OF CHRIST TO PETER AND TO REVEAL PETER TO HIMSELF. Before Isaiah could go as a messenger to the people he must have a vision of the Holy God, and be bowed down under a sense of his own sinfulness. So with Peter. Whether he clearly saw at this time the whole truth of the Godhead of Christ it may be hazardous to affirm. But this is clear, that he felt himself in the presence of One who represented the holiness of God. And he shrank from Him, yet was attracted towards Him. "Depart from me"; but his inner heart says, "Stay with me." The work was done. "They forsook all and followed Him" (ver. 11). (*G. Calthrop, M.A.*) *The miraculous draught of fishes* :—I. We have here ENCOURAGEMENT TO PERSEVERANCE. II. LEARN THAT CONVICTION OF SIN IS DEEPENED BY KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST. III. Learn that HUMILITY IS THE BEST PREPARATION FOR ENTERING UPON CHRISTIAN WORK. IV. Learn HOW TO RESPOND TO A GREAT CALL—BY FORSAKING ALL. (*D. Longwill.*) *Place of the miracle in the history* :—The interest in this case centres not in the miraculous element, but in the two questions: Is the incident historical? and is it in its true place in the history? The circumstances that the narrative is found only in one of the Synoptical Gospels, and that not, as we might have expected, the one containing the Petrine tradition; that an incident is recorded in the appendix to the fourth Gospel so similar as to suggest the hypothesis of a duplicate; and that an emble-

matic significance is assigned to the occurrence in the words reported to have been spoken by Jesus, lend plausibility to the notion that we have to do here not with an actual event, but simply with a symbolic story invented to embody the promise made to Peter by his Master that he should become a fisher of men. Of those who are prepared to recognize in the incident something more than a metaphor transformed into a fact, some have doubted whether it is in its true place in Luke's Gospel, and ought not rather to be assigned to the post-resurrection period, as in the fourth Gospel. In this connection stress is laid on the exclamation of Peter on seeing the great draught of fish, "Depart from me," &c., which, as connected with the period of the first call to the discipleship, seems to lack point and appropriateness, but gains deep meaning when conceived of as spoken by Peter when his humiliating denial of his Lord was fresh in his recollection. But one has no great difficulty in imagining such an excitable, impressionable man as Peter uttering the words at any time, without any special occasion for calling his sin to mind, viewing them simply as an expression of reverence. Strauss characterizes Peter's fear as superstitious, and not at all New-Testament like. Granted, but what then? Was it to be expected that the disciples at the time of their first call should be men of the New Testament in their thoughts and feelings? On the contrary, was it not the very aim of their vocation that they might be associated with Christ, and in His company gradually imbibe the spirit of the new Christian era, the era of the better hope, when we no longer stand off in fear, but draw nigh to God in filial trust? Peter's exclamation, as reported by Luke, is in keeping with the initial period of discipleship, and just on that account it supplies no ground for transferring the incident to the later period when discipleship was about to pass into apostleship. At that late time Peter might have more reason than ever before for calling himself a sinful man, but his sense of unworthiness was not so likely then to express itself in the form of a "Depart from me." Looking at the incident in connection with its probable aim, it seems equally appropriate at the beginning and at the end of the history. Christ's purpose was to inspire Peter with enthusiasm for his spiritual vocation. There was a need for this at both periods, and in view of this fact it becomes credible that the narratives of Luke and John are not variations of the same history, but records of distinct events. The earlier event served the purpose of winning Peter to the life of discipleship, the later of inspiring him with devotion to the heroic career of the apostolate. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *The nature of the miracle:*—As for the nature of the action recorded, it has been variously conceived as a miracle of power controlling the movements of the fish and directing them into a particular course, or of supernatural knowledge of the place where the fish were to be found at a certain moment, or of prophetic clairvoyance in the exercise of a faculty natural to man, but possessed by Jesus in a preternatural degree, or so far as Jesus was concerned a mere act of trust in a special providence of God making itself subservient to His designs. It is not necessary, and the narrative does not enable us, to decide peremptorily between these various views. We are not even absolutely shut up to the belief that there was a miracle in the case in any form or degree. It is not an impossible supposition that the knowledge possessed by Jesus was such as might be obtained by observation. Traces of such a great shoal of fish might be visible on the surface to any one who might be looking in the proper direction. A well-known writer [Canon Tristram] remarks, "The density of the shoals of fish in the Sea of Galilee can scarcely be conceived by those who have not witnessed them. Frequently these shoals cover an acre or more of the surface, and the fish, as they slowly move along in masses, are so crowded, with their back fins just appearing on the level of the water, that their appearance at a little distance is that of a violent shower of rain pattering on the surface." But, while this description clearly proves the possibility of becoming aware of the presence of a shoal by observation, the supposition that our Lord acquired the knowledge which enabled Him to give directions to the fishermen in this way, is rendered very improbable by the fact that the draught of fish appeared to Peter marvellous not only in itself, but in connection with the agency of Jesus; for that he recognized Jesus as somehow the cause of the extraordinary and utterly unlooked-for success is manifest in his words. Yet it is noticeable that the narrative does not lay stress on that agency in explaining the emotions of Peter and his companions, but simply on the quantity of fish taken (ver. 9). And it may be admitted that the purpose of the transaction did not absolutely demand a miracle. Christ's aim was not merely to attach the disciples to Himself, but to fire them with zeal for their new vocation. For that end what was wanted was not a mere miracle as displaying supernatural

power or knowledge, but an experience in connection with their old vocation which, whether brought about miraculously or otherwise, should take possession of their imagination as an emblem of the great future which lay before them in their new career as apostles, or fishers of men. The phenomenal draught of fish, however brought about, fulfilled this purpose better than a small take would have done, even though the fish had been expressly created before the eyes of the disciples. Such a miracle would have filled them with astonishment and wonder, but it would not have awakened in their breasts wondering thoughts and high hopes in reference to the work and progress of the Divine Kingdom. (*Ibid.*)

All through the long night's mist and rain,
In open sea or near the shore,
They cast their nets, yet still in vain;
They found but failure evermore.

'Twas time to cleanse from tangled weed,
And lay them on the beach to dry:
When lo! in hour of utmost need,
They heard the voice of Jesus nigh.

They cast their nets again, and lo!
So large the haul of fish they take,
The meshes gape, and scarce they know
If they shall land them ere they break.

And then a chill of sudden fear,
As though the veil of sense were rent,
And they, frail men, were brought too near
The scope of some Divine intent.

Oh, could they bear that presence dread,
Before whose keen and piercing sight
Lie bare the hearts of quick and dead,
The world's great Teacher, Light of light?

What wonder if from pallid lips
The cry bursts out, "Depart from me"?
Too bright that full apocalypse
For man's sin-darkened eyes to see.

"Sin-stained am I, and Thou art pure;
Oh, turn Thy steps some other way;
How shall I dare Thy gaze endure?
How in Thy stainless presence stay."

Yet chiefly when unlooked-for gains
Our skill-less, planless labours bless,
And we, for weary labour's pains,
Reap the full harvest of success;

We wonder at the draught we take,
The latent powers that bud and grow;
Ah, can we dare our work forsake,
And follow where He bids us go?

"Yes, fear ye not," so ran His speech;
"Fishers of men ye now must be,
Where'er the world's wide waters reach,
By gliding stream or stormiest sea."

So only can we hope restore,
So only conquer shame and fear,
And welcome, from the eternal shore,
The voice that tells "our Lord is near."

(*Dean Plumptre in "Poet's Bible."*)

Christ with the Galilean fishermen:—1. The rank of life from which Jesus Christ chose the men who were to be the chief ministers of His religion, is worthy of particular notice. We see that His ministers were, in general, of lowly station; and yet we at the same time know that their instructions and influence far surpassed those of the most learned and powerful men the world had ever seen. Principles were disseminated by fishermen and tent-makers, which, from the very first, excited the admiration of many, and which, in the process of time, effected a complete revolution in the religious sentiments of the civilized world. Does not this afford an irrefragable argument for the Divine origin of the gospel? Whence had such men such things? Let us beware of neglecting anything they delivered. 2. Let us mark the honour here put on honest industry. Duty requires us to be diligent in the proper duties of our station and profession in life. No matter how humble our employment, Christ will accept us in it, visit us in it, and bless us in it. 3. The success of human industry depends on the blessing of Providence. If given, let us thank God for it; if withheld, let us not murmur, but cheerfully acquiesce in the Divine will. 4. An encouraging example of implicit and persevering obedience to the Divine commandment. 5. Instruction to ministers, in their employment being compared to that of fishermen. (1) Arduous. (2) Requiring watchfulness. (3) Exercising patience. 6. The necessity of forsaking all, in order to follow Christ. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *The blessed fishermen*:—Blest—(1) by the gracious presence of Jesus; (2) by the rich gift of Jesus; (3) by the gracious call of Jesus. (*Heubner.*) *The just means of gaining temporal blessing*:—1. God's word. 2. Labour. 3. Trust in God. 4. Acknowledgment of personal unworthiness. 5. Right use of the blessing. (*Ibid.*) *The remarkable transitions in the life of faith*:—1. From disappointment to surprise. 2. From want to plenty. 3. From joy to terror. 4. From fear to hope. (*Van Oosterzee.*) *The faith of Peter*:—Peter's faith—(1) was tried; (2) endured; (3) was changed into sight. (*Ibid.*) *The obedience of faith*:—1. Its ground. 2. Its nature. 3. Its blessing. (*Ibid.*) *An image of the preaching of the gospel*:—1. The wide-reaching command (ver. 4). 2. The hard labour (ver. 50). 3. The sole might (ver. 56). 4. The rich fruit (vers. 6, 7). 5. The right temper (ver. 8). 6. The highest requirement of the evangelical function (vers. 10, 11). (*Ibid.*) *Peter an example for us*:—1. Hear when the Lord speaks. 2. Labour when the Lord commands. 3. Believe what the Lord promises. 4. Follow whither the Lord calls. (*Fuchs.*) *Blessing in our temporal calling*:—1. On what it depends. 2. Of what nature it is. 3. For what it inspirits us. (*Lisco.*) *Failure and success*:—I. THE FISHERMEN'S FAILURE. 1. It was simply failure; disgrace did not attend it. They had done their best, and it was not their fault that they were unsuccessful. Better to say, "I toiled all the night, and caught nothing," than, "I cast in the net, and caught one thousand fish without an effort." 2. It was overruled for good. God often teaches that the years of plenty are from Him, by prefacing them with years of famine. 3. It did not produce despair. 4. No faithful toil is without reward. What we call failure is, in God's account, oftentimes brightest success. II. THE FISHERMEN'S SUCCESS. 1. It was miraculous. In two respects—that they caught so many, and, though the net brake, saved all. 2. But by ordinary means. No success without diligent labour. 3. They had much anxiety—"The net brake." Yet this apparent accident was a source of good—co-operation. 4. Their minds seem to have been pervaded by deepest awe. "They beckoned"—not shouted, as in ordinary circumstances they would have done. 5. To enjoy success, we must have a present Lord. 6. Success should lead us to follow Christ more fully. (*R. A. Griffin.*) *The two draughts of fishes*:—We have heard of some ministers who could say that they had often preached from the same text, but they had never delivered the same discourse. The like may be said of Christ. He often preached upon the same truth, but it was never precisely in the same manner. We have read in your hearing this morning the narrative of two miracles (Luke v. and John xxi.) which seem to the casual observer to be precisely alike; but he who shall read diligently and study carefully, will find that though the text is the same in both, yet the discourse is full of variations. In both the miraculous draughts of fishes, the text is the mission of the saints to preach the gospel—the work of man-catching—the ministry by which souls are caught in the net of the gospel, and brought out of the element of sin to their eternal salvation. I. IN THESE TWO MIRACLES THERE ARE MANY POINTS OF UNIFORMITY. They are both intended to set forth the way in which Christ's kingdom shall increase. 1. First you will perceive that in both miracles we are taught that the means must be used. In the first

case, the fish did not leap into Simon's boat to be taken; nor, in the second case, did they swarm from the sea and lay themselves down upon the blazing coals that they might be prepared for the fisherman's feast. No, the fishermen must go out in their boat, they must cast the net; and after having cast the net, they must either drag it ashore, or fill both boats with its contents. Everything is done here by human agency. It is a miracle, certainly, but yet neither the fisherman, nor his boat, nor his fishing tackle are ignored: they are all used and all employed. Let us learn that in the saving of souls God worketh by means; that so long as the present economy of grace shall stand, God will be pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Every now and then there creeps up in the Church a sort of striving against God's ordained instrumentality. God getteth the most glory through the use of instruments. 2. Again, in both our texts there is another truth equally conspicuous, namely, that means of themselves are utterly unavailing. In the first case you hear the confession, "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing." In the last case you hear them answer to the question, "Children, have ye any meat?" "No"—a sorrowful No. What was the reason of this? Were they not fishermen plying their special calling? Verily, they were no raw hands; they understood the work. Had they gone about the toil unskilfully? No. Had they lacked industry? No, they had toiled. Had they lacked perseverance? No, they had toiled all the night. Was there a deficiency of fish in the sea? The Great Worker who does not discard the means would still have His people know that He uses instrumentality, not to glorify the instrument, but for the sake of glorifying Himself. He takes weakness into His hands and makes it strong, not that weakness may be worshipped, but that the strength may be adored which even makes weakness subservient to His might. 3. Thirdly, there is clearly taught in both these miracles the fact that it is Christ's presence that confers success. Christ sat in Peter's boat. 4. In both instances the success which attended the instrumentality through Christ's presence developed human weakness. We do not see human weakness more in non-success than in success. In the first instance, in the success you see the weakness of man, for the net breaks and the ships begin to sink, and Simon Peter falls down with—"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He did not know so much about that till his boat was filled; but the very abundance of God's mercy made him feel his own nothingness. In the last case, they were scarcely able to draw the net because of the multitude of fishes. Brethren, if you or I would know to the fullest extent what utter nothings we are, if the Lord shall give us success in winning souls we shall soon find it out. II. THERE ARE ALSO SEVERAL POINTS OF DISSIMILARITY. The first picture represents the Church of God as we see it; the second represents it as it really is. The first pictures to us the visible, the second the invisible. Luke tells us what the crowd see; John tells us what Christ showed to His disciples alone. The first is common truth which the multitude may receive; the next is special mystery revealed only to spiritual minds. Observe, then, carefully, the points of divergence. 1. First, there is a difference in the orders given. In the first, it is, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." In the second it is, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." The first is Christ's order to every minister; the second is the secret work of His Spirit in the word. The first shows us that the ministry is to fish anywhere and everywhere. All the orders that the Christian has, as to his preaching, is, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your net." He is not to single out any particular character; he is to preach to everybody. The secret truth is, that when we are doing this, the Lord knows how to guide us, so that we "cast the net on the right side of the ship." That is the secret and invisible work of the Spirit, whereby He so adapts our ministry, which is in itself general, that He makes it particular and special. 2. In the first instance you will clearly see that there is a distinct plurality. The fishermen have nets—in the plural; they have boats—in the plural. There is plurality of agency employed. 3. Thirdly, there is another difference. In the first case, how many fish were caught? The text says, "a great multitude." In the second case, a great multitude are taken too, but they are all counted and numbered. "A hundred and fifty and three." What was Peter's reason for counting them? We cannot tell. But I think I know why the Lord made him do it. It was to show us that though in the outward instrumentality of gathering the people into the Church the number of the saved is to us a matter of which we know nothing definitely, yet secretly and invisibly the Lord has counted them even to the odd one, He knoweth well how many the gospel net shall bring in. I, as a preacher, have nothing to do with

counting fish. My business is with the great multitude. Splash goes the net again! Oh Master! thou who hast taught us to throw the net and bring in a multitude, guide into it the hundred and fifty and three! 4. Yet again, notice another difference. The fish that were taken the first time appear to have been of all sorts. The net was broken, and therefore, doubtless some of them got out again; there were some so little that they were not worth eating, and doubtless were thrown away. "They shall gather the good into vessels and throw the bad away." In the second case, the net was full of great fishes; they were all great fishes, all good for eating, all the one hundred and fifty-three were worth the keeping, there was not one little fellow to be thrown back into the deep again. The first gives us the outward and visible effect of the ministry. We gather into Christ's Church a great number. And there will always be in that number some that are not good, that are not really called of God. Sometimes we have Church-meetings in which we have to throw the bad away. We have many blissful meetings where it is gathering-in the fish—and what big hauls of fish has God given to us! Glory be to His name! But at other times we have to sit down and tell our fish over, and there are some who must be thrown away; neither God nor man can endure them. Thus is it in the outward and visible Church. Let no man be surprised if the tares grow up with the wheat—it is the order of things, it must be so. 5. Yet again, you notice in the first case the net broke, and in the second case it did not. Now, in the first case, in the visible Church the net breaks. My brethren are always calling out, "the net is broken!" No doubt it is a bad thing for nets to break; but you need not wonder at it. We cannot just now, when the net is full, stop to mend it; it will break. It is the necessary consequence of our being what we are that the net will break. There are several other points of difference, but I think we have hardly time to enlarge upon them. I will only hint at them. In the first case, which is the visible Church, you see the human weakness becomes the strongest point; there is the boat ready to sink, there is the net broken, there is the men all out of heart, frightened, amazed, and begging the Master to go away. In the other case it is not so at all. There is human weakness, but still they are made strong enough. They have no strength to spare, as you perceive, but still they are strong enough, the net does not break, the ship goes slowly to land dragging the fish; and then, lastly, Simon Peter pulls the fish to shore. Strong he must have been. They were just strong enough to get their fish to shore. So in the visible Church of Christ you will often have to mourn over human weakness; but in the invisible Church, God will make His servants just strong enough—just strong enough to drag their fish to shore. The agencies, means, instrumentalities, shall have just sufficient force to land every elect soul in heaven, that God may be glorified. Then, notice, in the first case, in the visible Church they launched out into the deep. In the second case, it says they were not far from the shore, but a little way. So to-day our preaching seems to us to be going out into the great stormy deep after fish. We appear to have a long way to reach before we shall bring these precious souls to land. But in the sight of God we are not far from shore; and when a soul is saved, it is not far from heaven. To us there are years of temptation, and trial, and conflict; but to God, the Most High, it is finished—"it is done." They are saved; they are not far from shore. In the first case, the disciples had to forsake all and follow Christ. In the second, they sat down to feast with Him at the dainty banquet which He had spread. So in the visible Church to-day we have to bear trial and self-denial for Christ, but glory be to God, the eye of faith perceives that we shall soon drag our net to land, and then the Master will say, "Come and dine"; and we shall sit down and feast in His presence, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. III. The time is gone, and I close by NOTICING ONE AMONG MANY LESSONS WHICH THE TWO NARRATIVES IN COMMON SEEM TO TEACH. In the first case, Christ was in the ship. Oh, blessed be God, Christ is in His Church, though she launch out into the deep. In the second case, Christ was on the shore. Blessed be God, Christ is in heaven. He is not here, but He has risen; He has gone up on high for us. But whether He be in the Church, or whether He be on the shore in heaven, all our night's toiling shall, by His presence, have a rich reward. That is the lesson. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The disappointing night and the successful morn*:—I. THE NIGHT OF DISAPPOINTMENT. 1. A most unlikely disappointment. 2. The disappointment of skilled men. 3. A disappointment in spite of devoted labour. 4. This disappointment was most disheartening. II. THE MORNING OF SUCCESS. 1. It was success that was not very probable. The best time for fishing had gone—the night. Not unfrequently, the work of which we

have least hope in the end gives us most joy. History of missions, *e.g.*, to South Sea Islands. "In the morning sow thy seed," &c. 2. It was success through the use of the old means. 3. It was success in the old sphere. 4. It was success realized by the very men who had previously failed. 5. It was success consequent on the Lord's presence and on a believing obedience to His word. 6. It was success of the most complete character. 7. It was success in the joy and blessing of which others shared. Those in "the other boat" were called upon to help. 8. It was success which had the most gracious results. (1) Led to the adoring recognition of the Lord's presence and power (ver. 8). (2) Filled the minds of all with grateful astonishment (vers. 9, 10). (3) Was the pledge and promise of greater things (ver. 10). (4) Led to completest devotion on the part of those concerned (ver. 11). (*R. M. Spoor.*) *The sinking fishing-boat a symbol of the ruinous tendency of abounding prosperity*:—When is a man most likely to go wrong morally? When he is in suffering? Hardly so. Prosperity puts him to a far severer test. On the ground nobody gets giddy and falls, but on a pinnacle many a one, having lost the steady nerve and firm foothold, has trembled, reeled, and rolled down. How few can bear success! Let a man steal a march on his fellows, outstrip them in the boisterous race for riches, "get on in the world," as we phrase it, and the chances are that he will deteriorate. Noble exceptions there are to the rule, never more than in our own day. Many rise in character as they rise in circumstances. But, alas! numbers do the exact opposite: as they go up in possessions, they go down in mind, down in heart, down in conscience. Gray, in his charming Elegy, speaks of "chill penury" freezing "the genial current of the soul." It may do, but the pleasant, soothing zephyr of wealth certainly tends to relax manly vigour and induce baneful lethargy. There are certain fish which flourish best when lowest in the sea; severe pressure is evidently, in some way, adapted to their nature; when raised near the surface they invariably degenerate. It is so, too often, with men; when raised, they descend. Alexander the Great was all right as long as he had to cope with his enemies; difficulty did not daunt but develop him. On he went from strength to strength, carrying everything before him. But the day that saw his final obstacle removed beheld the first step taken in a retrograde direction. Conquest surrounded him with luxuries; all the elaborate appliances of civilization were placed within his reach; he had but to lift his hand, and the prolific, varied resources of distant and neighbouring lands were at his command. The enervating influences of these things were, however, only too speedily manifested. The Macedonian hero dwarfed into the effeminate *bon vivant*; Spartan simplicity gave way to requirements as multitudinous as they were vicious, and to make his ruin complete, the world's conqueror died from the effects of a disgraceful drunken brawl! (*T. R. Stevenson.*) *A new year's word for business people*:—"Out of the ship." The Lord Jesus had been preaching in synagogues; but there were very many outside who wanted to hear Him, and whom He wanted to reach. So He entered into a boat belonging to one of His disciples that was drawn up on the beach, and when it was thrust a little way from the shore He sat down and taught the people. I. JESUS SEEKS A PULPIT RIGHT IN THE MIDST OF DAILY LIFE. He comes to each of us and asks us to let Him have our daily occupation as His preaching-place. II. LOOK AT THE BOATS WHICH THE LORD JESUS USES. 1. It was the boat of a disciple. He never thrusts Himself upon any. Can we afford to receive the Lord aboard of our ship? 2. It was the boat of an ardent and loving disciple. How eagerly Simon received Him into the boat! 3. It was the boat of a busy disciple. Hard-working disciples who can toil all night, if need be—their's is the business from which Christ will preach. III. LOOK AT THE FISHERMEN. They were washing their nets. The Lord will never help us to catch fish with dirty nets. IV. THEN AS TO THE SERMON WHICH THE LORD WOULD PREACH from the daily occupation. 1. Considerateness for other people. These men would have to go off again at sunset to fish, and they had toiled all the previous night. But that others might see and hear Jesus, they leave their nets, they thrust out the ship, and they wait upon the Lord. A sermon that was never so much needed as it is to-day. 2. Faithfulness. The crying want of our times is this, that men should see and hear Jesus in the boat of every disciple. Faithfulness on the part of His disciples goes furthest to give men faith in their Lord and Master. V. Then there are TWO OR THREE OTHER THOUGHTS THAT GROW OUT OF THE INCIDENT. 1. It goes well with the boat when Christ is on board. 2. Notice that while the Lord said "nets" (ver. 4), Simon said "net" (ver. 5). And he took up the first that came to hand. Ah, Simon, the blessed Master knows more about

fishing than you think. And, my brethren, He knows as much about your business as about Simon's. Their net brake (ver. 6), so they needed the *nets* after all. 3. Think of the fishing-net giving the disciples the most amazing manifestation of Jesus they had seen. Ah, so it is when Jesus is in the business, the common daily work of life shall bring glorious manifestations of the Lord's presence and power. 4. The fisherman who takes Christ on board is promoted to the rank of an apostle. To serve Jesus in the common round of daily life is the way up to the highest and most splendid service for the King. 5. When Jesus is in the ship everything is in its right place. The cargo is in the hold, not in the heart. Cares and gains, fears and losses, yesterday's failure and to-day's success, do not thrust themselves in between us and His presence. "Goodness and mercy shall follow me," sang the Psalmist. Alas when the goodness and mercy come before us, and our blessings shut Jesus from view! Here is the blessed order—the Lord ever first, I following Him, His goodness and mercy following me. (*Mark Guy Pearse.*) *Failure, faith, and fortune:*—I. FAILURE. "Toiled—nothing." Failure may be caused by (*a*) lack of aptitude; (*b*) deficiency of energy; or (*c*) want of perseverance. Notwithstanding skill, exertion, and persistence, here was failure. 1. The plea of disappointment. 2. That plea urged as a reason for relinquishing toil. II. FAITH. "Nevertheless, at Thy word," &c. The fishermen were learning of Christ; their confidence and hope were growing. They had Christ's word to rely on, and have not we? 1. Faith in exercise. 2. A right resolve taken. 3. A new venture made. III. FORTUNE. 1. Unexpected abundance. 2. An act of kindness compensated. 3. Plenty the reward of obedience. 4. Success the providence of the Lord Jesus Christ. IV. Note THE RESULTS OF THE MIRACLE. 1. The perception of Christ's glory. 2. Christ's majesty producing humility. 3. A new vocation indicated. 4. Abandonment of all for Christ's service. (*M. Braithwaite.*) *The three F's—a parable of fishing:*—1. Through a long weary night four men sat in their boats on the Sea of Galilee. They are not novices in the art of fishing, but old experienced hands. They do not idle away their time. They toil hard. They toil hard—dropping their nets and drawing them up again, empty. The story of that vexatious night of disappointment is told, next day, by one of their number in this one sentence, "Master, we have toiled," &c. It could all have been compressed into the one sad word, FAILURE. And this is the word which many pastors and Christian workers may feel themselves obliged to write underneath many of their undertakings and efforts. But God holds us responsible only for duties, never for results. Not by human might, or power, but by His Spirit, is success to be reached. A Paul may plant, or a Peter may fish, but God only can give the increase. 2. Now let us turn over the leaf, and begin Chapter II. It is no longer midnight, but morning. The early sun sparkles on the blue waves of Gennesareth. Two fishermen are on the beach, washing their nets; two others, John and James, are mending theirs in a boat. Jesus comes in sight, followed by a jostling crowd. He wants elbow-room, and space to address the throng, and so He calls for Peter's boat and makes it His floating pulpit. As soon as His discourse is over, He begins to think of His hungry and disappointed disciples. So He gives the order to Simon. There was a great deal of human nature in Peter. He felt just as you and I have felt a hundred times. He said, "We have been toiling all night, and have taken nothing." Had he stopped short right there he would have got a rebuke for the shameful sin of giving up. He was despondent over the past; but he was not despairing for the future. So out bolts that ringing reply, "Nevertheless," &c. Noble words! There spake out a resolute and a relying FAITH. Faith set the bow of Peter's little smack right towards the deep water, and then laid hold of the oar. This is precisely the same thing which we pastors, and Sunday-school teachers, and parents must do straightway. Invite Jesus into our undertakings, for we cannot fail if He is with us in the boat. Then let us pull out into the deep water of thorough, conscientious, faithful work. The fish are in the deep water, not near the shore. 3. What will be the result sooner or later? Look at those disciples in the boat and you will see. They have lowered their net, just as Jesus told them to do. Lo, a multitude of fishes swarming in! The net is breaking. Peter signals to John to bring his boat alongside and help to save the prodigious haul. Up comes the other smack. The two vessels are soon so overloaded that they begin to sink; and Peter throws himself down in awe-struck wonder, and cries out that he is unworthy of such a miraculous blessing. That was Peter's way of saying just what we pastors have often said when the revival was glorious, and we felt how much more God had done for us than we deserved. How sweet was Christ's answer! "Follow Me, and I will make

you a fisher of men." And so the loaded boats are pulled ashore, and the happy day's work ends in a FULNESS of blessings. Here are the three F's. The first is a sad one, and teaches us that when we rely upon an arm of flesh our hardest toils may end in Failure. The second is the watchword of all wise action, and all holy endeavour—it is the golden word Faith. And when we take Jesus with us in obedient trust, we bring back a Fulness of success. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) This paragraph—1. Illustrates Christ's indirect method of working. He often gives commands, the exact bearing of which it is difficult ori mpossible to see. 2. Illustrates the proper treatment of the Divine word on the part of man. 3. Shows the proper effect of God's rule over inferior things. There is enough in any display of Divine power to humble us, if we did but open our eyes to see the way of the Most High. 4. Illustrates the ever-heightening and ever-widening vocation of mankind. (1) "Thou shalt catch men." God does not call men downward but upward, when they are faithful to their trust. (2) Men need to be caught, for they have gone astray from God. (3) Man must catch men. (4) The art of catching men is a Divine art. It is easy to amuse them, and not difficult to instruct them; but to catch them in the holy sense of this promise to Peter, is an art taught only by the Master Himself. 5. Shows that Jesus Christ does not put men into the ministry simply because they are unfortunate in secular concerns. Peter had caught nothing all night, and in the morning he was turned into a minister! Do not people plan to put their least gifted and least successful children into the Church? It is sometimes said that they do. Christ seemed to say to Peter, "See, there are fish enough yet in the water; but you leave your occupation at the very moment of your highest success. I don't make a minister of you because there is no other way in which you can make a morsel of bread, but for infinitely higher reasons." So to-day there are men in the ministry who could have caught fish enough and been highly successful in the ordinary work of life. Give them credit for good motives. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Christ the Lord of nature*:—We must not minimize this miracle by deeming that Christ, either by marvellous sagacity or superhuman omniscience, knew of the presence of this great shoal at that time and spot. Rather, we must not only see in Jesus "the Lord of nature, able, by the secret yet mighty magic of His will, to guide and draw the unconscious creatures, and make them minister to the higher interests of His kingdom"; but we must also recognize in Him the second Adam exercising that dominion over the fish of the sea, which was part of the grant of empire given originally to man. That there should be this great herd of fish was not in itself miraculous; what was miraculous was that its appearance should be thus timed, that it should coincide with Christ's word and subserve His purpose. (*W. J. Deane, M.A.*) *Reasons for the miracle*:—Various reasons have been offered for the special applicability of this miracle. 1. Thus was Peter repaid for the loan of his boat, even as the widow of Sarepta was rewarded for her charity to Elijah by the unfailing resources of the barrel of meal and the cruise of oil; as the Shunamite hostess was requited for her kindness to Elisha by the restoration of her son to life; as the house of Obed-Edom was blessed when it gave shelter to the ark of the Lord; as Christ Himself testified that a cup of cold water given to one of His disciples should not lose its reward. 2. Also, Jesus was thus preparing His apostles for their coming call; they might see that in casting in their lot with Him and in abandoning their gainful trade, they were entering the service of One who was able to provide for their bodily life as well as for the wants of their soul; One who taught them that "godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." 3. Still more might Simon see herein a prophecy of the future, an adumbration of the success that awaited the preachers of the gospel, as they in obedience to the word of Christ cast their nets into the sea of the world. 4. Here, too, is a lesson for all; how little we can do by our own skill or wisdom, how much when we take Christ with us in our work. His Word teaches us how, and where, and when to labour, and following that Divine Teacher we are sure of success. (*Ibid.*) *A broken net*:—"The net brake." That net is the Church; and the history of the Church is, alas! a history of the tearing of its meshes, and the breaking away of its fish. Heresy and schism have troubled the Church from the apostolic period; and Christ in this miracle showed that it would be so, lest we should be discouraged; but He also showed the remedy for it—a remedy we have not sufficiently taken to heart. When the net was torn, then Peter beckoned to his partners to help to receive the draught. And by this we are shown that the true remedy for heresy and schism is unity. Sad it is that there should be so much separation among the Apostolic Churches; that the

Eastern Church, and the Church which claims to be founded by St. Peter, and our own English Church, should all be engaged in fishing on our own several accounts, with mangled nets, from which many escape, and in which only few are saved. When the Churches recognize the real cause of their failure, repent of their haughty and narrow isolation, and draw together, and call to each other to help, then, and then only, will they be filled to the bulwarks, so that they seem almost about to sink. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *Use of partners*:—There cannot be a better improvement of society than to help us in gain, to relieve us in our profitable labours, to draw up the spiritual draught into the vessel of Christ and His Church. Wherefore hath God given us partners, but that we should beckon to them for their aid in our necessary occasions? Neither doth Simon slacken his hand, because he had assistants. What shall we say to those lazy fishers, who can see others to the drag, while themselves look on at ease, caring only to feed themselves with the fish, not willing to wet their hands with the net? what shall we say to this excess of gain? (*Bishop Hall.*)

Ver. 8. **When Simon Peter saw it he fell at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me.**—*What it was that Peter saw*:—To understand the action and the words of Simon Peter, we must know what it was that he saw. The place was the shore of the Lake of Galilee, and the time was early in the first year of the ministry of Christ. Already men were talking of the great prophet, and wondering who and what He was; and no doubt the fishermen had thought and spoken much of Him. One day Christ came; He went straight to Simon's ship, and from it He taught the people, while Simon Peter listened. And then followed that great wonder of the miraculous draught of fishes, which astounded all beholders. That was what Peter saw. But he saw more; he saw in all this what was like a call to him; not yet a direct one, but one which he could not help but understand. When you see a grand action, it is a call to you to imitate it; when you hear of a noble deed, it is a call to you to correct whatever of littleness or meanness may be in your own soul; when you see others walking with God, it is a call to you to join them, and to walk even as they. Sympathetic natures need no explanation at such times; they take in at once the meaning of the voices which they hear as they go on through life. Simon Peter felt what he saw; he felt how it bore on him; and feeling it, instantly and profoundly, his first motion was to draw back in alarm, and to pray the Lord to depart from him. (*Morgan Dix, D.D.*) *Two kinds of shrinking from Christ*:—Does this remind you of another scene? It must, if you are thoughtful, and accustomed to interpret scripture by scripture. It was the very thing that the Gadarenes and Gergesenes did, when Christ revealed Himself to them in His holiness, and manifested forth His glory. Compare the narratives; they run almost exactly parallel. The place was the same—the Lake of Gennesaret or its immediate shores. The main personage in each scene is the same—Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. The state of preparation in human minds is the same—the Gadarenes had heard of Christ, and so had Peter. The time was the same—just after a startling miracle. The act in each case was the same, nay the very words are the same; the people of Gadara prayed Him that He would depart out of their coasts; and Simon Peter cried, "Depart from me, O Lord." But yet, notwithstanding all these correspondences, in time, in place, in deed, in result, in word, there was a difference which outweighs all agreement. Not farther asunder are the poles of this globe, not wider apart are east and west, than were the spirit of the men of Gadara and the soul of Simon Peter. Nor could the final results have been more diverse. The men of Gadara never saw Christ again; Peter never left Him. They kept all they had, and lost the Lord; he kept the Lord, and lost all else. And then the histories diverge, as streams part, never again to be united, but to flow farther and farther away from each other. On the one hand a low, material, worldly life drags sluggishly forward, passing into darkness and silence, and descending into shame and everlasting contempt: while the other, fixed on Jesus, and developed in Him, groweth more and more unto the perfect day; the name becomes an immortal name, the man is numbered with the saints in glory everlasting, and the very record of his life tells with tremendous moral force, even down to this far-off day, and here in this remote land, and is helpful, and precious, and stands like a tower of strength amidst the waves of this troublesome world. (*Ibid.*) *Peter's cry of despairing love*:—The feeling of St. Peter, as he uttered this cry, is not unmixed with sensations of reverence and love. True, it contains within it elements of terror; it is not the

language of that perfect love which casts out fear; it is lower than the awe which inspires angels and just men made perfect as they are conscious of the imperfections and limitations of creaturely existence in the presence of the great Alpha and Omega of all creation. But it is the cry of despairing love, not of despairing hate; the cry of one who yearns after an unattainable height, not of one who is content to wallow in the mire of his sins. I. Undoubtedly it was the effect of FEAR PRODUCED BY A SENSE OF SIN. The consciousness of standing before a Being of infinite holiness produces in sinful man a thrill of moral agony; the force of contrast brings into strong relief the hideous, intolerable deformity of sin; in the light of that presence sin becomes exceeding sinful, and the yawning depths of iniquity which lie hid in man's nature are no longer veiled by the mists of custom and long habit. Man for the most part is unconscious of the real foulness of his sin; the moral atmosphere around him is charged therewith; he imbibes its taint at every breath; the world around him is penetrated with it; it enters into him at every pore, it suffuses itself more or less over his whole nature. Hence arises the further realization of sin which results from growth in holiness, the explanation of the seeming difficulty that the saintliest of mankind confess themselves the greatest sinners. Men living at a distance from God are actually without any standard by which to measure their deflection from the Divine law. Only when a man begins to ascend the hill of God, to make his way out of the foul miasma amid which he has been living and moving, can he in any measure discover the real proportions of things, or bring home to his heart the miserable and loathsome forms of evil by which he has been hitherto surrounded. II. St. Peter's words seem to arise out of some feeling of REPUGNANCE BETWEEN HIS HUMAN WILL AND THE WILL OF AN ALL-HOLY GOD. There is, alas! even in regenerate nature, a certain amount of antagonism towards the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. We can none of us be brought into the immediate presence of God without being conscious of the claim which is made upon us thereby of striving after a more complete renunciation of our own lusts and desires, a more entire conformity to that likeness which we instinctively feel to be the law and pattern of redeemed humanity. At this, man's nature rebels. III. These words seem to spring also from a REVERENT HUMILITY. An intensified form of the centurion's faithful saying (Matt. viii. 8). St. Peter had been treating our Blessed Lord too much as a mere man; he had been mingling familiarly in His company, listening to Him as a mere human teacher; and now the consciousness lights up within him that God was in that place and he knew it not—that he had been standing at the very gate of heaven. CONCLUSION: Wounded with a sense of exceeding sinfulness, or conscious of a will struggling against the Divine purpose, or penetrated with a feeling of unworthiness, you may be ready to exclaim, "Depart from me," &c. Yet in that cry is the earnest of your acceptance, not of your rejection. In that cry lies a sure augury of future success. It is the first step towards penitence, self-examination, confession, and God's absolving word. (*S. W. Skeffington, M.A.*) *Peter's confession of sin*:—Observe well what it was which led to this conviction of guilt in Peter's soul. Not terror, or judgment; not any view of the anger and justice of the Being with whom he had to do. It was simply the reception and consciousness of a very great and exceeding kindness. This made him love what he admired; and the love and the admiration which he felt to God became, by an easy change, hatred and detestation against himself. He was softened at the moment that he was convinced; and upon his melted heart and conscience he wrote the large, deep characters of sin. 1. The greatest and surest test of every man's state before God is this—How does he feel toward sin? It is a great thing to have faith enough to see the requirements of a holy God; faith enough to be conscious that there is a distance; faith enough to fear. 2. There is no feeling in Peter's breast akin to the desire to get rid of his religious thought. He was asking rather that which he thought he ought to ask, than what he wanted to ask. The humility was real; but it was not enlightened. It was exactly what every man ought to say and feel, if he saw only his own breast, and did not see the bosom of God. 3. This feeling operates differently, according to the moral temperament, or according to the stage in which a man may happen to stand in the Divine life. (1) In one, it becomes despair. The soul dares not to admit the thought that it could ever be received into the love of God. The dread of the sin of presumption—from which it is the farthest off—is always haunting it. The very name and joys of heaven seem a mockery to him. (2) In another man it destroys all sense of God's mercy. Peace, instead of being a fact, established by

the Cross, and simply taken, is always a thing put off and off to some distant future. What is this but putting Christ away? (3) Others seek an intermediate agency between Christ and their soul. 4. It is an unspeakable comfort to know that this awful prayer, which Peter made in ignorance, was not answered. Christ did not depart from him. Thank God, He knows when to refuse a prayer. He never leaves those who are only ignorant. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The sense of sin in the Saviour's presence*:—Such has ever been the effect of God's presence felt and realized by a human soul. Even the sinless angels veil their faces, and worship with an awful reverence before the throne on high; how much less can man's nature, penetrated with the mystery of sin, endure without agony the blinding light and holiness of God! Thus Adam and his wife, in the first moments of self-conscious guilt, hid themselves among the trees of the garden from the presence of the Lord God; the people of Israel trembled at the foot of Sinai, and entreated to hear the voice of God no more; Manoah fears death as the consequence of the vision of God; the blameless Daniel falls prostrate and weakened before the great Angel of the Covenant; Isaiah is oppressed with a painful sense of guilt after witnessing the adoration of the Eternal. And even when God Incarnate on earth had concealed beneath the tabernacle of our humanity the rays of His Divine glory, and talked with man face to face, yet there were moments when the glory of the Divine nature flashed forth from behind the thin veil of flesh, and confounded the awe-struck senses of the beholders. There were moments at which even His enemies were driven back, and fell before His presence; and many more occasions on which the hearts of apostles and friends failed them for fear when they felt that God was, indeed, in the midst of them. (*S. W. Skeffington, M.A.*) *The terror of the law*:—This is a cry which has a long story behind it. It carries us far back as we trace it step by step along the pages of the Old Testament. St. Peter is testifying to his hold on the significance of the law. His words carry us back to the voice of Adam as he saw God draw near in the evening amid the pleasant garden, and he knew the chill of a terrible fear and hid himself among the trees. Ever since that dismal day there had been in man a blind terror lest his Father should come too near him. This is the terror which passes like a shudder through primitive faiths, and turns savage religions into acts of alarm, into rituals of panic. Men are nervous, discomfited, when their God is near; and the very cruelties of these savage faiths are cruelties of fear. They know not the secret of their dread; they cannot syllable the confession, "I am a sinful man." They only know the fear, and passionately, and at any cost, beseech God to depart out of their coasts. This is the terror which is at work to purge witchcraft. Jacob fleeing from his home, when he awakes at Bethel, exclaims, "How dreadful is this place; this is none other but the house of God." It is the terror, this terror with its deep ground-tone, which meets us, in its simplest and most natural fashion, in Manoah, when the vision of the angel did wondrously and vanished, and he cried to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." And we know its utterance, its stormy utterance, in the mouths of Israel, at the foot of Sinai, as they cried to Moses, not "Bring us near to God," but "Set bounds lest He break forth upon us. Why should we die? If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, we shall die." (*Canon Scott Holland.*) *The nearer to God, the sharper the anguish*:—It is not the gross and carnal only, or the ignorant, who know this start, this touch of shame. The cry breaks from the lips of the purest and the highest; and it breaks from them with intenser violence, and with more startling passion. The nearer to God, the sharper the anguish, and the more vehement the protestation, "Depart from me." It is Job, with his whole heart aflame with righteousness, after a life which—as it lay there under his human review—looked so fair and high and blameless; it is he who is stricken with the ancient fear as he sees God with the seeing of the eye, and thus abhors himself. And it is Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, who crowds into hot words the fullest passion of the old cry (Isa. vi. 1–5). So has it ever been, until the last word of the last prophet is there to tell us how he wondered lest He, for whom they had all, one after another, so ardently waited, should consume them by His very coming: "Who shall abide the day of His coming? Who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire." (*Ibid.*) *Peter's surprise and fear*:—It was not at all surprising to him that Jesus should draw very near, and should ask for his boat, and with him launch out. He was not alarmed or disturbed at such an invitation; rather, everything in it to him was most natural and most habitual. There seemed nothing to herald a spiritual crisis; it is the old task of the fisher-

man to which he is used, the task familiar to him all his days. From earliest childhood he had lived with the nets and the boats on the edge of those home waters. It is the old art that would be his surely till death should lay him to sleep, or till he became too old to do more than watch the younger men take his place in the old haunts. Everything stood for him that morning as it had ever been; nothing seemed ready for any great shock or surprise. No word of expectancy gathered over that sleeping scene. There lay the broad waters as they had lain a thousand times before under his eyes; there stood the hills, quiet and ancient and unmoved; and the same sky bent over him as had ever bent over him, familiar and dear; and the same shores spread away with the old curves and creeks and headlands, and villages greeting him with all that motionless image of home. What symptom was there of that coming joy? How should he expect anything at all? He was too weary to expect much, for he had toiled long and taken nothing. It was but in a dull, passive acquiescence that he pushed out his boat. Aimless and dispirited as he was, how could he guess that it was to be the very last time that he would ever be as he had always been, the very last time that he would sit there on the shore mending his nets. Suddenly, like a flash of lightning, the moment is upon him; there is a start, a wonder, as the fish swarm into the net. What is it, this strange draught? What is it but a stroke of luck? Nay, a finger is upon him, admonitory and masterful, a thrill shoots through him, and he tingles as with a touch of flame. He turns to look at Him who sits there close by him in the boat. Who is He, and what? So quiet He seems, so human, so near, so serene; yet an awe has fallen upon Peter, and a terror shakes him. Very near and very intimate the Master is, and yet how is it that behind these steady human eyes there grows a terror—a terror as of the fires of Sinai or the thunderings of Horeb? How is it that within that quiet, gentle voice of His, there seems to be ringing the sound of that trumpet that grows louder and louder, until Israel fell on their faces afraid? The Master sits as He had always sat, and looked as He had always looked; and yet this tremor, this dread, as of a guilty thing surprised! It is the old-world fear, it is the ancient dismay that has fallen upon him, such as fell upon Isaiah when he saw the Lord high and lifted up between the cherubim. He cannot be mistaken; his true and pure spirit reads off the secret at a glance and at a flash. How, he knows not; but it is God upon whom He is looking. He is sure of it. He is seeing God, and therefore he cannot endure it; God very near; he sees Him with the seeing of an eye, as Job of old, and therefore he abhors himself in dust and ashes. (*Ibid.*)

The awakening of St. Peter:—After his first interview with Christ, Peter went home to his daily work. The words Christ had spoken to him were allowed to sink deep into his heart. There was a pause in life before the next impression was made upon him. For the first time in his life the unlearned fisherman had been recognized by one greater than himself. We may imagine in some degree what were his thoughts as he lay at night within his boat, rocked on the indolent surge of the lake, letting his thoughts wander with his eyes among the stars, and hearing nothing but the cry of the wild fowl on the lake, and the rustle of the oleander on the shore: "Shall I meet Jesus once again, or will He forget me in the greatness of His work?" And one fair morning, as he sat on the glittering beach of shells, mending his nets, his desire was answered. By all that Peter had gone through there had been kindled in his soul the first sparks of love to Christ, fitly mingled with veneration. But as yet there had been no spiritual element connected with them, and Christ's object was to awaken more than friendship. Peter loved, reverenced, believed; but he had not linked his love and reverence and faith to any profound feeling such as knits the forgiven sinner to a forgiving Father. And it is in what now took place, in the awakening of the slumbering forces of the spirit, that Peter was lifted into another and a higher, though a more sorrowful and more tempted life. Peter's expression of his emotion reveals one of those states of mingled feelings which seem too strange to be understood, but which we feel to be true to our human nature. It was a mixture of repulsion and attraction, of fear that repelled, of love that drew. "Depart from me," &c., that was the cry of his lips, and it rose half out of fear at the revelation of holiness, half out of shame at the revelation of his own sinfulness. But with this was something more. His fear and shame sprang out of his lower self; but he could not remain in fear or shame with that wonderful and tender face looking down upon him, as he knelt among the nets. His higher being rose in passion to meet the encouragement of Christ. That which was akin to Christ in him saw and recognized with joy—joy that took then

the garments of a noble sorrow, the beauty of holiness in Christ; remembered that this holiness had come to meet him, sought him out and loved him—and at the thought, all his nobler nature darted forward with a cry, repelled the lower that would have exiled Christ through fear, and threw him down, forgetting all else in utter love and broken-hearted humbleness, at the feet of Christ. "Depart from me—no, never, my Lord and Master, never leave me. There, in Thy holiness, can I alone find rest; in being with Thee always alone salvation from my wrong-doing; in loving Thee with all my heart alone the strength I need to conquer fear, and passionate impulse, and weakness in the hour of trial." Yes, that is the great step which takes us over the threshold into the temple of a spiritual life with God. And the life which succeeds that revelation of holiness and sin is no life of mere feeling. "Follow Me," said Christ, "and I will make you a fisher of men"; and Peter left all and followed Him. This part of the story does not tell us to throw aside our daily work, unless it should happen that we have a special apostolic call; but it does tell us to change our motives, our ideas, our aims: to live the life of Christ, the life that gives up life to others. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *Conviction of sin in the mind of Peter*:—We have here a specimen of the Redeemer's method of teaching. He taught by actions. His miracles had a voice. The advantage of this symbolic teaching twofold: 1. It was a living thing. 2. It saves us from dead dogmas. Our thoughts branch off into two divisions. I. THE MEANING AND OBJECT OF THE MIRACLE. More than all others it taught God's personality. The meaning and intention of every miracle is to break through the tyranny of the words "law" and "Nature." II. THE EFFECTS PRODUCED ON PETER'S MIND. The sense of personal sin. 1. When we come to look at the cause of this we see that the impression was (*a*) partly owing to the apostle's Jewish education. The Jews always recognized the personality of God, therefore this only awoke what was acknowledged before; (*b*) partly also it was produced by the pure presence of Jesus Christ. Wherever the Redeemer went, He elicited a strange sense of sin. And this is not the case only in our Redeemer's personal ministry, but it is so wherever Christianity is preached. 2. The nature of this conviction of sin in Peter's bosom. There is a remorse which is felt for crime, but this was not Peter's case. The language of holy men when they speak of sin is startling. In order to understand it, and to comprehend Peter's conviction of guilt, we must look at the three principles which guide the life of three different classes of men. (*a*) Obedience to the opinion of the world; (*b*) The standard of a man's own opinion; (*c*) The light of the life of God. The first of these makes the man of honour; the second, the man of virtue; the third, the man of saintliness. Up to this time Peter had lived an upright man, full of self-reliance; from this time he began to walk lowly and learnt self-forgetfulness. This is the way in which Christ produces conviction of sin—by placing before us infinite love, infinite loving-kindness, and a perfect humanity. We fall in the dust before this, and say, "We are sinful men, O Lord." We are sinners, we have erred exceedingly, and we have seen the infinite charity of God stream forth in the majesty of Jesus Christ. It is possible for us to bear the splendour of that presence only when love has taken the place of fear, and we feel that we need fear nothing, neither death nor hell nor men. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Humility*:—Few stories in the New Testament are as well known as this. Few go home more deeply to the heart of man. Most simple, most graceful is the story, and yet it has in it depths unfathomable. Great painters have loved to draw, great poets have loved to sing, that scene on the Lake of Gennesaret. The clear blue water, land-locked with mountains; the meadows on the shore, gay with their lilies of the field; the rich gardens, olive-yards, and vineyards on the slopes; the towns and villas scattered along the shore, all of bright white lime-stone gay in the sun; the crowds of boats, fishing continually for the fish which swarm to this day in the lake; everywhere beautiful country life, busy and gay, healthy and civilized—and in the midst of it, the Maker of all heaven and earth sitting in a poor fisher's boat, and condescending to tell them where the shoal of fish was lying. It is a wonderful scene. Let us thank God that it happened once on earth. Though our God and Saviour no longer walks this earth in human form, He is near us now and here. There is in us the same heart as there was in St. Peter for evil and for good. When he found suddenly that it was the Lord who was in his boat, his first feeling was one of fear. Do we never feel the thought of God's presence a burden? God grant to us all, that after that first feeling of dread and awe is over, we may go on, as Peter did, to the better feelings of admiration, loyalty, worship; and say at last, as Peter said afterwards, "Lord, to whom shall we go? for Thou hast the words of eternal life."

But do I blame St. Peter for saying, "Depart from me," &c. Who am I, to blame St. Peter? Especially when even the Lord Jesus did not blame him, but only bade him not to be afraid. And why did the Lord not blame him, even when he asked Him to go away? Because St. Peter was honest. He said frankly and naturally what was in his heart. He spoke not from dislike of our Lord, but from modesty; from a feeling of awe, of uneasiness, of dread, at the presence of One who was infinitely greater, wiser, better than himself. And that feeling of reverence and honesty is a Divine and noble feeling—the beginning of all goodness. Peter felt unworthy to be in such good company. He felt unworthy—he, the ignorant fisherman—to have such a guest in his poor boat. "Go elsewhere, Lord," he tried to say, "to a place and to companions more fit for Thee. I am ashamed to stand in Thy presence. I am dazzled by the brightness of Thy countenance, crushed down by the thought of Thy wisdom and power, uneasy lest I say or do something unfit for Thee; Thou knowest not what a poor miserable creature I am at heart—Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." There spake out the truly noble soul, who was ready the next moment, as soon as he had recovered himself, to leave all and follow Christ; who was ready afterwards to wander, to suffer, to die upon the cross for his Lord; and who, when he was led out to execution asked (it is said) to be crucified with his head downwards, seeing that it was too much honour for him to die looking to heaven, as his Lord had died. Do you not understand me yet? Then think what you would have thought of Peter, if, instead of saying what he did, he had said, "Stay with me, for I am a holy man, O Lord. I am just the sort of person who deserves the honour of Thy company; and my boat, poor though it is, more fit for Thee than the palace of a king." (*Charles Kingsley.*) *The sense of sin evoked by Christ and Christianity*:—When Simeon, on the verge of life, uttered his parting hymn within the Temple, he told Mary, with the infant Jesus in his arms, that, by that child, "the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed." Never was prophecy more true; nor ever perhaps the mission of our religion more faithfully defined. For wherever it has spread, it has operated like a new and Diviner conscience to the world; imparting to the human mind a profounder insight into itself; opening to its consciousness fresh powers and better aspirations; and penetrating it with a sense of imperfection, a concern for the moral frailties of the will, characteristic of no earlier age. The spirit of religious penitence, the solemn confession of unfaithfulness, the prayer for mercy, are the growth of our nature trained in the school of Christ. The pure image of His mind, as it has passed from land to land, has taught men more of their own hearts than all the ancient aphorisms of self-knowledge, has inspired more sadness at the evil, more noble help for the good that is hidden there; and has placed within reach of even the ignorant, the neglected, and the young, severer principles of self-scrutiny than philosophy had ever attained. The radiance of so great a sanctity has deepened the shades of conscious sin. The savage convert who before knew nothing more sacred than revenge and war, is brought to Jesus, and, as he listens to that voice, feels the stain of blood growing distinct upon his soul. The voluptuary, never before disturbed from his self-indulgence, comes within the atmosphere of Christ's spirit; and it is as if a gale of heaven fanned his fevered brow, and convinced him that he is not in health. The ambitious priest, revolving plans for using men's passions as tools of his aggrandisements, starts to find himself the disciple of One who, when the people would have made Him King, fled direct to solitude and prayer. The froward child blushes to think how little there is in him of the infant meekness which Jesus praised; and feels that, had he been there, he must have missed the benediction, or more bitter still, have wept to know it misapplied. Nay, so deep and solemn did the sense of guilt become under the influence of Christian thoughts, that at length the overburdened heart of fervent times could endure the weight no longer; the Confessional arose, and it became the chief object of the widest sacerdotal order which the world has ever seen, to soothe the sobs, and listen to the whispered record of human penitence. Everywhere the Christian mind proclaims its need of mercy, and bends beneath the oppression of its guilt; and since Jesus began to "reveal the thoughts of many hearts," Christendom, with clasped hands, has fallen at His feet and cried, "We are sinful men, O Lord." In nurturing this sentiment, in producing this solemn estimate of moral evil and quick perception of its existence, the religion of Christ does but perpetuate the influence of His personal ministry. (*J. Martineau, LL.D.*) *Illumination*:—A flash of supernatural illumination had revealed to him both his own sinful unworthiness and who He was who was with him in the boat. It was the cry of self-loathing which had already

realized something nobler. It was the first impulse of fear and amazement, before they had had time to grow into adoration and love. St. Peter did not mean the "Depart from me"; he only meant—and this was known to the Searcher of hearts—"I am utterly unworthy to be near Thee, yet let me stay." How unlike was this cry of his passionate and trembling humility to the bestial ravings of the unclean spirits, who bade the Lord to let them alone; or to the hardened degradation of the filthy Gadarenes, who preferred to the presence of their Saviour the tending of their swine! (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Self-loathing in view of infinite purity*:—We read in profane history of an old woman who fell mad on seeing her deformity in a looking-glass. There is enough in the view which the mirror of the Word gives us of our individual character, if not to drive us to derangement and despair, to prostrate us in the dust of self-abasement and self-abhorrence; and still more affecting and overpowering does this view of ourselves become in the presence of the Infinite Purity. *The impression made by Christ's holiness.* I. In the first place, A VIEW OF THE CHARACTER OF JESUS CHRIST AWAKENS THE FEELING OF SINFULNESS. It is absolutely perfect. The character of Jesus is fathomless; and what has been remarked of Christianity by one of the early Roman bishops, may with equal truth be said of the character of its Author: "It is like the firmament; the more diligently you search it, the more stars will you discover. It is like the ocean; the longer you regard it, the more immeasurable will it appear to you." When the characteristic qualities of Christ are distinctly beheld in their holy and spotless beauty by a sinful man, the contrast is felt immediately. The instant that his eye rests upon the sinlessness of Jesus, it turns involuntarily to the sinfulness of himself. He realizes that he is a different man from "the man Christ Jesus;" and that except so far as he is changed by Divine grace, there can be no sympathy and union with Him. This is a proper and blessed mood for an imperfectly sanctified Christian. It corresponds with the facts of the case. How can pride, the essence of sin, dwell in such a spirit? It is excluded. II. INTIMATELY CONNECTED, IN THE SECOND PLACE, WITH A VIEW OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER, IS THAT OF CHRIST'S DAILY LIFE. When this with its train of holy actions passes before the mind of the believer, it produces a deep sense of indwelling sin. This sense of sin as related to justice should hold a prominent place in the Christian experience; and in proportion as it is first vividly elicited by the operation of the law, and then is completely pacified by a view of Christ as suffering "the just for the unjust," will be the depth of our love towards Him, and the simplicity and entireness of our trust in Him. Those who, like Paul and Luther, have had the clearest perception of the iniquity of sin, and of their own criminality before God, have had the most luminous and constraining view of Christ as the "Lamb of God." III. Having thus directed attention to the fact that there is such a distinct feeling as guilt, we remark, in the third place, THAT THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF CHRIST BOTH ELICITS AND PACIFIES IT, IN THE BELIEVER. Whoever beholds human transgression in the light of the Cross, has no doubts as to the nature and character of the Being nailed to it; and he has no doubts as to his own nature and character. The distinct and intelligent feeling of culpability forbids that he should omit to look at sin in its penal relations, and enables him to understand these relations. The vicarious atonement of Christ is well comprehended because it is precisely what the guilt-smitten conscience craves in its restlessness and anguish. The believer now has wants which are met in this sacrifice. His moral feelings are all awake, and the fundamental feeling of guilt pervades and tinges them all; until, in genuine contrition, he holds up the Lamb of God in his prayer for mercy, and cries out to the Just One: "This oblation which Thou Thyself hast provided is my propitiation; this atones for my sin." Then the expiating blood is applied by the Holy Ghost, and the conscience is filled with the peace of God that passeth all understanding. "Then," to use the language of Leighton, "the conscience makes answer to God: 'Lord, I have found that there is no standing in the judgment before Thee, for the soul in itself is overwhelmed with a world of guiltiness; but I find a blood sprinkled upon it that hath, I am sure, virtue enough to purge it all away, and to present it pure unto Thee. And I know that wheresoever Thou findest that blood sprinkled, Thine anger is quenched and appeased immediately upon the sight of it. Thine hand cannot smite when that blood is before thine eye.'" We have thus considered the effect, in awakening a sense of sin, produced by a clear view of the character, life, and death of Christ. But how dim and indistinct is our vision of all this! It should be one of our most distinct and earnest aims, to set a crucified Redeemer visibly before our eyes.

(*W. G. T. Shedd, D.D.*) *Peter's confession.* I. Remark his CONFESSION—"I am a sinful man." II. His PETITION—"Depart from me, O Lord!" The following things seem to be implied. 1. Great fear and distress. Few, unless they have been in something of the same situation, can guess at the various agitations of Peter's mind. What a sense he now had of his own vileness, and what views of the excellency of Christ! Rebecca alighted from her camel when she saw Isaac, and prostrated herself before him: and whatever opinion we may have entertained of ourselves before, sure I am, that we shall be sensible of our own nothingness when we view ourselves in the light of the Divine perfections. 2. It implies modesty and diffidence, which kept him at a distance from Him who not only admits, but invites to the greatest nearness. Peter felt on this occasion somewhat like the centurion, when he said, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." 3. This request bespeaks rashness and inconsideration, much remaining darkness and ignorance. That might be applied to Peter here, which is said of him in another place: "He wist not what to say, for he was sore afraid." (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *Fifth Sunday after Trinity*:—Let us consider, with reference to this subject—I. The truth of Peter's confession. II. The unreasonableness of his petition. That Peter was a sinful man, who can possibly doubt? He was the child of Adam, inheriting his corrupt nature; and it must therefore needs be that he was a sinner before God. With some, the alarms of conscience are soon appeased; such heavings of the soul within are lulled speedily to rest. Some endeavour to quiet them by sedatives, or soothing applications, altogether inadmissible. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Such are the gracious purposes of God towards us. To depart from Him, because we are sinners, would be to reverse the order of Heaven's law and appointment. What is it, however, which will cause God to depart from us, or ourselves to desire that He should do so? Every kind and form of wilful and habitual sin; all unfaithfulness to God. (*H. J. Hastings, M.A.*)

Ver. 10. **Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.**—*Fishing for men*:—To be good fishermen we must be—I. ARDENTLY ENAMOURED OF THE FISHING. II. INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED WITH THE FISHES. In following the analogy, we may observe that, because of his acquaintance with the fishes, the fisherman knows—1. Where to fish. A novice would throw in his line anywhere; but not so the fisherman. Fishes of various sorts must be sought in various localities, and in some places you may seek in vain for any. Many a man has "toiled all the night and has taken nothing," simply because he has been trying in the wrong place; while others round about him have "made a good tide." For one sort he may go to the quiet lake and the gentle stream; for another to the open sea or the deep channel; while for others he has to go out into the great wide ocean. And in our spiritual fishing we must learn where to catch men. We may find opportunities in the quiet lakes of our own domestic circles, or in the pleasant streams of our social friendships. Because of his acquaintance with the fishes, the fisherman also knows—2. How to fish. Like men, fishes differ very much in their dispositions and habits, so that what would be suitable for catching one class would not be successful with another. For instance: While some must be drawn, others must be driven. I have seen fishermen, after casting their net, row round about it, making as much noise as possible with their oars, in order to frighten the fishes into it; while, in other instances, a bright light has been burned in the boat to allure them, if possible, into the snare. It is exactly so with men. Some are caught in shoals, while others must be caught singly. There are some that never can be taken in a net, and there are others that can never be taken with a line. You must go about it very cautiously. The fish is a shy creature, and many a would-be sportsman has driven away all chance of success by his incautious procedure. Almost anybody can cast a net, but it requires an expert to use the line. People can successfully address large assemblies, who are ill at ease when in personal intercourse with the ungodly. This is a work that demands all our skill and care. You may see a wonderful example of this in our Saviour's conversation with the woman at the well. I have been in the same boat with several persons, each provided with similar lines, hooks, and bait; and yet some have been as wonderfully successful as others have been strangely unfortunate. The secret, to those who understood fishing, was obvious. The good fisherman, knowing exactly how to manage and tempt his prey, could, with inferior apparatus, secure success; while the novice, with the best patent gear, might sit, and wait, and watch in vain.

The application is easy. Seek to allure men! Make your Christianity an attractive thing! Surround all you do with the genuine sunshine of the Bible! Reveal Christ, and He "will draw all men unto Him." Again, his acquaintance with the fishes will teach the fisherman—3. When to fish. "A word in season, how good it is!" Some fishes are to be caught when the tide is high; others, when it is low; and others, when it is "slack." Some can be obtained only in cloudy weather, and others may be caught when the sky is clear and bright. For some the daylight is needful, and for others there is no time like the night. And the fit season for approaching men may be equally various. As in fishing, so, as a rule, with men, the best time to seek them is during "the slack" of the tide. It is not well to make the attempt during either the full swing of the flood, or of the strong rush of the ebb. Indeed, no ordinary lead would carry your bait to where they are. You must seek men when they are quiet. It is worthy of observation that most fishes are caught best in cloudy weather. When the sky is murky and lowering, then the fisherman puts out to sea. This certainly suggests to us the appropriateness of Christian words in seasons of sorrow. III. MORALLY QUALIFIED TO BE FISHERMEN. Piety, patience, perseverance, and every Christian grace will be needful in this work. Its difficulties are neither few nor small. (*W. H. Burton.*) *Catching men alive*:—Thou shalt catch men. The word "catch" is different from any word that has been used concerning the fish, and expresses the *catching alive* of the prey to be caught; so that the phraseology of our Lord seems to carry with it the thought that fishers of men are to toil for living creatures, and that unless they be caught alive they might as well not be caught at all. How well would it be for all those who are called to be fishers of men, to remember that their work is not to fill their boat with fishes which may serve as food for themselves, but to catch living men and make them servants of the Most High God. (*Bishop Goodwin.*) *Fishers of men*:—The design of this miracle was twofold. It was intended—1. To produce an immediate effect upon the minds of Peter and the rest, to deepen their faith in the Master who had called them, and to set forth His power, His watchfulness, His love. But still more—2. To take effect in the future; it was emphatically a prophetic miracle—to be looked back to and to yield inexhaustible comfort again and again amid the heavy cares and discouraging tasks of the years to come, when the gospel-net had been finally put into their hands, and they had become "fishers of men." St. Peter was to translate into spiritual language all that belonged to his old fisherman's life. He was to understand that it had been in a homely, but still most real, way a preparation for the new unearthly service to which Christ was calling him. So you may remember the simple shepherd-life of David is set forth in the seventy-eighth Psalm as a preparatory discipline for kingly rule. And so, according to the fancy of an early writer, the trade of tentmaker followed by Saul of Tarsus prefigured the work which lay in store for Paul the apostle, as the maker of tabernacles for the people of God, the founder of Churches all over the known world. (*Canon Duckworth.*) The promise that Peter should become a fisher of men was made still more impressive by a great symbolical miracle. 1. The number of fish caught at Jesus' word represented the men he should some day take. 2. As he fished all night and caught nothing, so had he afterwards to labour long in Israel without winning a single human soul. 3. So, too, at Jesus' word, he put further out into the deep of the great Gentile world, and drew there a great draught. 4. Last of all, there were two boats to fill—the Gentile-Christian and the Jewish-Christian Churches. Then the net began to tear, and the opposition of these two sections threatened the Church with a grievous schism. But the draught was brought safely to land, to the confounding of the circumcised Jew, through whose instrumentality this Divine action had been brought about. (*B. Weiss.*) *Men-catchers*:—The man who saves souls is like a fisher upon the sea. 1. A fisher is dependent and trustful. 2. He is diligent and persevering. 3. He is intelligent and watchful. 4. He is laborious and self-denying. 5. He is daring—not afraid to venture upon a dangerous sea. 6. He is successful. He is no fisher who never catches anything. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) There is as much analogy as contrast between the first and second vocations of the sons of Jonas and Zebedee. 1. Like the fisherman, the minister of the gospel must be furnished with a good net, *i.e.*, he must be conversant with the Scriptures, and mighty in them. 2. Like the fisherman, he must be acquainted with the sea, *i.e.*, the world, and not fear to confront its perils in pursuance of his calling. 3. Like the fisherman, he must now mend, now cast his nets. 4. Like the fisherman, he must labour perseveringly, and wait patiently. 5. Like the fisherman, he must enter into the spirit of his vocation,

i.e., he must be animated with the enthusiasm of the holy ministry. 6. Like the fisherman, he must dare to expose his life (Acts xx. 24). 7. Like the fisherman, he must draw in his net after having cast it. (*C. Babut, B.D.*) *Sympathy a bait*:—It is a fact of which we can scarcely make too much, that nothing baits the gospel-fisherman's hook like sympathy. (*Dr. J. Clifford.*) *Purposeless sermons*:—Are an insult to God and man. A sermon that aims at anything short of catching men is a mistake. Let us beware of converting means into ends. (*Ibid.*) *Catching bait*:—The fisherman, however, thinks far less of his gathering bait than he does of his catching bait, in which he hides his hook. Very numerous are his inventions for winning his prey, and it is by practice that he learns how to adapt his bait to his fish. Scores of things serve as bait, and when he is not actually at work the wise fisherman takes care to seize anything which comes in his way which may be useful when the time comes to cast his lines. We usually carried mussels, whelks, and some of the coarser sorts of fish, which could be used when they were wanted. When the anchor was down the hooks were baited and let down for the benefit of the inhabitants of the deep, and great would have been the disappointment if they had merely swarmed around the delicious morsel, but had refused to partake thereof. A good fisherman actually catches fish. He is not always alike successful, but, as a rule, he has something to show for his trouble. I do not call that man a fisherman whose basket seldom holds a fish; he is sure to tell you of the many bites he had, and of that very big fish which he almost captured; but that is neither here nor there. There are some whose knowledge of terms and phrases, and whose extensive preparations lead you to fear that they will exterminate the fishy race, but as their basket returns empty, they can hardly be so proficient as they seem. The parable hardly needs expounding: great talkers and theorizers are common enough, and there are not a few whose cultured boastfulness is only exceeded by their life-long failure. We cannot take these for our example, nor fall at their feet with reverence for their pretensions. We must have sinners saved. Nothing else will content us: the fisherman must take fish or lose his toil, and we must bring souls to Jesus, or we shall break our hearts with disappointment. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Sucking off the bait*:—Walking to the head of the boat one evening, I saw a line over the side, and must needs hold it. You can feel by your finger whether you have a bite or no, but I was in considerable doubt whether anything was at the other end or not. I thought they were biting, but I was not certain, so I pulled up the long line, and found that the baits were all gone; the fish had sucked them all off, and that was what they were doing when I was in doubt. If you have nothing but a sort of gathering bait, and the fish merely come and suck, but do not take the hook, you will catch no fish; you need killing bait. This often happens in the Sunday-school. A pleasing speaker tells a story, and the children are all listening; he has gathered them; now comes the spiritual lesson, but hardly any of them take notice of it, they have sucked the bait from the hook, and are up and away. A minister in preaching delivers a telling illustration, all the ears in the place are open, but when he comes to the application of it the people have become listless; they like the bait very well, but not the hook; they like the adornment of the tale, but not the point of the moral. This is poor work. The plan is, if you possibly can manage it, so to get the bait on the hook that they cannot suck it off, but must take the hook and all. Do take care, dear friends, when you teach children or grown-up people, that you do not arrange the anecdotes in such a way that they can sort them out, as boys pick the plums from their cakes, or else you will amuse but not benefit. (*Ibid.*) *Over-cautious fishermen*:—A very zealous revivalist of our acquaintance was wont to say that over-cautious preachers were like fishermen who refuse to cast forth the net for fear they might catch a devil-fish. (*From Hervey's "Manual of Revivals."*) *Sinners must be taken out of their native element*:—We must never be satisfied till we lift sinners out of their native element. That destroys fish, but it saves souls. We long to be the means of lifting sinners out of the water of sin to lay them in the boat at the feet of Jesus. To this end we must enclose them as in a net; we must shut them up under the law, and surround them with the gospel, so that there is no getting out, but they must be captives unto Christ. We must net them with entreaties, encircle them with invitations, and entangle them with prayers. We cannot let them get away to perish in their sin, we must land them at the Saviour's feet. This is our design, but we need help from above to accomplish it: we require our Lord's direction to know where to cast the net, and the Spirit's helping of our infirmity that we may know how to do it. May the Lord teach us to profit, and may we return

from our fishing, bringing our fish with us. Amen. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The draught of fishes*:—This miracle illustrates—I. THE LOW LEVEL OF A LIFE WITHOUT CHRIST FOR ITS MASTER. Fishing had become to these men the chief end and whole aim of living. Up to this time their life was exceedingly narrow. It had no horizon wider than the sea which held their food and supplied their trade. Thus they would have lived and died, but for the call and commission of Christ. The secular ideal of life always binds men to earth. Only Christ can raise it. II. THE TRUE RELATION BETWEEN BUSINESS AND RELIGION. Our Lord lived a carpenter before He died a Saviour. Through all His early manhood He consecrated manual toil by His own example, and so He wedded the daily and spiritual life for ever in one. Here He sanctions Simon's business, even while crowning it with a higher calling. Our Lord is master both of business and religion; no drudgery is too low or mean to become, when done for Christ's sake, the very service of God. How this transfigures the net of the fisher, the miner's pick, the grocer's scales, the clerk's tape: in each of them can be discerned a humble tool for the accomplishment of the Divine will. The servant's broom, thus held, becomes a sceptre in the hand that holds it. III. THE SECULAR LIFE, SUBMITTED TO CHRIST, BECOMES A SCHOOL FOR THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. It was in doing His daily work for Christ's sake that Peter took his first and most needed lesson in apostleship—the lesson of humility. And thus it is, through the arts and implements which are the most familiar, that the Lord is always seeking to lift men up from secular to spiritual lives. As the Eastern astrologers were pointed to the Redeemer's cradle by a star; as the woman of Samaria, in the very act of drawing water out of Jacob's well, was led to dip and drink of the sweeter waters of life; as Peter, the fisherman, by a surprising draught of fishes was made lowly enough to catch men—so through the humblest art or calling of the daily life, the Lord is reaching down hands to train and mould us for a purer spiritual life and service. The counting-room is no longer narrow, when thus its higher use as schoolroom of the soul is recognized. Dollars and cents no longer degrade men when they learn to read on their face, not the name of Cæsar only, but the holier seal and superscription of God. The irritating cares of home cease to fret the housekeeper's spirit when she begins to treat them as part of that ministry by which the Lord seeks to make her a more profitable servant. IV. THE NOBLE SERVICES OF A LIFE CONSECRATED IN ALL ITS ACTIVITIES TO THE LORD. Not all at once; we cannot enter school and graduate the same day. It needs many lessons; line upon line of experience; but success does come at last. V. PRACTICAL LESSONS. 1. The service of the Lord is always the truest service we can render to ourselves. We have all something to give up to become followers of Jesus. Yet give it up! Yours will be a strange experience if the things you give up for Christ's sake do not soon look small beside the things you have gained. They will be, in comparison, as the Sea of Galilee to the world, as the worth of a fish to the value of an immortal man. 2. No business on earth is worth following for its own sake. It may be an honest and innocent business; but if it be not also a Christian calling, and that by our own most deliberate choice, it will certainly dwarf the higher nature of him who follows it. It may keep us alive. It may bring us gains. But what are life and wealth worth, in any sober man's estimate, when thus secured? The "successes" of millionaires have been commonly the worst mistakes of life. There is a higher law reigning over all trades, professions, occupation (1 Cor. x. 31). 3. The climax of all callings is to be a fisher of men. (*J. B. Clark.*) *The noblest calling*:—An eminent New England divine, in his last sickness, was asked by a friend, "What seems to you now the greatest thing?" "Not theology," said this prince of theologians; "not controversy," again replied this chief of debaters; "but," gathering up his last breath to speak the words, while his spirit hovered at the gate of heaven, "the greatest thing in the world is to save a soul." He spoke of what he knew, for he had felt the joy of delivering many; and could the witness of all saints, from Peter down to the last ascended, be taken, would it not be the same, "the greatest thing on earth is to save a soul"? (*Ibid.*) *The "net" of a genuine Christian life*:—You and I may never be heroes of a Pentecost; we are not masters of the great seine, which Peter and John of old, and some modern disciples, shoot out and catch men by the thousands; but have we not some humble hand-net with which we can take a few? Along our coast line, for some years, men have been setting up what they call "weirs," consisting of a series of enclosed ponds, connected with each other by openings, and terminating, at last, in a netted fence running far out into the bay. Against this netted fence the fish, in their progress, strike, and, following it down, they are safely enclosed, at last, in the smallest pond,

where they are easily captured when the tide is out. Like this netted arm, running far out into the busy world, is a genuine Christian life. It has none of the special gifts of a Finney or a Moody, but in the coming and going tides more than one soul is arrested by this standing net of a godly life. Unconsciously guided by the holy barrier in their way, they are drawn into stiller waters, and when the tide goes out at last, many, I believe, will be found taken for Christ, and taken by fishers of men whose chief skill has been to stand, to stand firm and without rent, in the midst of a restless sea. (*Ibid.*) *Catch men by love:*—Would you be a fisher of men? And do you ask, How may I succeed? Love is the best pilot, the only wise interpreter. Love men as Christ loved them, and you will not mourn your small skill or limited chance. Love will soon show you your own best way. To catch men without love is as hopeless as to catch fish without a net. Love is the net. There never was a wicked sinner unsoftened by a pure and steadfast love. There never was a wayward scholar who did not reward the faithful, patient love of his teacher. Let our love be only such that we can pray as Christ prayed for men, can weep as Christ wept over them, can bleed as Christ bled for them, can stretch our arms of help as wide as He stretched His on the cross of sacrifice! Then we shall be able to catch men, for so He drew us, and so He is drawing the world to Himself. "Fear not," He seems to say to all who love, yet shrink from this holy calling, "fear not; love men, and you shall catch them." (*Ibid.*) *Ministerial lessons:*—Christ's method of training His ministers for their high office was very remarkable. It was by a miracle, especially designed to represent, in a figure, their future office, so that the homely trade in which they were engaged was for ever hallowed to be the emblem of the gathering into the Church of such as should be saved. 1. The unwearied patience and consummate skill, without which the fisherman cannot be successful in alluring his prey, are, no doubt, fit illustrations of that constancy of purpose and that heavenly wisdom which are such important elements in the character of the Christian teacher. 2. And, perhaps, the fact that the four disciples had toiled all night and taken nothing, and yet were ready, at their Master's bidding, again to let down the net for a draught, is recorded as an instance of that unwavering faith in the Divine promise, and that patient continuance in well-doing, which had prepared these simple-minded peasants of Galilee for that office in which the Christian minister has only to obey, while he leaves results in a higher hand, and, even when he fears he has bestowed labour in vain, still to labour on, in reliance upon the assurance that God's word shall not return to Him void. 3. But perhaps the chief ministerial lesson which our Lord intended to convey to the minds of His apostles was this—that as even the fisherman, in spite of all his skill, must still depend on the power of Him whose is the sea, for He made it, so all the success of the gospel preacher is of the Lord alone. (*J. S. Hoare, B.D.*) *Fishers of men:*—I. NONE SHOULD ENTER THE MINISTRY BUT THOSE WHO ARE CALLED OF CHRIST. There are other voices to which young men are apt to listen. 1. There is the voice of the love of a life of literary ease. The young man has a passion for books; his daily toil seems to him mean and degrading; and he fancies that if he were in the ministry he would have nothing to do but to study, and that study would be a lifelong and ever-increasing delight. At the best he becomes a respectable bookworm, who hates preaching, which so greatly interferes with his studies; but he must preach or starve, and so he preaches sermons *about* the gospel—very learned sermons—which do his hearers about as much real good as would an admirable lecture on the chemistry of food delivered to a number of farm labourers who at the close of a day's toil had hurried into a kitchen hungry for food. 2. There is a voice of the ambition to be respectable, genteel! 3. There is the voice of the love of publicity. Sometimes a little success in delivering half a dozen addresses to a Sunday School, or in making as many speeches in a debating society, turns a young man's brain, and he is sure that his proper place is in the ministry. 4. There is still another voice to which many young men are apt to listen, imagining that it is indeed the voice of Christ calling them to devote themselves to the ministry—the voice of a sincere desire to do good. This desire is quick and powerful in the heart of every young man who has really given himself to Christ. But it is a pitiable mistake to imagine that the call to do good and the call to become a preacher of the gospel is one and the same thing. To none of the voices that I have named should a young man listen when he is debating the question whether he should devote himself to the ministry of the Word. Before he takes that solemn, and in many cases irrevocable step, he should be very sure that it is the voice of Christ that he has heard saying to him, "Follow Me, and I will make you a fisher of men." II. BUT—this is the second

fact that should be pondered—WHEN A MAN HAS HEARD THAT CALL HE SHOULD OBEY IT AT ANY COST. It may be that he cannot do so without making sacrifices; like Simon and Andrew, James and John, he may have to leave behind him nets, boats, valuable fishing-tackle, and dear friends; he may have to give up great present advantages, still greater prospective advantages; but like those of whom this narrative speaks to us, he should cheerfully forsake all, and follow Christ. Amos, the herdsman, was as true a prophet of the Lord as Isaiah, although he was reared in a palace. The other young man is in the counting-house; he is the eldest son of the successful head of the firm; he knows that in due time he will be a partner in the firm; he, too, is called, clearly called—he has no doubt that it is Christ's voice he hears—yet he hesitates, for the nets and boats that will have to be left are too many and too valuable; he reminds himself of the fact of which I have reminded you, that it is not in the ministry only that a man can do good, and so, with this excuse, which he knows is for him a lie, he silences the Voice that calls so clearly. And hence comes that fact, which all the Churches deplore, that so few young men come forth from the middle and upper ranks of society to serve our Lord Jesus Christ as preachers of His Word. This was Garibaldi's most effective appeal to his fellow-countrymen:—"Soldiers, your efforts against overwhelming odds have been unavailing. I have nothing to offer you but hunger, thirst, hardship, death: let all who love their country follow me" (July 22, 1849). Such an appeal does Christ address to-day to the sons of our Christian merchants and landowners. (*Christian Age.*)

Ver. 11. **And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him.**—*Imitation of the apostles:*—I. WITH REGARD TO THOSE POINTS IN WHICH THE EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLES AT THEIR CALL IS NOT TO BE UNIVERSALLY IMITATED, I would remark at once a wide difference betwixt their case and that of the generality of Christians, which is, that they were entering the ministerial office. Those whom they might convert, either from the errors of Judaism or the blindness of idolatry, might possibly become equally acceptable Christians in the sight of their Divine leader; but there would still remain a line of separation betwixt the two classes, and to each class peculiar duties were annexed. And besides this distinction which we have just noticed, there is another consideration which invests the situation of the apostles in a still more peculiar light. They were going to live day and night, and in constant companionship with one who, having "all power given Him both in heaven and earth," could, at any moment, supply their wants, whatever those wants might be: and in attending upon whom, therefore, they would be miraculously defended from all those evils which would infallibly overtake any one who now attempted literally to do as they were ordered. And in speculating upon our Saviour's purpose in this particular miracle, though the idea may not hitherto have occurred to you, it certainly does seem probable that He meant it to have this convincing effect; for that men, earning their precarious livelihood as mere fishermen on the Lake of Tiberias, probably dependent for their next day's meal on the fortune which attended their over-night's fishing, would naturally feel their trust much strengthened in our Saviour's character after such an exhibition of His miraculous power to help them, there cannot be a doubt. Christ foresaw, indeed, though as yet hidden from the apostles' eyes, that dreadful cloud of persecution which was gathering on every side of them, which in a very short while burst in its first fury upon Calvary, and soon after took off each one of our Lord's immediate followers by the refined agonies of some cruel death. And having this foreknowledge of what would and must come, Christ took only for the attendants of His mission such as would be undisturbed from their purpose of final perseverance and endurance: such in fact only as, having previously resigned all affections for this world, would be able and willing to quit life at any moment through the martyr's blood-stained gate. But, my brethren, there are some points in which the example of the apostles must be imitated, if we would be Christians. In the first place, we must imitate the apostles in their readiness to resign all earthly things when put in competition with those of heaven. Secondly, we must imitate them in their liveliness of conscience, to distinguish the value betwixt the body and the soul. Thirdly, we must imitate their perseverance and final triumph, through faith, over the temptations of life and the terrors of death. (*A. Gatty, M.A.*) *Forsaking all:*—This was indispensable to our becoming disciples. It is indispensable to our continuing disciples. 1. We are to feel habitually that we have nothing of our own. All idea of proprietary rights we are to relinquish. 2. And when the

selfish counter pleas that oppose the claims of the rightful Master solicit my consent, I must hear only the one Divine call that bids me forsake all I have in devotion to this new Master. 3. And this renunciation of all must be made in the conviction that there is no use we can possibly make of ourselves and of what we have that can be so sweet, so wise, and so fruitful of good and of blessing, as to lay the whole down at Jesus' feet. (*A. L. Stone, D.D.*) *Love to Christ supreme:*—A Karen woman offered herself for baptism. After the usual examination, I inquired whether she could give up her ornaments for Christ. It was an unexpected blow. I explained the spirit of the gospel. I appealed to her own consciousness of vanity. I read to her the apostle's prohibition (1 Tim. ii. 9). She looked again and again at her handsome necklace, and then, with an air of modest decision, she took it off, saying, "I love Christ more than this." (*Dr. Judson.*) *Leaving all to follow Christ:*—The secretary of the Brighton Town Mission narrates the following: "Miss B. was in the theatrical profession, earning as much at times as £21 a week. Through the agencies at work in connection with our hall, she was led to choose the one thing needful. But now came the struggle between duty to Christ and duty to her parents. As she expressed it, 'She could not have Christ and go on with her work; therefore, as she felt she would rather die than dishonour Him,' although only seventeen, she made the happy choice. Every means was taken to win her back; her Bible was burned, her clothes taken from her, she was locked up in her room, she was sent from home, but flattery and persecution were alike in vain, she realized in its fulness the promise, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' She still holds on her way rejoicing." *Rejecting a kingdom for Christ:*—This noble act has been left for a converted heathen in India to do for Christ. The account has lately been sent to this country by Mr. C. A. Elliott, C.B., the Commissioner of Assam, who says he supposes the man in question is the only man now alive who has rejected a kingdom for Christ. He was the heir of the Rajah of Cherra, U. Bor. Sing, of Khasia, India, and had been converted to Christianity by the missionaries. U. Bor. Sing was warned that in joining the Christians he would probably forfeit his right to be King of Cherra after the death of Ram Sing, who then ruled. Eighteen months afterwards Ram Sing died; the chiefs of the tribes met together, and unanimously decided that Bor. Sing was to succeed him as Siim (king), but that his Christian profession stood in the way. Messenger after messenger was sent to U. Bor. Sing urging him to go to the missionaries and recant. He was invited to the native council, and there asked to put aside his religious profession, and that then they would all acknowledge him as their king. His answer was, "Put aside my Christian profession! I can put aside my head-dress or my cloak, but as for the covenant I have made with my God, I cannot for any consideration put that aside." Another was therefore appointed king in his stead.

Vers. 12, 15. **Behold a man full of leprosy.**—*The leper cleansed:*—I. LEPROSY AFFORDS A STRIKING REPRESENTATION OF THE CHARACTER AND CONSEQUENCE OF SIN. 1. This spiritual leprosy has rendered all our race unclean in the sight of God and in the judgment of His holy law. (1) It shuts us out from His presence, (2) and from a place among His people. 2. No skill or power of man can cure this disease. 3. This malady, if not healed, will issue in death. And remember, death is not cessation of being, but a state of awful terror, pain, and wretchedness. This is the issue to which sin is bringing its victims. 4. Yet, thank God, our case is not altogether hopeless; there is a cure. II. OBSERVE THE STEPS TAKEN BY THIS LEPER TO OBTAIN A CURE. Thus we may learn what the disposition is, in which we should endeavour to approach the Saviour, who alone can heal our spiritual leprosy. 1. The first thing I would notice in this leper's conduct is the eagerness and haste with which he ran to Jesus immediately he met Him. 2. His reverential self-abasement. His eagerness in seeking relief did not cause him to forget what was due to the character of Him from whom that relief was sought. 3. The confidence he entertained of Christ's power. Have not we far stronger grounds for this than he had? (*J. Harding, M.A.*) *Two pulpits:*—I. OBSERVE HOW MANY ANONYMOUS BELIEVERS THERE ARE IN THE BIBLE RECORD WHO GIVE HELP ALL ALONG THE AGES. Here are mentioned "multitudes," and among them two persons in particular—a leper and a paralytic. And that is all we know about any individual to whom that eventful day was the beginning of renewed life. No name, no history, no after-career; but we suppose that these cripples are in heaven now, and we know that their story has helped thousands to be patient and cheerful on the way thither. It is of little consequence who we are; it matters more what we are. II. EVEN IN

EXTREME HOPELESSNESS OF DISEASE ONE MAY EXHIBIT A SUPREME AND ILLUSTRIOUS FAITH. The cases of these two men were as bad as they could well be; yet did our Lord find in them faith enough to be healed. In the rooms of the American Tract Society, in New York, are still standing two objects which I studied for some meditative years, once a month, at a committee meeting. One is a slight framework of tough wood, a few feet high, so bound together with hasps and hinges as to be taken down and folded in the hand. This was Whitefield's travelling-pulpit—the one he used when, denied access to the churches, he harangued the thousands in the open air, on the moors of England. You will think of this modern apostle, lifted up upon the small platform, with the throngs of eager people around him, or hurrying from one field to another, bearing his Bible in his arms; ever on the move, toiling with Herculean energy, and a force like that of a giant. There, in that rude pulpit, is the symbol of all which is active and fiery in dauntless Christian zeal. But now, look again: in the centre of this framework, resting upon the slender platform, where the living preacher used to stand, you will see a chair—a plain, straight-backed, armed, cottage-chair—rough, simple, meagrely cushioned, unvarnished, and stiff. It was the seat in which Elizabeth Wallbridge, "the dairyman's daughter," sat and coughed and whispered, and from which she went only at her last hour to the couch on which she died. Here again is a pulpit; and it is the symbol of a life quiet and unromantic and hard in all Christian endurance. Every word that invalid woman uttered—every patient night she suffered—was a gospel sermon. In a hundred languages, the life of that servant of God has preached to millions of souls the riches of Christ's glory and grace. And of these two pulpits, which is the most honourable is known only to God, who undoubtedly accepted and consecrated them both. The one is suggestive of the ministry of speech, the other of the ministry of submission. III. AN EXPLANATION OF THE MYSTERY AND THE PURPOSE OF SUFFERING. Pain is a sort of ordination to the Christian ministry. Pure submission is as good as going on a foreign mission. Souls may be won to the Cross by a life on a sick-bed just as well as by a life in a cathedral desk. IV. Hence, we may easily learn WHAT SHOULD BE THE CHIEF OCCUPATION OF AN INVALID. No one can preach from any pulpit without the proper measure of study. He must thoughtfully ascertain what will make his efforts most pertinent. 1. He will study doctrine. 2. He will study experience, too. A month ago I saw a brave soldier of the Cross who had been passing through a fiery history of years with broken health, which had taken him from the pulpit of his usefulness and bidden him look into the grave season after season. He was now only able to stand, and sought a new field. Only yesterday he visited me again; in his feebleness he lay on my couch while he talked. He had just come from putting the wife of his manhood, his patient helper and the stay of his home, in the bedlam of a madhouse. Poor in spirit and poor in purse, broken-hearted and alone, he feared he should break again. Yet there he lay, and spoke hopefully and gently. Oh, that valiant brother, quivering in every muscle, but bold and firm in his trustful courage, preached to me in my study as I know I never preached in my church! V. Some people recover from long illness; Christ heals them, as He did these men in the story. So there is one more lesson for convalescents: WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO WITH THEIR LIVES HEREAFTER? "It is a solemn thing to die," said Schiller, "but it is a more solemn thing to live." We know the story of the Scotch mother, whose child an eagle stole away; half maddened she saw the bird reach its eyrie far up the cliff. No one could scale the rock. In distraction she prayed all the day. An old sailor climbed after it, and crept down dizzily from the height. There, on her outstretched arms, as she pled with closed eyes, he laid her babe. She rose in majesty of self-denial and took it (as she had been taught in that land) to her minister. She would not kiss it till it had been solemnly dedicated unto God! What shall a man do with a life given back to him? (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *What has God done to save me?*—The divinely-offered key to a right appreciation of Christ's spiritual work, even to that which theologians call the Atonement, should be sought by observing how our Lord cleansed the lepers, made the blind to see, and the lame to walk. Let us endeavour to realize how He, whose name is the only name given under heaven among men whereby we may be saved, healed men's diseases, in order that we may understand, so far as it has been revealed, how He saves us from our sins. I. CONSIDER, FIRST, WHY JESUS HEALED. Not to show that He could, but because He pitied the sufferer. When asked to work miracles to prove His ability to do so, He habitually declined. Every act of healing wrought by Christ was an act of pure compassion. He never healed to attract attention to

Himself. He often commanded those He healed to say nothing of their cure. II. CONSIDER, NEXT, HOW JESUS HEALED. 1. The fact that He had compassion upon them was itself the first step in the cure of many who came to Him. There are diseases in which recovery must begin by regaining lost self-respect. In Christ the most dissolute and disgraced found not only pity, but delicate considerateness. Think, *e.g.*, of His treatment of this leper. We can scarcely conceive what the effect must have been upon a man who had for years been closeted with his loathsome self, or with still more loathsome fellow-sufferers—a man who might not eat with human beings unless the same deadly taint was upon them, nor appear in the street except jangling a bell to give warning of the peril his presence brought; who, if he patted upon the head a carrion dog, it must be instantly killed, lest it should brush against others and defile them, because he had touched it; who, if he saw his mother, his child, his wife approach, must fly or shout, "Unclean, unclean! Keep afar!" We can scarcely conceive what the effect must have been upon such a man, when he saw Jesus draw nigh. The multitude attending the Saviour falls back as men shrink from the plague; for crowds are always cowards. But the Master approaches, and, paying no heed to the jangling bell, the warning cry, lays His hand upon him. For the first time for years the leper feels the touch of a hand that is not hardened by the awful malady. That touch must have made the leper a new man in heart before the quickened pulse could shoot new life into the decaying limbs. 2. In healing, Christ made effort. One must be blind to read the New Testament, and fancy Christ's cures cost Him nothing because He was Divine. It was because He was Divine that they cost Him so much. If you would seek beings incapable of suffering, you must not go up toward the angels and the great white throne, for there you will find "the Lamb as it had been slain," but down among the oysters. Do you ask, How did Christ bear men's diseases? Thus: He sighed, He prayed, He lifted them in His arms, He put His hands upon them, He drew them to His bosom, He groaned, He felt His strength go from Him, to heal their bodies. If He had done less, He would not have made manifest the long-suffering God; and His saving men's bodies, His bearing their infirmities and healing their diseases, would have been no illustration of the agony with which He wrestled in Gethsemane for the salvation of their souls. 3. In many instances Jesus employed known remedies in physical healing. He manipulated the palsied tongue and the stopped ears—"put His fingers in the ears," "touched the tongue." He covered the blind eyes with moist clay, a well-known Egyptian remedy for ophthalmia. He inquired minutely the symptoms of the demoniac boy. He bent over those He healed, He touched them, as careful physicians do. Thus He encouraged, not the breach, but the observance of God's order. He put honour, by His example, upon the use of scientific remedies. At times He healed by a word, without approaching the sick one. But He seems to have dispensed with remedies only when to employ them was impossible, or when they would have been obviously useless, or when there was a special reason for neglecting them. His example said to those apostles to whom miraculous powers were given, "Use the best means; pray God to bless their use; and when you can do nothing more, pray." And that is what every wise and instructed Christian tries to do. 4. In all Christ's healings there was conspicuously revealed the authority of absolute power. When He spoke, devils obeyed, the dead heard, the despairing hoped, the lost knew that they were found. (*William B. Wright.*) *The touch of Christ; or, the power of sympathy*:—A lady visiting an asylum for friendless orphan children lately watched the little ones go through their daily drill superintended by the matron, a firm, honest woman, to whom her duty had evidently become a mechanical task. One little toddler hurt her foot, and the visitor, who had children of her own, took her on her knee, petted her, made her laugh, and kissed her before she put her down. The other children stared in wonder. "What is the matter? Does nobody ever kiss you?" asked the astonished visitor. "No; that isn't in the rules, ma'am," was the answer. A gentleman in the same city, who one morning stopped to buy a newspaper from a wizened, shrieking newsboy at the station, found the boy following him every day thereafter, with a wistful face, brushing the spots from his clothes, calling a car for him, &c. "Do you know me?" he asked at last. The wretched little Arab laughed. "No; but you called me 'my child' one day. I'd like to do something for you, sir. I thought before that I was nobody's child." Christian men and women are too apt to feel when they subscribe to organized charities that they have done their duty to the great army of homeless, friendless waifs around them. A touch, a kiss, a kind word, may do much towards saving

the neglected little one who feels he is "nobody's child," teaching it, as no money can do, that we are all children of one Father. When Christ would heal or help the poor outcast, He did not send him money, but He came close and touched him. *A leper's logic*:—This man apparently had no doubt of our Lord's ability to heal him. It was about Christ's willingness that he was in doubt. As a rule, men do not naturally associate love and power; they believe in the existence of power far more readily than in that of love. Power seems to create distrust in love. 1. Perhaps because the world is so used to seeing power used arbitrarily and selfishly. 2. Because of the consciousness of sin. It was when Peter saw the Divine power of Christ displayed in the draught of fishes that he said, "Depart from me," &c. And in the light of this fact, the incident of our text has a peculiar force; for—I. THE DISEASE FROM WHICH THIS MAN WAS SUFFERING WAS REPRESENTATIVE OF SIN. It was a decomposition of the vital juices, putrefaction in a living body; hence an image of death. The leper was treated throughout as a sinner. "He was a dreadful parable of death." The case of this leper, therefore—II. GAVE OUR LORD AN OPPORTUNITY, NOT ONLY TO DO A WORK OF MERCY AND LOVE UPON A DISEASED MAN, BUT ALSO TO GIVE A SYMBOLIC TESTIMONY OF HIS WILLINGNESS TO DEAL LOVINGLY AND FORGIVINGLY WITH A SINFUL MAN. Let us see how Christ's willingness comes out in this incident. 1. It is not repelled by an imperfect faith. 2. It was shown in Christ's express declaration. How striking is the way in which He meets that timid "If Thou wilt" with "I will." (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) "*If Thou wilt*":—When the leper said, "If Thou wilt," he narrowed his appeal, and directed it to the will of Jesus. His faith in Christ's power was very much stronger that his faith in Christ's goodness. It contained much that was true, but did not contain much more that was equally true. Christ answered, not according to the imperfection of the appeal, but according to its possibility of being perfected. "If Thou wilt" is fitting language for us, not because we doubt His goodness, but because we believe in His wisdom. If we learn that it is God's will that we should suffer and have disappointment, we hope amidst our pain, and know that our disappointment is after all the appointment of the wiser still, and that, whatever may be in the meantime withheld, the answer will be given at last, "Be thou clean." (*J. Ogmore Davies*). *Leprosy*:—I. PHYSICAL ASPECT. 1. White pustules—eat away flesh—attacking one member after another—at last the bones. 2. Attended with sleeplessness, nightmare, and hopelessness of cure. 3. A living death. II. SOCIAL ASPECT. 1. Contagion. 2. Lived in a several house, or in bands at a distance from ordinary dwelling. 3. Went with head uncovered, crying, "Room for the leper." III. RELIGIOUS ASPECT. 1. Excommunication—no communion with the commonwealth of Israel. 2. In every way a type of the impenitent sinner. For—3. Sin is a living death; contagious, and separates from God. (*F. Godet, D.D.*) *Socially restored, as well as morally*:—And He charged him to tell no man. Assume that the true state of the case was that Jesus wrought a cure, and left it to the priest to declare the patient cured, and all becomes clear, natural, and Christlike. Two things had to be done to make the benefit complete—the disease had to be healed, whereby the sufferer would be delivered from the physical evil; and it had to be authoritatively declared healed, whereby the sufferer would be delivered from the social disabilities imposed by the law upon lepers. Jesus conferred one-half of the blessing, and He sent the leper to the priest to receive from him the other half. He did this, not in ostentation, or by way of precaution, but chiefly, if not exclusively, out of regard to the man's good, that he might be restored, not only to health, but to society. Hence, also, the injunction of silence. The prevention of unhealthy excitement among the people was only a secondary aim. The primary end concerned the man healed. Jesus wished to prevent him from contenting himself with half the benefit, rejoicing in restored health, and telling everybody he met about it, and neglecting the steps necessary to get himself universally recognized as healed. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *Show thyself to the priest, &c.*:—A certificate of the recovery of a leper could only be given at Jerusalem, by a priest, after a lengthened examination, and tedious rites. It will illustrate the bondage of the ceremonial law, as then in force, to describe them. With his heart full of the first joy of a cure so amazing, the leper had to set off to the Temple for the requisite papers to authorize his return, once more, to the roll of Israel. A tent had to be pitched outside the city, and in this the priest examined the leper, cutting off all his hair with the utmost care; for, if only two hairs were left, the ceremony was invalid. Two sparrows had to be brought at this first stage of the cleansing—the one, to be killed over a small earthen pan of water, into which its blood must drop;

the other, after being sprinkled with the blood of its mate—a cedar twig, to which scarlet wool and a piece of hyssop (Psa. li. 1) were bound, being used to do so—was let free in such a direction that it should fly to the open country. After the scrutiny by the priest, the leper put on clean clothes, and carried away those he had worn to a running stream to wash them thoroughly, and to cleanse himself by a bath. He could now enter the city, but for seven days more could not enter his own house. On the eighth day he once more submitted to the scissors of the priest, who cut off whatever hair might have grown in the interval. Then followed a second bath; and now he had only carefully to avoid any defilement, so as to be fit to attend in the Temple next morning, and complete his cleansing. The first step in this final purification was to offer three lambs, two males and a female, none of which must be under a year old. Standing at the outer edge of the court of the men, which he was not yet worthy to enter, the leper awaited the longed-for rites. These began by the priest taking one of the male lambs destined to be slain as an atonement for the leper, and handing it to each point of the compass in turn, and by his swinging a vessel of oil on all sides in the same way, as if to present both to the universally-present God. He then led the lamb to the leper, who laid his hands on its head, and gave it over as a sacrifice for his guilt, which he now confessed. It was forthwith killed at the north side of the altar, two priests catching its blood, the one in a vessel, the other in his hand. The first now sprinkled the altar with the blood, while the other went to the leper and anointed his ears, his right thumb, and his right toe with it. The one priest then poured some oil of the leper's offering into the left hand of the other, who, in his turn, dipped his finger seven times into the oil thus held, and sprinkled it as often towards the Holy of Holies. Each part of the leper which before had been touched with the blood was then further anointed with the oil, what remained being stroked on his head. The leper could now enter the men's court, and did so, passing through it to that of the priests'. The female lamb was next killed, as a sin-offering, after he had put his hands on its head, part of its blood being smeared on the horns of the altar, while the rest was poured out at the altar-base. The other male lamb was then slain for a burnt-sacrifice; the leper once more laying his hands on its head, and the priests sprinkling its blood on the altar. The fat, and all that was fit for an offering, was now laid on the altar, and burned as a "sweet-smelling savour" to God. A meal-offering of fine wheat meal and oil ended the whole; a portion being laid on the altar, while the rest, with the two lambs, of which only a small part had been burned, formed the dues of the priest. It was not till all this had been done that the full ceremony of cleansing, or showing himself to the priests, had been carried out, and that the cheering words, "Thou art pure," restored the sufferer once more to the rights of citizenship and of intercourse with men. No wonder that even a man like St. Peter, so tenderly minded to his ancestral religion, should speak (Acts xv. 10) of its requirements as a yoke which "neither our fathers nor we are able to bear." (*Dr. Geikie.*) *The moral of verse* 14:—Unless we show ourselves to whomsoever is our priest after our healings and cleansings, and after the gift which is commanded us, we are less pure for having been so cleansed, and more diseased for having been so healed. There can be no greater evil than to be prosperous without being prayerful, and strong without being Godlike. You should never finish your successful commercial enterprise with the balancing of your account at the bank. The only duty of your restored vigour is not merely to pay your doctor's bill. Your healing and your prospering are from Israel's God; you had better tell Him of them, and tell Him without much ado with man by the way. Tell no man until you know how to speak devoutly, and see no man until you have seen God. You must obey with the new strength before you are free in the use of it. (*J. Ogmore Davies.*)

Ver. 15. **A fame abroad of Him.**—*True popularity*:—That distinguished and excellent judge, Lord Mansfield, once observed: "True popularity is not that popularity which is followed after, but the popularity which follows after." *A fruitless expedient to prevent overcrowding*:—Dr. Chalmers, when large audiences attended his services, sometimes announced in the morning that he would repeat the same sermon in the afternoon. On one occasion when he had made that announcement Dr. Wardlaw was present, and gives us an account of the scene. It was on one Sabbath evening. The seats were occupied an hour before the time, and the doors were closed and bolted. An immense crowd was without, and as soon as Chalmers opened the vestry door, in spite of the keepers, the front door was forced open and the crowd rushed

in, completely filling all the vacant space. Chalmers was grieved, and administered a sharp rebuke to the audience. Walking home with him, Chalmers said to Wardlaw, "I preached the same sermon in the morning, and, for the very purpose of preventing the annoyance of such a densely-crowded place, I intimated that I should preach it again in the evening. Have you ever tried that plan?" "Wardlaw says: "I did not smile. I laughed outright. 'No, no,' I replied. 'My good friend, there are but very few of us that are under the necessity of having recourse to the use of means for getting thin audiences.'" (*Bishop Simpson.*)

Vers. 16, 17. **And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed.**—*Jesus praying*:—What were the special reasons which led our Lord at this time to go away for prayer. I. THE NEED OF INWARD REFRESHMENT OF WHICH HE MUST HAVE BEEN CONSCIOUS. 1. Christ was full of the truest, tenderest sympathy. 2. His sympathy was invariably practical. 3. It was intensely personal; general enough to embrace the multitude; particular enough to fix itself on the individual. We can imagine, therefore, how exhausted He must have been. II. THE FEELING OF SADNESS WHICH CAME TO HIM IN VIEW OF THE SPIRITUAL APATHY OF THE MULTITUDES WHO WERE SO EAGERLY SEEKING HIM. If we are deeply concerned for the spiritual welfare of men we shall feel something of the same sadness. III. HIS CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE DANGER TO HIS SPIRITUAL MISSION WHICH WOULD ARISE FROM A PREMATURE POPULARITY. Prayer is the only true preservative against the perils of success. Because of our success we are in danger—1. Of rushing on too fast. 2. Of becoming self-dependent. 3. Of growing unsympathetic. (*B. Wilkinson, F.G.S.*) *The Redeemer an example of solitary prayer*:—I. UPON WHAT PRINCIPLES ARE WE TO ACCOUNT FOR OUR LORD'S FREQUENT RETIREMENT FOR SOLITUDE AND DEVOTION? A man, though in blessed and ineffable union with God. Made in all points like unto His brethren, with the exception of His sinless purity. 1. The Redeemer would be impelled to cultivate solitude and devotion by the fervour of His piety. 2. Solitary communion with God was necessary to preserve His holy mind from the contaminations of the world, incidental to the possession of a material body, and his participation of human nature. 3. In solitude and prayer, the Redeemer was invigorated to pursue and to accomplish His great work. 4. Our Lord, by this habit of retired devotion, afforded an example and an illustration of His own doctrine, and condemned the hypocritical and ostentatious worship of the Jewish elders. II. WHAT ADVANTAGES MAY WE EXPECT TO DERIVE FROM IMITATING THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAVIOUR IN THIS PARTICULAR INSTANCE. To suppose the disciple in less need of perpetual supplies of grace than his Lord were folly and presumption. 1. Solitude is favourable to that calm, reflecting, and pensive state of the mind which is suitable to the higher duties of religion. 2. In devout seclusion, the realities of religion are brought more closely home to our consciences and our hearts, and we feel more deeply our individual concern in their truth and consequences. 3. A life of faith in opposition to a life regulated by the exclusive interests of the present world, can only be sustained by habits of private devotion. 4. It secures an effectual refuge amidst the sorrows and calamities of life. (*W. Hull.*) *Christ and prayer*:—1. In what His prayers for the most part consisted we know not, but we know that one element, which must ever form an important part in our petitions, could have no place in His. He would not say, "Forgive Me My trespasses." 2. But though Christ prayed without seeking mercy, of which He had no need, He still truly and earnestly *prayed*. His devotions were not simply thanksgivings, utterances of praise and gladness, or ecstatic contemplations. 3. In the prayers of Christ, if in nothing else, we see abundant reason for our prayers. (*E. Mellor, D.D.*) *The exhaustion of pity*:—The spirit is never so exhausted as when it is exhausted by being pitiful. For weariness of bone and muscle nature is very generous; rest for that may be found anywhere; the tree will do for shelter, and the stone for a pillow. Weariness of brain is harder to lay aside, and weariness of heart harder still. Brain and limb fail when the heart's power is gone. Jesus needed the day for work and the night for rest. The spirit must rest and be refreshed by spirit; we are revived again, and often brought to a lively hope through the ministry of life's friendships, and have been created anew by the consciousness of being understood. Christ had been understood neither when He spake nor acted, but had been wholly when He prayed. We, too, have need of a place apart where we may be refreshed from the presence of the Lord. (*J. Ogmore Davies.*) *Solitude necessary*:—Life must have its hours of holy solitude if it would be rich and strong. It is true that we can pray in the city; it is also true that the wilderness has charms of its own for meditative

purposes. Silence helps speech. Loneliness prepares for society. Nature has special messages to exhausted workers. After the wilderness came the city, with all its activities and temptations. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Prayer the breath of the spiritual man*:—A celebrated performer upon the piano was continually familiar with his instrument, for he used to say, "If I quit the piano one day *I* notice it; if I quit it two days my *friends* notice it; if I quit it three days *the public* notice it." No doubt he correctly described his experience; only by perpetual practice could he preserve the ease and delicacy of his touch. Be sure that it is so with prayer. If this holy art be neglected, even for a little time, the personal loss will be great; if the negligence be continued, our nearest spiritual friends will notice a deterioration in tone and life; and if the evil should be long indulged, our character and influence will suffer with a wider circle. To be a master of the mystery of prayer one must pray, pray continually, pray hourly, pray at all times, pray without ceasing. A Christian should no more leave off praying than the musician should leave off playing; in fact, it is the breath of every spiritual man, and woe be to him should he restrain it! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A great man at prayer*:—I had once been spending three weeks in the White House with Mr. Lincoln as his guest. One night—it was just after the battle of Bull Run—I was restless and could not sleep. I was repeating the part which I was to take in a public performance. The hour was past midnight. Indeed, it was coming near to the dawn, when I heard low tones proceeding from a private room near where the President slept. The door was partly open. I instinctively walked in, and there I saw a sight which I shall never forget. It was the President kneeling beside an open Bible. The light was turned low in the room. His back was toward me. For a moment I was silent, as I stood looking in amazement and wonder. Then he cried out in tones so pleading and sorrowful, "O thou God that heard Solomon in the night when he prayed for wisdom, hear me: I cannot lead this people, I cannot guide the affairs of this nation without Thy help. I am poor and weak and sinful. O God, who didst hear Solomon when he cried for wisdom, hear me, and save this nation!" (*James E. Murdock.*) *Public prayer not always the measure of private prayer*:—My brethren, do we pray? There is many a minister—pardon me for saying so—who spends more time in public prayer than in private prayer, and not a few spend more time in preaching than in praying. Is this as it ought to be? A faithful pastor went once to see a young man who was a member of his Church, and he said to him, "I have come to ask you if you are on good terms with your Father?" meaning his heavenly Father. The young man seemed very much taken aback, and said to him, "Who told you about me and my father? We have not been on speaking terms for years." "Oh," said the minister, "I mean your heavenly Father; but this is very sad." "Oh, it is sad, and it grieves me in my heart," said the young man. "Oh," said the minister, "I have often spent an evening in your house, and I never noticed there was any estrangement between you and your father." "Ah, no," says the young man, "we have an arrangement, when we come together in company to act as if nothing had happened; but when we are alone there is no intercourse between us." (*C. Lockhart.*) **And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.**—*The gospel's healing power*:—I. THE POWER OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL IS MAINLY A POWER TO HEAL. 1. It is a Divine power which comes from our Lord Jesus, because He is most surely God. It is the sole prerogative of God to heal spiritual disease. 2. Although our Lord Jesus healed as Divine, remember that He also possessed power to heal because of His being human. He used no other remedy in healing our sin-sickness but that of taking our sicknesses and infirmities upon Himself. This is the one great cure-all. 3. The power which dwelt in Christ to heal, coming from Him as Divine and human, was applicable, most eminently, to the removal of the guilt of sin. Reading this chapter through, one pauses with joy over that twenty-fourth verse, "The Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sin." Here, then, is one of the great Physician's mightiest arts: He has power to forgive sin. 4. This is not the only form of the healing power which dwells without measure in our glorious Lord. He heals the sorrow of sin. It is written, "He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds." When sin is really manifest to the conscience it is a most painful thing, and for the conscience to be effectually pacified is an unspeakable blessing. Sharper than a dagger in the heart, or an arrow piercing through the loins, is conviction of sin. When Jesus is received by faith, He lifts all our sorrow from us in a moment. 5. Christ also heals the power of sin. 6. And He is able to heal us of our relapses. II. A second remark arises from the text: THERE ARE SPECIAL PERIODS WHEN THE POWER

TO HEAL IS MOST MANIFESTLY DISPLAYED. The verse before us says that on a certain day the power of the Lord was present to heal, by which I understand, not that Christ is not always God, not that He was ever unable to heal, but this—that there were certain periods when He pleased to put forth His Divine energy in the way of healing to an unusual degree. The sea is never empty; it is indeed always as full at one time as at another, but yet it is not always at flood. The sun is never dim, he shines with equal force at all hours, and yet it is not always day with us, nor do we always bask in the warmth of summer. Christ is fulness itself, but that fulness does not always overflow; He is able to heal, but He is not always engaged in healing. 1. On this occasion there was a great desire among the multitude to hear the Word. 2. The healing power was conspicuously present when Christ was teaching. 3. A further sign of present power is found most clearly in the sick folk who were healed by Jesus. 4. The particular time mentioned in the text was prefaced by a special season of prayer on the part of the principal actor in it. III. WHEN THE POWER OF THE LORD IS PRESENT TO HEAL, IT MAY NOT BE SEEN IN ALL, BUT MAY BE SHOWN IN SPECIAL CASES AND NOT IN OTHERS. We do not find that this power was wanting among the publicans; we have an instance here of one of them who made a great feast in his house for Christ. Where, then, was the power lacking? Where was it unsought and unfelt? 1. It was, in the first place, among the knowing people, the doctors of the law. These teachers knew too much to submit to be taught by the Great Rabbi. There is such a thing as knowing too much to know anything, and being too wise to be anything but a fool. Beware of saying, "Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, that is very applicable to So-and-so, and very well put." Do not criticise, but feel. 2. Those, moreover, who had a good opinion of themselves were left unblest. The Pharisees! no better people anywhere, from Dan to Beersheba, than the Pharisees, if you would take them upon their own reckoning. 3. The people who stood by, as one observes, they did not come to be preached *at*, they came for Christ to preach *before* them. They did not come for Christ to operate upon them; they were not patients, they were visitors in the hospitals. 4. Those who felt not the healing power sneered and cavilled. When a man gets no good *out* of the ministry, he is pretty sure to think there is no good *in* the ministry; and when he himself, for want of stooping down, finds no water in the river, he concludes it is dry, whereas it is his own stubborn knee that will not bend, and his own wilful mouth that will not open to receive the gospel. IV. In the last place, I want Christian people here to observe that WHEN THE POWER OF CHRIST WAS PRESENT, IT CALLED FORTH THE ENERGY OF THOSE WHO WERE HIS FRIENDS TO WORK WHILE THAT POWER WAS MANIFEST. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ healing the sick*:—1. The infinitude of Christ's power. 2. The tenderness of Christ's power. 3. The beneficence of Christ's power. 4. The availableness of Christ's power. The conditions on which is secured the outflow of Christ's beneficent power. 1. Helplessness. Leper and paralytic men were unable to relieve themselves. 2. Humility. 3. Faith. (*P. P. Davies.*)

Vers. 18–26. **A man which was taken with a palsy.**—*Carried by four*:—I. THERE ARE CASES WHICH WILL NEED THE AID OF A LITTLE BAND OF WORKERS BEFORE THEY WILL BE FULLY SAVED. Yonder is a householder as yet unsaved: his wife has prayed for him long; her prayers are yet unanswered. Good wife, God has blessed thee with a son, who with thee rejoices in the fear of God. Hast thou not two Christian daughters also? O ye four, take each a corner of this sick man's couch, and bring your husband, bring your father, to the Saviour. A husband and a wife are here, both happily brought to Christ; you are praying for your children; never cease from that supplication: pray on. Perhaps one of your beloved family is unusually stubborn. Extra help is needed. Well, to you the Sabbath-school teacher will make a third; he will take one corner of the bed; and happy shall I be if I may join the blessed quaternion, and make the fourth. Perhaps, when home discipline, the school's teaching, and the minister's preaching shall go together, the Lord will look down in love and save your child. II. We now pass on to the second observation, that SOME CASES THUS TAKEN UP WILL NEED MUCH THOUGHT BEFORE THE DESIGN IS ACCOMPLISHED. They must get the sick man in somehow. To let him down through the roof was a device most strange and striking, but it only gives point to the remark which we have now to make here. If by any means we may save some, is our policy. Skin for skin, yea, all that we have is nothing comparable to a man's soul. When four true hearts are set upon the spiritual good of a sinner, their holy hunger will break through stone walls or house roofs. III. Now we must pass on to an important truth. We may safely gather from the

narrative THAT THE ROOT OF SPIRITUAL PARALYSIS GENERALLY LIES IN UNPARDONED SIN. Jesus intended to heal the paralysed man, but He did so by first of all saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The bottom of this paralysis is sin upon the conscience, working death in them. They are sensible of their guilt, but powerless to believe that the crimson fountain can remove it; they are alive only to sorrow, despondency, and agony. Sin paralyses them with despair. I grant you that into this despair there enters largely the element of unbelief, which is sinful; but I hope there is also in it a measure of sincere repentance, which bears in it the hope of something better. Our poor, awakened paralytics sometimes hope that they may be forgiven, but they cannot believe it; they cannot rejoice; they cannot cast themselves on Jesus; they are utterly without strength. Now, the bottom of it, I say again, lies in unpardoned sin, and I earnestly entreat you who love the Saviour to be earnest in seeking the pardon of these paralysed persons. IV. Let us proceed to notice that JESUS CAN REMOVE BOTH THE SIN AND THE PARALYSIS IN A SINGLE MOMENT. It was the business of the four bearers to bring the man to Christ; but there their power ended. It is our part to bring the guilty sinner to the Saviour; there our power ends. Thank God, when we end, Christ begins, and works right gloriously. V. WHEREVER OUR LORD WORKS THE DOUBLE MIRACLE, IT WILL BE APPARENT. The man's healing was proved by his obedience. Openly to all onlookers an active obedience became indisputable proof of the poor creature's restoration. Notice, our Lord bade him rise—he rose; he had no power to do so except that power which comes with Divine commands. He did his Lord's bidding, and he did it accurately, in detail, at once, and most cheerfully. Oh! how cheerfully; none can tell but those in like case restored. So, the true sign of pardoned sin, and of paralysis removed from the heart, is obedience. VI. ALL THIS TENDS TO GLORIFY GOD. Those four men had been the indirect means of bringing much honour to God and much glory to Jesus, and they, I doubt not, glorified God in their very hearts on the housetop. Happy men to have been of so much service to their bedridden friend! When a man is saved his whole manhood glorifies God; he becomes instinct with a new-born life which glows in every part of him, spirit, soul, and body. But who next glorified God? The text does not say so, but we feel sure that his family did, for he went to his own house. Well, but it did not end there. A wife and family utter but a part of the glad chorus of praise, though a very melodious part. There are other adoring hearts who unite in glorifying the healing Lord. The disciples, who were around the Saviour, they glorified God too. And there was glory brought to God, even by the common people who stood around. We must, one and all, do the same. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Jesus' method of doing good:*—The first thing which He did was not the thing which He was expected by men to do. His first word seemed remote from the thing needing then and there to be done. The friends of that palsied man expected the famed Miracle-Worker to heal him; and instead, Jesus said only, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." That was not the first nor the last time that ecclesiastical logic has drawn a correct circle of reasoning by which the living truth has been shut out. Jesus stood for the moment looking upon the disappointed faces of His friends, and meeting the cruel eyes of His enemies. He knew that His word of Divine forgiveness, which seemed remote from the very present need of that palsied man, and which to the Pharisees was idle as a breath of air, was nevertheless the force of forces for the healing of the world. He knew how to begin His work among men, before any form of suffering, with a word which should bring down to the soul of man's need the power of the heart of God. The multitude looked on and saw the momentary failure, as it seemed, of the Christ of God. "But Jesus, perceiving their reasonings," &c. "Whether is easier?" &c. Which is the greater force, the love of God forgiving sin, or the miracle of healing? Jesus began with the greatest work. The miracle, as it seemed to the people, was not the greater work which Jesus knew He was sent to accomplish. The physical miracle followed easily upon the diviner power of God's love which Jesus was conscious of possessing and exercising over the might of evil, when He said, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." The people, when they saw the lesser work done, not comprehending the power of God then and there present upon the earth, and working first the greater work of the forgiveness of sin, were amazed and filled with fear, and said, "We have seen strange things to-day." And this opinion of the people must be our opinion of these miracles if we do not know Jesus any better than those doctors of the law at Capernaum had learned Christ. But as in that case soon appeared, Jesus Christ was right in the way He chose to begin His work, and the

people were all wrong. He did the harder thing first, and the easier thing next. And the method of the Church, following Christ's, is profoundly right. It is practically true. The gospel of Divine forgiveness we must put first; our benevolences second. Sin is first to be mastered; then suffering is more easily healed. (*Newman Smyth, D.D.*) *The gospel of forgiveness*:—In this miracle many truths are presented to us; *e.g.*, 1. A strong faith will overcome difficulties. 2. The readiness of Christ to welcome the needy, and to reward faith. 3. The enmity and opposition of the human heart. 4. The superiority of spiritual to temporal blessings. 5. Testimony given to the Divinity of Christ by His (1) forgiving sin; (2) searching the heart; (3) healing the body. But the central truth of the passage appears to be, the gospel of forgiveness preached to the poor. I. THE NEED IT MEETS. The figure presented to us: a paralysed man—helpless, incurable—a mere wreck. Three things combined in him. 1. Disease. 2. Poverty. 3. Poverty of spirit. He had a sense of sin—connected his misery with his sin—was softened, penitent. II. THE HOPE IT AWAKENS. Indefinite—but the hope of good. Had heard of Jesus. Drawn by the Father. The attraction exercised by Christ. All obstacles overcome. Jesus must be reached. III. THE BLESSING IT BESTOWS. 1. Forgiveness. A word lightly used; little valued by many. But ask the friend, the child, the sinner who feels himself a wrongdoer, and longs for reconciliation. 2. Manner of bestowment. (1) Immediate. (2) Free. (3) Complete. (4) Authoritative. (5) Effectual. IV. THE OPPOSITION IT EXCITES. The spirit of opposition to grace always the same; the form differs. Here it was provoked by Christ's assumption; commonly by man's presumption. V. THE VINDICATION IT RECEIVES. Christ proves His power to forgive, confutes His adversaries, saves the man. The gospel may appeal to results. CONCLUSION: Application to (1) The careless. (2) The anxious. (3) The healed. (*Emilius Bayley, B.D.*) *Reflections on the healing of the paralytic*:—1. This passage suggests some serious consideration relating to the great numbers who sometimes assemble when the gospel is to be preached. Some hear with profit; but how many seem to hear in vain. 2. Be exhorted to imitate the benevolence of the four men who brought the paralytic to Christ. All who are themselves in health, strength, and comfort, ought to be ready to perform the various offices of humanity to those who are in sickness, or any trouble. 3. There are some things here for the consideration of the sick. The best use of sickness is for religious improvement. 4. It is delightful to think that the Son of Man has still power to forgive sin. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *God interprets prayers*:—In our prayers, Christ often hearkens more to our wants than our desires. He goes to the very root of the evil, which is sin; and we ought to imitate Him in our afflictions. They who, out of a spirit of charity, pray for others, receive frequently more than they ask. God interprets their prayers; because He understands better what charity asks in them, than they do themselves. (*Quesnel.*) *Faith's reward*:—The hand of faith never knocked in vain at the door of heaven. Mercy is as surely ours as if we had it, if we have but faith and patience to wait for it. (*W. Burkitt.*) *The healing of the paralytic*:—Here is an instance of the secondary services which men may render to each other. The men who carried the sufferer could not cure him. Still they could help him by kind and sympathetic attention. We should not shrink from the lower duties simply because we cannot discharge those which are higher. The method of approaching Christ adopted by them, and Christ's approval of it, show that the one thing to be particular about is to get to Christ, rather than to be fastidious as to the mere manner by which the object is accomplished. The great thing that Jesus Christ valued in men was faith. His answer to the faith of man was always in proportion to the fulness and courage of that faith. In this case He gave the very highest answer at once, with an apparent abruptness that startled the scribes and the Pharisees as if He had committed high blasphemy. Look at the harmony between the action of the men and the speech of Jesus. He did not receive them coldly, and test their sincerity by much questioning and seeming reluctance. On the contrary, no sooner did He see a special exhibition of faith in His power, than He instantly spoke the highest word which God Himself can address to the heart of man. Singularly enough, in this instance Jesus Christ passed from the high spiritual act of forgiveness to the high spiritual act of penetrating the hidden thoughts of those who were secretly accusing Him of blasphemy. The twenty-second verse shows the absolute fearlessness of Jesus, in that He did not wait for an audible expression of unbelief or aversion. He who could thus read the heart showed another phase of that great power by which He released man from the captivity of his guilt. The power is one; only in its

application is it varied. In His further remarks upon this case Jesus Christ shows that He can begin His work either from the highest spiritual or the highest physical point. It is curious to observe how sensitive were the scribes and Pharisees in the matter of the forgiveness of sins by any but God Himself, and yet how dull they were to draw the right inference from the fact that Jesus perceived their thoughts. The man who can read the thoughts of the heart has a presumptive claim to be considered able to do more than lies within the sphere of ordinary men. We find, however, that they passed from this instance of spiritual insight without a remark. This is a danger to which we are all exposed—the danger, namely, of seeing blasphemy where we ought to see Divinity, and of neglecting to construct the right argument upon such evidences of Christ's power as are patent to our own observation. The effect produced upon the minds of the spectators (ver. 26) was apparently satisfactory, yet not really and permanently so, or there could have been no recurrence of hostility. We see from this how possible it is to be amazed, even to glorify God and to be filled with fear, and yet to fall back from this high feeling into positive distrust and enmity. Feeling must be consolidated by understanding, or it will prove itself a poor defence in the day of repeated trial. Christianity is an argument as well as an emotion; and to separate them is to divide our strength and to miss the great purpose of Christian instruction. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The story*:—1. Is an admirable commentary on the psalmist's words, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." As we follow the steps of the narrative, we feel how, by His gentleness, by the wise gradations of His approach to the paralytic's true need, Christ is gradually raising him into his best moods. 2. Reminds us that in His grace Christ rewards the very moods of faith and hope which He Himself has produced. He says, "Be of good courage"; and, at the word, courage springs up in our fearful hearts. He says, "Thy sins are forgiven"; and we are able to believe that He, who can forgive sins, can do for us whatever we may need. And then, having inspired faith and courage, He rewards them as though they were our virtues rather than His gifts: He bids us "arise and walk," to prove our victory over sin, to show that we have found new life in Him. So that the reward He bestows is—new and happier service. 3. Teaches that Christ often crosses our wish to supply our want. No doubt the supreme desire of the Galilean paralytic was deliverance from the palsy. But that is not the first thing Christ grants him. There must be faith before there can be healing; the man's sins must be forgiven before he can be made whole from his disease. But then, when our sins are really forgiven us, forgiveness implies a free restoration to health. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The vicarious nature of faith*:—We have here a distinct recognition of the value of intercessory prayer, or, if I may so express myself, of vicarious faith. God, we learn therefore, hears prayers of believing men offered up not for themselves but for others. 1. This doctrine is Scriptural. Abraham, Moses, &c. 2. This doctrine is reasonable. It can give a good account of itself before the bar of philosophy. It is a wise, God-worthy policy to encourage men to pray, live, and even die for one another, in the assurance that they pray not, live not, die not in vain. 3. The duty arising out of the foregoing doctrine is plain. It is without ceasing to desire and to pray for the well-being, spiritual and temporal, of all men, specially of those whose case Providence brings closest home to us. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *Spiritual uses of affliction*:—I. A CASE OF DIRE DISEASE. II. PRACTICAL SYMPATHY EVOKED. III. UNEXPECTED HINDRANCES. IV. THE INGENUITY OF FAITH. V. A GRACIOUS ORDER OF BLESSING. VI. PLAUSIBLE OBJECTIONS CONFUTED. VII. HUMAN RESTORATIONS BY JESUS MADE COMPLETE. VIII. HUMAN SUFFERING RESULTING IN BRINGING GLORY TO GOD. (*D. Davies, M.A.*) *Who can forgive sins?*—I. Whether God can forgive sins or not, it is certain that NO OTHER BEING CAN. We have no right to forgive one another. We cannot forgive one another. Forgiveness, real and complete, can neither go nor come, can neither be given nor accepted, between man and man. As I have said before, God would have to die first. Eternity would have to end first. This is what conscience says to-day, will say to-morrow, and will say for ever. I am almost ashamed to be insisting upon anything so elementary and axiomatic. But I dare not be ashamed of it. There is something in the air which predisposes us to think lightly of sin. And I must warn you against it; and warn myself against it. Questions of conscience are only in part subjective and social. They are between us and the Unseen; between us and the Eternal; between us and the All-Just; between us and the All-Terrible. I do not see nor touch Him yet. But when this tired breast stops heaving, and this tired pulse stops beating, quick as thought, quicker than lightning, I shall be

with Him, face to face. Only one question shall I then care to have answered: Can He forgive? I do not, dare not, can not forgive myself; can He forgive me? II. Let us ask, and answer this question now: Can God forgive? In the dainty, superficial thinking of our time, which comes of so much self-indulgence, softening the mental and moral fibre, Divine forgiveness is easy. It is assumed that suffering must cease some time. A bold assumption, in the face of a creation which has always sighed and groaned. If God is not impeached or disturbed by suffering to-day, why need He be to-morrow, or next day, or the next? Much is said also of our insignificance, and that, too, by men who, in other relations, make great account of the dignity of human nature. God, it is said, can suffer no loss at our hands. We cannot rob Him of any treasure. Somebody once asked Daniel Webster what was the most important thought that ever occupied his mind. The propriety of the question hardly equalled the solidity of the answer. "The most important thought that ever occupied my mind," said he, "was that of my individual responsibility to God." Psychology admits no possibility of forgiveness. On purely rational grounds, it is inconceivable. Plato could see nothing ahead but either penalty, or penance. Some speakers and writers of our time, affecting philosophy, are eloquent about work and wages, being and condition, character and destiny. Very well, gentlemen: but do you know what you are saying? You hate our iron-clad orthodoxy. But our creed, as you must yourselves admit, has some mercy in it; while your creed has no mercy in it at all. To be consistent, you should get rid of your idea of a personal God, as perhaps you have already. As you put things, this universe might just as well be governed by some impersonal Force. The laws are all alike, whether physical or moral. Atonement suggests and warrants the declaration that "God is Love." Somehow, on the basis of this atonement, and in pursuance of its purpose, God forgives. What is forgiveness? Not mere remission of penalty. Moral penalty never can be remitted without moral change. To forgive an offence that I know will be repeated is to be accessory to that offence, before and after. Divine forgiveness can go no farther than human forgiveness, and achieve no more. It must observe the same ethical laws. It must have the same high ethical tone. "Go, and sin no more," is always the condition of forgiveness. (*R. D. Hitchcock, D.D.*) *Zeal will always find a way to accomplish its purpose*:—It seems to have been a common practice with their (the Waldensian) teachers, the more readily to gain access for their doctrines among persons in the higher ranks of life, to carry with them a box of trinkets, or articles of dress, something like the hawkers or pedlars of our day; and Reinerius thus describes the manner in which they were wont to introduce themselves: "Sir, will you be pleased to buy any rings or seals or trinkets? Madam, will you look at any handkerchiefs or pieces of needlework for veils; I can afford them cheap." If, after a purchase, the company ask, "Have you anything more?" the salesman would reply, "Oh, yes; I have commodities far more valuable than these, and I will make you a present of them, if you will protect me from the ecclesiastics." Security being promised, he went on: "The inestimable jewel I spoke of is the Word of God, by which He communicates His mind to men, and which inflames their heart with love to Him." (*Milner.*) *A mother's belief that God would justify her faith for her son's conversion*:—A touching story of a mother's faith is that of a dying Scotch mother, who in praying for and speaking of a wandering son, whom she had not heard from for years, said: "O God, Thou knowest I consecrated Jamie to Thee when he was an infant in my arms. Thou knowest I have prayed for him with the prayer of faith—a mother's faith, every day ever since he was born. He is Thy child; Thou must go after him and find him, and bring him into the kingdom, for Thou hast promised, and Thou art faithful to fulfil Thy promises. Thou canst not lose my Jamie from the fold. I know that Thou wilt save Jamie for me, and I shall meet him in the land where none ever wander away from the green pastures and the still waters." *Faith honoured*:—"There is no use in keeping the church open any longer; you may as well give me the key," said a missionary in Madras, as in the course of a journey he passed through a village where once so many of the natives had professed Christianity that a little church had been built for them. But the converts had fallen away, returned to their idols, and there only remained faithful the one poor woman to whom now the missionary was speaking. "There is Christian worship in the village three miles off," he added, noticing her sorrowful look; "any one who wishes can go there." "Oh, sir," she pleaded, most earnestly, "do not take away the key! I at least will still go daily to the church and sweep it clean and will

keep the lamp in order, and go on praying that God's light may one day visit us again." So the missionary left her the key, and presently the time came when he preached in that very church crowded with repentant sinners; the harvest of the God-given faith of that one poor Indian woman. *Rejoicing through forgiveness:*—"We now visit an old man of seventy-five, who had been a coachman and cabdriver in Paris. We have known him for ten years. His home is humble, but it was very interesting to look in from time to time on old Grimmet and his wife, both of them diligently cutting into strips a sort of coarse lace to try and earn something for their own support. He was a great sufferer through gout for the last two years, and when the thought came forcibly home to him that he could not live much longer, the sins of his past life weighed heavily upon his mind. 'You have no idea,' he would say, 'of the sins I have committed during my long life, and if I only knew they were forgiven I should not be afraid to die.' The feeling quite overpowered him. We visited him, and read God's Word with him, and after some months the light shone in upon him, and all was changed. But let him tell his own simple story: 'I know now my sins are all forgiven, for the sake of my Saviour, who died for me. Yes, though I am such a great sinner, God has forgiven me all. I used to be so frightened when I awoke at night, and seemed to see dreadful spirits round me; but now, when I am awake, I pray to God, and I seem to know He is in the room with me. One night I am sure I saw Jesus standing before me when I was praying.' His faith was bright to the last, and he passed quietly away to 'the home above.'" (*Miss Leigh's work in Paris.*) "*Sixty-five years' sins all forgiven*":—This was the language of Mrs. B——, who has been visited by the missionary for many years. She always received my visits, and was willing to hear the Scriptures read, but was totally blind to their spiritual application, and always said she was too bad to be forgiven; but this was as a cloak to cover her indulgence in sin. About nine months ago she manifested a deep concern about her spiritual condition. She said, "It's no use talking to me, the day of grace is gone, I am afraid there is no hope for me." I repeatedly visited her, read and prayed with her. She attended all the meetings, and would cry out, "Lord, save me, if thou canst look upon a poor sinner like me!" At night she was terrified with dreams. "My old man," she said, "declared I was gone mad. I said, 'It's my sins, my sins!' I didn't know what to do nor where to go. It was at the Mission-room last June that I heard distinctly a voice that said, 'Thy sins which were many are all forgiven thee.' I felt such a change; I'm an old woman, but I could dance for joy; it is wonderful the Lord Jesus forgave me. Sixty-five years' sins all forgiven!" *Omniscience of Christ*:—Nature, in all her realms, lies open to His eye. No pearl of the deep, no metallic splendour of the mine, but shines to Him. No flower of a day, no tree of a century, no forest of a millennium, but has in petal, foliage, and gathering girth a history He intimately knows. No fish, glancing through the seas, no beast, wild or subdued, no bird, savage or harmless, but has a biography whose every incident is clear in the flame of His all-searching eyes, and, pointing to man, He says: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." And is He so minutely acquainted with man's decorating and living crown? He has as intimate acquaintance with the thoughts of man's mind and the feelings and aspirations of his soul. Every creature, small and great, every event of every life, every sin, sorrow, fear, and hope, lives simultaneously, completely, unerringly, in the light of His countenance. (*G. T. Coster.*) *Christ can see through men*:—He needed not that one should tell Him what was in men; He knew it. He, looking upon men, looked upon them as if they were glass, and as if their soul's machinery was perfectly visible within them. As we, looking upon a clock, see its whole mechanism, so Christ, looking upon men, seemed to see the interior men more than the exterior. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The simplicity of Christ's method of healing*:—I looked the other day into old Culpepper's Herbal. It contains a marvellous collection of wonderful remedies. Had this old herbalist's prescriptions been universally followed, there would not long have been any left to prescribe for; the astrological herbalist would soon have extirpated both sickness and mankind. Many of his receipts contain from twelve to twenty different drugs, each one needing to be prepared in a peculiar manner; I think I once counted forty different ingredients in one single draught. Very different are these receipts, with their elaboration of preparation, from the Biblical prescriptions which effectually healed the sick—such as these: "Take a lump of figs and lay it for a plaster upon the boil": or that other one: "Go and wash in Jordan seven times"; or that other: "Take up thy bed and walk." One cannot but admire the simplicity

of truth, while falsehood conceals her deformities with a thousand trickeries. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The purpose of Christ's miracles of healing*:—It is not so easy a matter as it might seem, to explain the multitude of the miracles that are narrated or referred to in these Gospels which give us all that we know of the life of Jesus the Messiah. The accounts of them make up a large part of the four Gospels. Why is it that the three brief years of Christ's miracles should have been so largely consumed in these hundreds, thousands of acts of healing men's bodily ailments and infirmities, and even inconveniences? What was the purpose, and what was the result, of all these mighty works? 1. If the one object of Christ's miracles was directly to reduce the sum of human misery, then they were a failure; for their result was inappreciably small and insignificant. What a mere drop of solace in an ocean of agony! What an atom of comfort beside the huge, mountainous mass of human woe! 2. Such an object as that of arbitrarily interrupting the general course of human suffering by miraculous interference, not only was not accomplished by the power of Christ, but it ought not to have been accomplished—it would not have been a blessing. The notion that there was too much pain and suffering in the world—more than was right, more than was best, more than was needed by mankind for their own good—the notion that God our Father had dealt hardly by His children, and that the Son of God, with a superior love, came down to mitigate the hardship which the Father's too great severity had imposed—is quite too much like some other of the obsolete notions of a mediæval theology, and quite too much unlike the Word of God. For it is not true. God tolerates no pain in the world that can be spared. It was not in revenge or cruelty, but in that justice which is another name for love, that He pronounced on the apostate race the curse of toil and suffering and death. His curse was the best blessing that mankind, sinful, apostate, were capable of receiving. 3. The real answer is declared in the text. When God interferes to break the dreadful chain of moral causes that binds penalty to sin, He gives sign and token of the same, by breaking also the chain of physical cause and effect that holds the creation groaning under bondage to bodily pain and weakness. When He sends His only-begotten into the world, He adopts this way to signalize Him to the wretched, the poor, the hungry, the sick, the palsied, the sinful and unhappy of every land and language and century, as God's authorized Commissioner. 4. Christ's works, moreover, set before us the way of salvation—the way in which He gives it, the way in which we are to receive it. The miracles are parables—not the less parables for being also facts. And this miracle, in particular, shows the order in which the devil's works are destroyed by the Holy One of God—not first pain and sorrow, and then sin; but first sin, and then the pain, sorrow, death that sin has wrought. (*Leonard W. Bacon.*) *The healing of the palsied*:—I. THIS MIRACLE IS A PARABLE. 1. Of Divine power and love. 2. Of human faith. II. CONSIDER THE PARALYTIC'S PRAYER. It was a wonderful prayer—so brief, so comprehensive, so affecting, so complete; stating the whole case, setting it forth in every particular, detailing every symptom of the malady, urging every argument of sympathy, calling for exactly the comfort and help that were required;—such was the prayer offered by the sick of the palsy, as his couch with its half-dead burden dropped on the ground at the feet of the Christ. What then did he say? Not one word! The silence which this strange intruder brought with him into the school of Christ was broken only by the voice of the Son of Man Himself—"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." He had told his story well. There was a dead and leaden limb hanging to a half-lifeless trunk. There was a hand shaking with the helpless tremor of the nerves that could do little more than tremble. There were the lips drooling and mowing, and the tongue lolling with a look like idiocy within the gate of speech, and the eyes, last refuge of the blockaded intellect, looking with longings that cannot be uttered toward Him who is the Life. And now do you ask, What did he say? Rather, What did he leave unsaid? It was an unspoken prayer, but not a prayer unuttered or unexpressed. I find, in the very nature of this sick man's malady, some instructive indications as to what is the prayer of faith, and what is faith that gives prevailing power to prayer. It is not without significance that so large a proportion of our Lord's miracles of healing were wrought on the blind and the palsied—the sufferers from those two forms of human infirmity which most discipline one to a sense of his own helplessness and need, and most educate him in the habit of confiding in the strength and wisdom and faithfulness of another. And as I meditate of blindness and palsy, I better understand the darkness and impotency of sin, and what is that faith by which we should commit ourselves to the infinite wisdom,

love, and power of God. III. CONSIDER THE ANSWER WHICH THE PALSIED MAN RECEIVED TO HIS PRAYER. If it seemed at first, to any, that he had uttered no prayer at all, such will surely think at first that he received no answer at all. Very commonly this is true, in the Gospels, of the Lord's response to those who come to Him. "Jesus *answered* and said," we read; but the answer has no obvious relevency to what was asked (John iii. 1–3). He answers, not the words, but what lay in the heart, behind the words. In such wise He answers the prayer of the palsied —a prayer that says, plainer than any words can say it, "Lord, that I might be healed." It seems no answer at all—"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." There seems to be some untold story here. There is more than palsy—there is sin; if not an anxious face, at least a troubled conscience. And there is a keen diagnosis on the part of the Great Healer, going deeper than the surface symptoms, reaching to the inmost roots of the trouble. And His answer is given accordingly. Observe in it—1. That the paralytic received the substance, though not the form, of what he had asked, to his entire satisfaction. For a similar case, see 2 Cor. xii. 7–10. Did the features of the paralytic, think you, betray to the gazing and murmuring scribes some sign of disappointment or discontent, when those majestic words were spoken down to him—"Thy sins be forgiven thee"? Is it ever those who cry mightily to God, who are found complaining that He is slack concerning His promises? And if not, then who are you that are finding fault—making bold to come between the saint and his Saviour, to complain that the covenant is not fully performed? If Christ is satisfied, and the suppliant soul is satisfied, who are we that we should interfere to measure the prayer against the answer, and remonstrate with the Lord that His ways are unequal. Nay, I take you all to witness—2. That this petitioner received more than the equivalent of what he had asked, by as much as it is a greater thing to suffer and be happy and joyful in the midst of suffering, than it is not to suffer at all. Many a sick man has implored the Lord for health and strength, and won a blessing greater than he asked, in learning "how sublime a thing it is to suffer and be strong." Many a bankrupt man, that had struggled, with anxious calculations and many an earnest petition, for deliverance from accumulating troubles, and seemed to find no answer from God, has been rewarded at last with the heavenly gift of grace to step majestically down from wealth to poverty, and has found a joy in low estate beyond what wealth could ever give. 3. But now observe, finally, that when he had received the equivalent of his prayer, to his full content; and when he had received "exceeding abundantly above what he had asked"; at last, this palsied man was given the identical thing which he had asked. Not for *his* sake—no, he did not ask it now. He was of good cheer—his sins were forgiven him. So far as appears, he was full of exceeding peace and content, craving nothing more, but wholly satisfied, the rest of his appointed time, to lie a helpless infant in the everlasting arms. No, it was not for *his* sake, but "that *ye* may know that the Son of Man hath power," &c. For now the palsy had accomplished its work and could be spared. It had brought the sufferer, and laid him low and helpless at the feet of Jesus to receive the forgiveness of his sins, and what more could it do for him? The time was come, at last, when it might be dismissed, but not till now. And Christ is not so unkind as to give healing so long as suffering is still needed. He is not less merciful than the Father, as He is not more merciful. Would you dare to ask that your grief, your pain, your burden should be taken away before its work was done? Could you bring your mind to wish that all these past hours, and days, and weeks, and weary months of suffering should have been in vain; and that God should call back these stern but kindly servants of His, while yet their mission was incomplete, and bid them Let him alone! sorrow is wasted on him! he is joined to his idols; let him alone? But now, the sick of the palsy is forgiven and at peace. The sickness has well fulfilled its painful but beneficent ministry, and He who is Lord over all the powers of life and death, that saith to this one, Come, and he cometh, and to another, Go, and he goeth, may call away this sad-faced angel, and send him back to where, before the throne, they "stand and wait" for some new bidding upon messages of love. (*Ibid.*)

Strange things:—I. MARK THE STRANGE THINGS OF THAT PARTICULAR DAY. 1. Power present to heal the doctors (ver. 17). 2. Faith reaching down to the Lord from above (ver. 19). 3. Jesus pardoning sin with a word (ver. 20). 4. Jesus practising thought-reading (ver. 22). 5. Jesus making a man carry the bed which had carried him (ver. 25). II. MARK THE STRANGE THINGS OF CHRIST'S DAY. 1. The Maker of men born among men. 2. The Lord of all serving all. 3. The Just One sacrificed

for sin. 4. The Crucified rising from the dead. 5. Death slain by the dying of the Lord. III. MARK THE STRANGE THINGS SEEN BY BELIEVERS IN THEIR DAY WITHIN THEMSELVES AND OTHERS. 1. A self-condemned sinner justified by faith. 2. A natural heart renewed by grace. 3. A soul preserved in spiritual life amid killing evils, like the bush that burned with fire and was not consumed. 4. Evil made to work for good by providential wisdom. 5. Strength made perfect in weakness. 6. The Holy Ghost dwelling in a believer. 7. Heaven enjoyed on earth. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Revivals of religion*:—I. THIS INFLUENCE SUCCEEDED TO PRAYER. It is said our Redeemer had withdrawn into the wilderness to pray; He had just come from the wilderness, where He had been engaged in earnest prayer with the Father, no doubt for the salvation of a lost world; for this was the errand upon which He came to our earth, this was the work which He took upon Him, and with reference to this work were all His engagements. We are sure His prayers, when presented to His Father, had a special and direct reference invariably to the salvation of a lost world. After thus praying He came forth, and it was then this extraordinary influence was present. In all ages, God hath made the execution of His gracious purposes to depend upon the exercise of the forth-putting of earnest prayer. Throughout the Old Testament dispensation, we find all those who were raised up by Him to bring about the spiritual or temporal deliverance of His people, were instructed to do so in the spirit of prayer. When the holy prophet Daniel was made aware that the set time to favour Zion was come, even after knowing this he did not restrain prayer, but gave himself to this duty as one which must be performed in order to the accomplishment of God's gracious purposes. II. THIS GRACIOUS INFLUENCE WAS IN CONNECTION WITH THE TEACHING OF JESUS. Jesus had not only been praying, and was now in the spirit of prayer, but He was teaching, and the Lord hath made the salvation of the world to depend upon the faithful teaching of the doctrines of Christ: "Go ye," said our Redeemer, "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." III. We observe THE CONVERSION OF THIS MAN WAS BROUGHT ABOUT BY EXTRAORDINARY MEANS. Now the present state of the Christian Church, and this professedly Christian land, calls to extraordinary efforts. We have been trying for a length of time to get people by the door, and if the house has not always been crowded, as it has not in some instances (the more the pity), yet, in innumerable instances it has been crowded with devils, who kept out poor sinners, who prevented them from coming in: and there we have been too ready to leave them, because we were afraid of stepping out of the ordinary course—that we should do anything out of the usual way, lest the whole town should be in a stir, and that any of the people of God should think we were disposed to signalize ourselves. Now we wish you to be impressed with this; and beware, because you have happened to see a conversion effected by extraordinary means, of supposing that this is the only way, and that this way always succeeds, and no other will. It is an extraordinary way suited to extraordinary circumstances; and, I believe, extraordinary circumstances are more general than people are disposed to admit. But what will take place then? Why, if you act thus, there will be a great deal of excitement, and people will talk against it; they will say, oh, take care of excitement (for the excitement has been very great amongst us in several instances)—take care you do not excite the people. We ask them to specify any good reason why we should not try to excite the people, and then we will desist. Are they too susceptible? Is not the world affected with excitement in other quarters? There is plenty of excitement in the theatre, plenty of excitement in the ball-room, and no one attempts to fasten upon them the charge of enthusiasm. These men are most rational, the very lights of the world, fitted to expound everything that appears a mystery! It is only in the house of God, where the most stirring subjects are brought before us, that it is thought better to be as still as possible; that is, it is thought a perfect breach of decorum for *there* to be the slightest indication of sympathy in the statements made. We are in perfect bondage; we dare not utter our feelings lest some that stand by should say that we are enthusiasts. But then, if the Lord thus appear, if the Lord make bare His arm, they will say, oh, it is all sympathy—it spreads from one to another. We admit that, to a considerable extent, sympathy is the means that God employs. But, further, if you thus get the influence of God down upon the people, the power of Christ communicated to their hearts, and have the matter settled by the testimony of the Spirit, they will object to the suddenness of the conversion. God's way of salvation is very simple, and the person who has been brought to exercise a believing act will learn more in a few hours than he could by years of study previous to its exercise. (*J. M'Lean.*)

Forgiveness and healing:—I. THE SICK MAN AND HIS FRIENDS. 1. The sick man. 2. The sick man's friends. Several interesting particulars are suggested by their action in this matter. (1) They had faith in Jesus. It is only men of faith who can truly do good to others. If we do not believe in our hearts and souls that Jesus Christ can forgive and heal sinners, we shall certainly never bring any such to him. (2) Theirs was a practical faith. Faith is not merely a sentiment which believes something to be, but a vitalized affection which starts all our faculties into action and sets us to work to accomplish something. (3) Their faith was resourceful. There were difficulties in their path. (*G. F. Pentecost.*) *Strange things:*—The world is a-weary, and longs for something novel. The greatest stranger in the world is Jesus; and alas! He is the least seen, and the least spoken of by the most of men. If men would come and watch Him, they would see strange things. His person, His life, His death, are full of strange things. What He is doing now has as much as ever the element of strangeness and wonder about it. Life never grows stale to a companion of Jesus. Do you find it becoming so, and are you a believer? Seek the conversion of your family, and your neighbourhood. Seek to know more of Jesus at work among men. This will cause you to see stranger and stranger things, till you see the strangest of all with Christ in glory. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Two kinds of wonder:*—Wonder at the work of God is natural, justifiable, commendable. He is a God of wonders. It is right to say of the Lord's doing, "It is marvellous in our eyes." We are to talk of all His wondrous works; but this must be in the spirit of devout admiration, not in the spirit of suspicion and doubt. A holy, grateful wonder should be indulged to the full; but a cold, sceptical wonder should be resisted as a suggestion from Satan. Faith accounts all things possible with God; it is unbelief that incredulously marvels at the work of His hand. (*Ibid.*) *God's wonders:*—Guthrie, of Fenwick, a Scotch minister, once visited a dying woman, whom he found very anxious about her state, but very ignorant. His explanation of the gospel was joyfully received, and she died soon afterwards. On his return home, Guthrie said, "I have seen a strange thing to-day—a woman whom I found in a state of nature, I saw in a state of grace, and left in a state of glory."

Vers. 27, 28. **And saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom.**—*A publican:*—Publican was the name given to an *employé* of low degree, whose duty it was to get in the tribute money. He was the agent of the farmers-general, great personages who lived by their depredations, after the publicans themselves had kept back an exorbitant percentage on the money levied. The Talmuds often betray the scorn felt for the publicans. Their testimony was not accepted in a court of justice. Probable that the publicans were allowed no more rights than the heathen, and that the Court of the Gentiles alone was open to them. (*E. Stapfer, D.D.*) The Jews, who bore the Roman yoke with more impatience than any other nation, excommunicated every Israelite who became a publican; and the disgrace extended to his whole family. Nobody was allowed to take alms from one, or to ask him to change money for them. They were even classed with highway robbers and murderers, or with harlots, heathen, and sinners. No strict Jew would eat, or even hold intercourse, with them. (*Dr. Geikie.*)

AT THE RECEIPT OF CUSTOM.

From fishers' net, from fig-trees' shade,
  God gathers whom He will;
Touch'd by His grace all men are made
  His purpose to fulfil.

But not alone from shady nooks,
  Fresh with life's noontide dew
From humble walks or quiet books,
  Calls He His chosen few.

Out of the busiest haunts of life,
  Its most engrossing cares,
Its mighty travail, daily strife,
  Self-woven golden snares—

He for His vineyard doth provide,—
  His gentle voice doth move
The world's keen votaries to His side,
  With its persuasive love. (*Dr. Monsell.*)

ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE.

At once he rose, and left his gold;
His treasure and his heart
Transferred, where he shall safe behold
Earth and her idols part;
While he beside his endless store
Shall sit, and floods unceasing pour
Of Christ's true riches o'er all time and space,
First angel of His Church, first steward of His grace. (*J. Keble.*)

The call of St. Matthew:—Matthew was the son of Alphæus, or Cleopas who had married the sister, probably the elder sister, of our Lord's mother. Not unlikely that he was the Cleopas who walked to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 13–35). A holy family—Israelites indeed. To such a family, what calamity could be more terrible than that one of the sons should become a publican, a renegade to the Hebrew faith, a traitor to the Hebrew commonwealth? Levi had taken service with the Romans. Day by day, in their own city of Capernaum, he was to be seen sitting at the receipt of custom. Whenever boats came into the little port, it was his duty to take dues of them. Whenever a caravan reached the city, he had to take toll of the goods with which the weary camels were laden. And these tolls and dues were paid, not into the Jewish treasury, but into the purses of the Roman knights. For the true *publicani* were Romans of wealth and credit who "farmed" the taxes of a province. In the collection of these taxes they commonly employed natives of the province, who were, as a rule, infamous for their extortions. Only the lowest and most profligate of the people would accept so degrading an office. What led Levi thus to wound and put to shame those who loved him so well? It may be that the very austerity of their piety alienated him from them. It may be that he was simply thoughtless and pleasure-loving. It would be a keen joy to the Lord Jesus to give joy to such good people as His uncle and aunt and cousins, to restore peace and union to the family in which He had lived so long. This was His pleasant errand this morning as He left the house in which His mother dwelt with her sister, and Cleopas, and their children, and passed through the city to the shore of the lake. As He passed through the official quarter, He saw Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom. Possibly He had not seen him for a long time. In all likelihood Matthew had hitherto slipped out of His way. But now at last He sees him sitting at his post. What a Divine constraining power there must have been in the words of Him who spake as never man spake! As He looks at Matthew, He says simply, "Follow Me"; and His cousin, so hardened and degraded by his sins, rises, leaves all—his work for the moment, his official post and wage—and follows Him as though drawn by an irresistible power. Hitherto he had been called Levi, after the son of Jacob. And the word "Levi" simply meant "link." But Jesus had found and saved him; and He brings him back to the old home a new man with a new name. Henceforth Levi, now a true and strengthening link, is to be called Matthew, *i.e.*, the gift of God; the very moment he rises to the level and meaning of his old name, a new name, a new ideal is given him. A true gift of God was this recovered son to the wounded and sorrowful hearts of his father and mother and brethren. Matthew, then, was the scapegrace of a holy family. Father, mother, brothers, sisters were ashamed of him. Yet even he was not beyond the reach and sway of Christ. (*S. Cox, D.D.*)

THE CALL OF MATTHEW.

"Arise and follow Me!"
Who answers to the call?
Not Ruler, Scribe, or Pharisee,
Proud and regardless all.

"Arise and follow Me!"
The publican hath heard;
And by the deep Gennesaret sea
Obeys the Master's word.

Thenceforth in joy and fear,
Where'er the Saviour trod,
Among the twelve his place was near
The Holy One of God.

His is no honour mean,
For Christ to write and die;
Apostle, Saint, Evangelist,
His record is on high. (*Dean Alford.*)

Following Christ:—I. THE REALITY OF THIS CONVERSION proved by—1. The change of occupation in obedience to Christ. 2. The sacrifice endured. 3. His identifying himself with Christ. 4. His concern for his fellow-men. II. LET US TRY OURSELVES BY THESE TESTS. 1. What is Christ's power over us? 2. What sacrifices are we making for Christ? 3. How do we identify ourselves with Christ? 4. What are we doing to bring others to Christ? (*W. W. Patton, D.D.*) *God calls busy men to do His grander work*:—God calls busy men to do His grander work. Moses, the shepherd; Shamgar and Elisha and Gideon, the farmers; James and John, Andrew and Peter, the fishermen; Matthew, the tax-collector; Luke, the physician, &c., &c. This same Jehovah-angel appears also to Joshua. The case of the Roman Cincinnatus, called by his people from the plough to be dictator of Rome, and saving it from the enemy, is also in point. Many of God's most distinguished workmen have been called from scenes of the humblest labour. It was when toiling over a shoemaker's bench that Carey's soul was filled with a zeal for missionary labour. Yet he became one of the most successful missionaries of his age. By his labours a magnificent college was erected at Serampore, sixteen flourishing stations were established, the Bible translated into sixteen languages, and the seed sown of a moral revolution in India. Morrison, another laborious missionary, was once a maker of shoe-lasts. Henry Martyn's father was a Cornwall miner. John Williams, of Erromanga, left the blacksmith's shop to teach the islanders of the Pacific the way of life. Dr. Livingstone supported himself through a course of study by working in a cotton mill. (*Teacher's Storehouse.*) *Following Christ fully*:—In the diary of the lamented Dr. Livingstone was found the following passage, written thirteen months before he died:—"My own Jesus, my King! my life, my all I have given Thee; I dedicate my whole self to Thee. Accept me, O gracious Father, and grant that ere this year has gone I may finish my task. In Jesus' name I ask it. Amen." There is the key to the life of Dr. Livingstone. *The call of Matthew*:—I. CHRIST CALLS. 1. We cannot tell what preparation may have been previously made for this abrupt summons. If Matthew was son of the Alphæus elsewhere named, then his connection with our Lord would account for it. 2. In any case we are sure that our Lord's appeal was reasonable. Resting on grounds intelligible to St. Matthew. 3. The call involved sacrifice. He was following a lucrative calling, and he had to abandon it. 4. Our Lord's calling is always substantially the same. (1) It bids us leave the world. (2) It bids us follow Him. Whatsoever is inconsistent with a close earnest following of Him must be abandoned. II. MATTHEW OBEYS. Mark the brevity, yet sufficient fulness, of the account given. This was all that was required of him, and he did it. 1. Great difficulties lay in his way. (1) His manner of life. (2) The peculiar character of his employment. (3) Perhaps also acquired habits in connection with his employment. 2. Yet his obedience was ready and prompt. (1) No rashness. He certainly knew what our Lord asked, and what he was bound to render. Christ repressed those who came thoughtlessly. (2) On the other hand, no vacillation or hesitation. III. THE REALITY OF HIS ADHESION TO CHRIST. This was shown—1. By the evident sacrifice he made. An example to all who hear Christ's voice, and follow Him. No royal road to perfection. Jesus by suffering conquered, and all who follow Him must enter into the spirit of sacrifice. 2. By his seeking for Christ's communion. He "made Him a great feast." (*W. R. Clark, M.A.*) *Matthew before, during, and after his conversion*:—Matthew is of the number of those saints who, once living in sin, gained heaven by perfect repentance. As a true penitent he deserves our veneration, which we shall best exhibit by learning from his life what we should do, and what avoid, in order to gain heaven. I. THE OCCUPATION OF MATTHEW BEFORE HIS CONVERSION. 1. The occupation of a money-changer, which is perilous. 2. The trade of a usurer, which is vicious. 3. The office of a toll-collector, which was odious. II. THE SUPPER PREPARED BY MATTHEW FOR THE LORD. 1. The reasons for which he prepared it. (1) To show his true joy, and to give an evidence of his willingness to forsake all things and to follow Jesus. (2) He would do the little He could, in order to gain the love of Jesus. (3) To give other publicans an opportunity of becoming acquainted with Jesus. 2. The reasons for which Jesus accepted the

invitation to the supper. (1) To afford pleasure to Matthew, to encourage and reward him. (2) To exhort also other publicans, and to give them grace. 3. The reasons for which the Pharisees grumbled, and reprimanded the disciples. (1) To deceive the disciples, by making them distrust their Master, and to turn them from Jesus. (2) Because they envied Jesus. III. THE HONOURS OF ST. MATTHEW AFTER HIS CONVERSION. 1. He became an apostle. 2. An evangelist. 3. A martyr. LESSONS. 1. Let sinners learn from St. Matthew conversion without delay. 2. Let the converted learn from him zeal. 3. Let the zealous learn from him perseverence. (*Laselve.*) Great honour was put upon the simple work of the fisherman, and the keen pursuits of the custom-house, when Christ chose of fishermen and publicans to become His first disciples and His apostles. His parables, also, cast the same reflection of honour on all honest work. Let us then ask how our common business in warehouses and shops may bring glory to Christ. I. IN BUSINESS MAY BE FOUND A SERVICE FOR CHRIST. May be found; but, alas! sometimes it is lost; often it is not even sought. II. WE MUST NOT THINK TOO MUCH OF DAILY WORK, and set too great a price on it. III. WE SHALL SEEK TO GIVE OF THE FRUITS OF OUR TRADING TO CHRIST. All we spend may be spent with express thought of Him; but to make full proof of our ministry, we shall seek for special expenditure in works of Christian philanthropy. IV. WE SHALL BE WILLING TO GIVE UP, NOT ONLY THE FRUITS OF DAILY WORK, BUT DAILY WORK ITSELF, FOR CHRIST. It is not only to ministers that Christ says "Follow Me." Others also are called to self-sacrifice. To say that business keeps me from Sunday-school teaching, or that business keeps me from visiting the sorrowful, and taking help to the needy, may not be a plea that ever covers neglect in the sight of our great Master, Christ. His word may be, "Then have less business. Follow Me." It is possible that God calls one and another to make some sacrifice of apparent opportunities of making money, in order that there may be more time for spiritual service. Willingness to make sacrifice for Christ is essential to true discipleship. (*T. Gascoigne, B.A.*) *Matthew obeys Christ's call*:—Some years ago I remember having my notice drawn by a little picture that hung in the window of an Oxford book-shop; it was a simple German lithograph, and it represented the call of Matthew. I do not know the name of the artist, but he seemed to me to have caught the whole spirit of the scene. In the centre was Matthew himself, eagerly leaving his booth, with treasures of untold money lying untouched on the counter for his helpers to reckon. Before the booth was the crowd of fishers and traders entering the seaside city, almost aghast at the sudden leaving of the business by one till then so strict in all his dealings with them, so ever ready to receive tribute. And just behind appeared a company of Christ's disciples, not altogether unwondering at so ready a departure from all that wealth; half sorry for sacrifice so great; and yet half feeling, from what little they had learnt already of the Master, that He was worth the sacrifice. And in front was the Christ Himself, patient, tender, calling, waiting—the Lord of all, knowing calmly how life in the Father's kingdom was worth any earthly sacrifice, that the Father could yet give to His own all they ever might have need of. (*Ibid.*) *Self-surrender*:—It is related in Roman history that when the people of Collatia stipulated about their surrender to the authority and protection of Rome, the question asked was, "Do you deliver up yourselves, the Collatine people, your city, your fields, your water, your bounds, your temples, your utensils, all things that are yours, both human and Divine, into the hands of the people of Rome?" And on their replying, "We deliver up all," they were received. The voluntary surrender which you, Christian, have made to Christ is equally comprehensive; it embraces all you are, and have, and hope for. (*H. G. Salter.*) *Follow exactly*:—Two persons were walking together one very dark night, when one said to the other, who knew the road well, "I shall follow you, so as to be right." He soon fell into a ditch, and accused the other with his fall. The other replied, "Then you did not follow me *exactly*, for I have kept free." A side step had caused the fall. There is like danger in not following Christ fully. *On the calling of St. Matthew*:—I. WE ARE TO LEAVE ALL OUR EVIL PRACTICES THAT WE MAY FOLLOW CHRIST. We must relinquish our former iniquities altogether, and without reserve. Suppose that St. Matthew, when Christ commanded him to become His follower, had answered, that he would attend upon Christ occasionally, when his occupation afforded him leisure: and that for the future, when employed in collecting tribute, he would commit acts of extortion only seldom. Would Christ have accepted such service? You must surrender yourselves entirely to Christ.

You must follow Him wholly. You must follow Him alone. When you reserve some favourite sin for your occasional gratification; is that to leave all for the sake of Christ? No man can serve two masters. II. WE MUST RENOUNCE, FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST, ALL OUR EVIL INCLINATIONS. This step is necessary to make repentance complete. St. Matthew not only relinquished his occupation, but abandoned it with gladness. You do not see him taking leave of his home with reluctance and sorrow. In conformity to this example every Christian is not merely to abstain, as by constraint, from sinful actions; but to glorify his God by cheerful obedience, and to bring his will under thankful subjection to his Redeemer. He is to be holy in thought, holy in heart, holy in his designs, holy in his wishes. III. We, like St. Matthew, ARE TO RENOUNCE PRIVATE INTEREST, WHENEVER IT INTERFERES WITH OUR OBEDIENCE TO JESUS CHRIST. Behold a decisive proof of sincerity! He does not honour his Saviour with his lips only. He glorifies the Son of God by making large sacrifices for His sake; by immediately making every sacrifice which is required. He counts all things but loss that he may win the approbation of his Redeemer. IV. We are to renounce our own righteousness; TO CAST AWAY ALL RELIANCE ON MERIT OF OUR OWN FOR ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD. Why did St. Matthew become a disciple of Jesus Christ? Why did he leave all to be with that man of sorrows? Because he beheld in that man of sorrows one who bare our griefs; one who bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. He recognized the appointed Saviour; the Lamb of God which took away the sins of the world. V. We must, in the last place, FOLLOW OUR REDEEMER UNTO THE END. Such was the stedfastness of St. Matthew. He remained constantly with Christ until the evening before the crucifixion. On that evening he showed, in common with the other apostles, what man is, when the Divine grace withdraws itself, and leaves him to his native weakness. All the disciples of Christ forsook Him and fled. Of that guilty flight St. Matthew was a partaker. After the Resurrection, he received, in conjunction with the other apostles, pardon and strength from his forgiving Lord. When Jesus had ascended into heaven, we behold St. Matthew continuing closely in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and the brethren; and bearing his part as an apostle in the election of a successor to the traitor Judas. Boldly remaining at Jerusalem, when havoc was made of the Church after the martyrdom of Stephen, he proved that he was not of those who have no root, and in time of persecution fall away. And the early history of the Christian Church informs us that, in the face of danger and death, he persevered until the end of his days in preaching the gospel of his Lord. From every Christian patient continuance in well doing is indispensably required. (*Thomas Gisborne.*) *The duty of following Christ, as illustrated by the conduct of His disciples*:—But, in the event which succeeds, we have an instance of still greater power than that which is involved in the healing of any temporal disease. We find Him controlling not merely the elements of nature, as he had often done, or the circumstances which conduce to the health of our temporal frames, as in the instance of the paralytic man, but we find Him swaying the very elements of the mind and will, and proving that the moral and the intellectual powers of man are no less subject to His sovereign control. "After these things," we are told, "He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said unto him, Follow Me." 1. In the first place, the individual named Levi, who is spoken of by St. Luke, is said to have been a publican—a term which is explained in some degree, when it is mentioned that he was found "sitting at the receipt of custom." It was thus that the name of publican became expressive, in their mind, of all that was abandoned and profane. There was nothing, for instance, in the character or condition of the individual before us to warrant his selection to this high and distinguished calling. There was no title existing in himself whereby he could claim it as peculiarly his own. He was a member of an obnoxious profession, and he was, so far as we know, unadorned with any lofty or brilliant attainments. We are not referring in the meantime to the condition of these men as poor and illiterate, and as affording from their original circumstances, as contrasted with the noble future discharge of their apostolic duties, a powerful argument for the truth and efficacy of our holy religion. We are referring to it simply as pointing out in the term, publican, in the present instance, and in the ideas which were usually associated with that term, the very condition in which by nature we are placed, and from which Christ is so willing to redeem us. Naturally, we say, there is nothing in any one of us to entitle us to selection on the part of Christ. On the contrary, there is everything that might lead Him to reject us, and dispose Him, in the purity

of His character and the beauty of His own perfections, to pass us by as unworthy of His notice. In all our character and condition, naturally considered, and as seen in the light of His untainted holiness, there is nothing which His pure and omniscient eye can possibly desire. We are not engaged in His service. We are not contemplating His works. We are not endeavouring to ascend through the survey and admiration of these to the adoring contemplation of His excellence, or aspiring in the light of His perfections to have our natures assimilated to His. There is nothing of all this, when He comes to us on His errand of mercy, and calls upon us to follow Him as His disciples and His friends. We are engaged in the service of the world at that very time, intent, like the fishermen of Galilee, or the despised receiver of customs, on the affairs of a life which is only preparatory to another, but for which other we are not mindful or solicitous to prepare. Yes, my friends, we are either busied in the pursuit of some gainful and engrossing occupation, or we are sitting at destructive ease in the degradation of sin, reviewing our extending treasures, and yet thirsting to increase them. If active, we are not active in God's service—if at ease, we are not at ease in Zion, or because we have sought peace and found it of the Lord. We repeat, then, that we are selected by Christ in the exercise of free and sovereign compassion. We are called to be disciples of His, not because we have loved Him, but because He has loved us. 2. The inclination or willingness to follow onward to know the Lord, is not occasioned by any exercise of our own powers, but is wrought in us by the operation of Christ's own mighty power. But in Jesus there was nothing outwardly to distinguish Him. He was surrounded with no trappings of external dignity, no insignia of honour, no symbols of opulence or power. He was meek and lowly in His deportment—the reputed son of a carpenter; arrayed like the meanest of the people, and bearing in His aspect the suffering, yet subdued, expression of the man of sorrows. And yet He called the disciples, and they implicitly obeyed Him. No sooner did He issue the command than they hastened to fulfil it. He said to them, "Follow Me," and immediately they left all and followed Him. Now, we argue from this, that a great and decided change must have instantaneously passed upon their minds. The mere command of Jesus, considered apart from His divinity—considered apart from His power over the understanding and the heart, could never have produced this effect. We say, then, that the grace of God must have operated directly in this instance to the enlightenment of their minds, and the regulation of their wills. On no other principle can we account for the conduct they displayed. The Spirit of the Lord was with them, and at once they felt it to be their duty and their privilege to obey. They resembled the men who acknowledged Saul to be their king, when Samuel announced him to be the chosen of God to the throne of Israel, and when the children of Belial were despising and setting him at nought: they resembled these firm and devoted men, of whom it is said, in the expressive language of Scripture, "that when Saul went up to Gibeah, there went up with him likewise a band of men, whose hearts God had touched." In the case of the disciples, God also had touched and influenced their hearts. 3. We would remark, that when the Spirit of God does touch our hearts, and the power of Christ is thus made manifest in our lives, we are at once enlightened as to two things—the right of Jesus to command, and His worthiness as a King and Saviour to be obeyed. All this was exemplified in the conduct of the disciples. True, they had not at this time the most clear views of His character, or the most spiritual notions of the kingdom He was to establish, but still they saw, or rather felt enough, to convince them that Christ was worthy of their obedience and love; and, therefore, without a moment's hesitation or reserve, they yielded the submission which He required, and determined to "follow Him whithersoever He went." We admit, then, that they were not enlightened all at once, and that they were still imperfect as to their conceptions of Christ's heavenly kingdom. But this is the way in which the Spirit of Divine grace in general acts upon the human understanding. He works in a gradual and progressive manner, disclosing more and more of the beauty of Christ, and of the loveliness of sacred truth, and shining inwardly upon the soul with somewhat of the brightening effulgence of that light of heaven, which rises at first with the faint dawnings of the eastern sky, until at last it opens and expands into the glorious lustre of the perfect day. But still the work of the Spirit leads us at once to exercise confidence in Christ. Now, the right which Christ has to the obedience of us all, is simply this: He has created us, and we are bound to serve Him; He has preserved us, and we are bound to honour Him; He has redeemed us, and we

are bound to love Him. In every character and relation He is entitled to our love, and homage, and gratitude, and esteem. But superadded to this, there is now the powerful, the constraining tie of sovereign and redeeming love. In following Christ, my friends, we must follow Him to duty. When the Saviour issued His command to His disciples, there was before Him the chequered scene of His labours; and they, as the companions of His wanderings, had to go forth and mingle in the work. Again, my friends, we must follow the Saviour in the path of suffering. When Christ told His disciples to follow Him, He had yet before Him the scenes of His agony and death—the privations of His wanderings to feel, the hall of Pilate to encounter, the garden of Gethsemane to bear, the torture of the cross, in unmitigated anguish, to endure. And His disciples, whom He had called to follow Him, had likewise their griefs and sufferings to undergo. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," was the warning which He gave them. Not that the way of life is a dark and painful career, unsoothed by a single comfort, unalleviated by a single joy. The truth is, that the follower of Christ has joys which the world cannot understand, just as he has sorrows which it cannot share. He has a peace of mind which passeth knowledge, which rises far above the comprehension of the mere natural man; but then he has griefs which a stranger cannot interfere with. There is encouragement, however, the amplest and surest encouragement. Hear the language of Christ to His people: "I will make My grace to be sufficient for you; I will perfect My strength in your weakness; I will guide you by My counsel, and receive you to My glory." (*W. Maclure.*)

Vers. 29, 30. **And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house.**—*Levi's feast:*—Text shows our Lord a guest at a great feast at which a company of publicans and others sat down with Him. Our Lord's example applicable to us all. That which Christ did always, His servants cannot be justified if they never do—the mixing with others, neither for business nor yet for pleasure, but, in the largest sense of the word, for *charity*. 1. It will then be seen how many persons there are who have need to be reminded of this duty. 2. One way of mixing with our brethren, in a manner most pleasing to Christ and useful to ourselves, is by holding frequent intercourse with the poor. (*T. Arnold, D.D.*) *Religious joy associated with common occasions:*—Some people are very much offended by the close connection of common joys with spiritual and religious events. "Keep religion by itself," they say, "and let it be unmixed with any associations which may in the least tend to degrade it; and if you take pleasure, let it be wholly separated from religious occasions." But the conduct of Christ is a perpetual witness to the fact that the most holy and momentous occurrence in our religious history may be associated with social enjoyment. The feast to which Christ was invited, and which He attended, was a feast which was given in connection with the choice and appointment of an apostle. The event is deserving of our attention inasmuch as it brings Christ before us in an aspect of His character which is often overlooked. We have looked to Him so much as the Christ who has gone away from the world that the simple gospel history of Christ in the world has been passed over by us, and we have almost felt that we were doing something wrong when we ascribed to Jesus Christ words and acts such as ordinary men would say and do. Yet here is the history to speak for itself—the record of One who, if He had been seen in our streets, and in our homes, might have been found living as we live, entering the dwellings of neighbours, with or without ceremony, speaking kindly to the old, the weak, the downcast, and being at home in the houses of rich and poor, Pharisee and publican, at the rich feast or the scant meal, and shedding around Him the fragrance of good feeling, and a genial warmth and light. And withal, here is the record of One, who, in all these simple and kindly courtesies, never forgot that it was the deepest cravings and wants in human nature which He had come to satisfy, and that His great mission was to bring men to God. (*A. Watson, D.D.*) *The conversion of Levi:*—I. JESUS BEHOLDING SINNERS. "Jesus saw a publican." Jesus, brethren, sees all the sons of men. His eyes behold all classes. Christ saw Paul while, in his unconverted state, he was sitting at the feet of Gamaliel; and while he was afterwards occupied in persecuting the Christian Church; and He took not off His eyes from Paul till, in deep contrition and self-devotion, he cried out—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Christ saw the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, long before she had any idea that Christ's seeing her would issue in her salvation. Christ saw Zaccheus in the fig-tree before his conversion, and

called him down to active service and eternal salvation. Christ saw Lydia of Thyatira, the seller of purple, long before she had any conception that her heart would be opened to hear the word spoken by St. Paul. But do not mistake my words. To prevent your conversion, Satan makes some of you imagine that, if you become religious, the Lord Jesus will wish you to neglect your proper callings. Far otherwise. He expects His people to be "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." But, when Jesus beholds sinners with the eye of His pity, He does so with a view to their salvation. This we shall see, while we state our second point. II. JESUS CALLING SINNERS. Jesus said unto Levi, "Follow Me." There are, you observe, brethren, two kinds of call. There is the general call, and there is the effectual call. III. JESUS HONOURED BY SINNERS. It is the cry of every true believer — "What can I render unto the Lord for all His mercies?" This was the cry of Levi's heart as soon as he was brought to a saving knowledge of his Redeemer. He was willing to do anything which would show his attachment to that Saviour, to whose love and mercy he was so much indebted. He, therefore, made for Jesus "a great feast," "in his own house." He then thought to show his respect for Christ by providing for Him a great entertainment; and, with a view to their spiritual benefit, he invited to it many of his old friends from among the publicans and his other companions. Now this, brethren, is one great proof of an effectual call. David, in his deep thankfulness for God's sparing mercy, said to Araunah the Jebusite—"I will not offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." There are innumerable ways, brethren, in which we also can show our gratitude to Christ. Temporally and spiritually we can help Christ's brethren; and of such acts He declares, "Ye have done it unto Me." Those, therefore, of you who never make any sacrifice, either of your substance or your time, for Christ and Christ's work, have reason at once to conclude that you have heard the Saviour call, but that thus far that call has been unheeded. It is a great trial to a really spiritual man to mix with the world at all, whether on festive or on other occasions. And as soon as such mixing with the world ceases to be a trial, mischief has been done. But we come now to notice a remarkable interruption in the feast, and this interruption gave our Lord the opportunity of stating—IV. THE BLESSINGS IMPARTED BY THE GOSPEL. There never was any good done in this fallen world without some men objecting. When Nehemiah was building the walls of Jerusalem, "What do these feeble Jews?" was the taunt of Tobiah and Sanballat. And, what is more observable, the objection generally proceeds from those who ought to be the last to make it. The objection often comes from those who profess to be the spiritual guides of the people. Look at the case before us. Here was Levi making a feast for publicans and sinners, with Jesus among the guests, with a view to their spiritual profit. And who can object to such a proceeding? The civil and the ecclesiastical rulers of the day—"the scribes and Pharisees"—they object. They do not attack the Master; they attack the disciples. So is it now. Many objectors attack Christ's servants, but they little imagine that, in so doing, they are attacking Christ. If, therefore, you are attacked, brethren, for your piety, remember that no one was more attacked than was Christ Himself. You may safely leave your cause with Jesus, as your faithful Creator. He will answer every objection, and you shall hold your peace. It was so here. The scribes and Pharisees murmured against the disciples, and said—"Why do ye eat with publicans and sinners?" To this question Jesus gave them a reply they little expected. He told them plainly, that was the object of His gospel. It was not meant for self-righteous formalists. It was meant for those who feel their guilt—for those who are sensible of their spiritual disease. I now add two other practical remarks. We see hence—1. The freeness of salvation. Medicine is for the sick. Salvation is for sinners. In all diseases there are outward symptoms. That precious blood, which He shed for our sins on the cross, is a never-failing remedy. It makes crimson iniquities as white as snow. It cleanses sins as red as scarlet, till they become as wool. 2. The peril of a worldly spirit. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *Christ's call:*—I. THIS CALL IS TO INDIVIDUALS. 1. To repentance, *i.e.*, to begin life again. 2. To a feast, and its joys. II. THIS CALL WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IF WE DESIRE IT. 1. Having susceptible hearts. 2. If poor in spirit. 3. If we hunger after righteousness, *i.e.*, desire the feast. III. HOW THE CALL IS MADE OF NONE EFFECT. 1. The worldly heart—pre-occupied—makes effectual calling impossible (Luke xiv. 16, 20). 2. The "wise and prudent" do not like it (Matt. xi. 25). 3. The stupid heart, wayside — no soil. 4. By levity. "They made light of it." (*F. B. Proctor, M.A.*)

Ver. 30. **But the scribes and Pharisees murmur.**—*The Friend of sinners*:—We cannot wonder at the scribes and Pharisees asking this question. I think that we should most of us ask it now, if we saw the Lord Jesus going out of His way to eat and drink with publicans and sinners. Make merry with them He could not, but He certainly so behaved to them that they were glad to have Him among them, though He was so unlike them in thought, and word, and look, and action. And why? Because, though He was so unlike them in many things, He was like them at least in one thing. If He could do nothing else in common with them, He could at least eat and drink as they did, and eat and drink with them too. Yes. He was the Son of Man, the man of all men, and what He wanted to make them understand was that, fallen low as they were, they were men and women still, who were made at first in God's likeness, and who could be redeemed back into God's likeness again. The only way to do that was to begin with them in the very simplest way—to meet them on common human ground. Self-respect would begin to rise in those poor sinners' hearts when our Lord came to them and ate and drank with them. (*Charles Kingsley.*) *Practical sympathy*:—A city missionary was one day visiting one of the lowest and most degraded courts in London, and a woman said something like this to him:—"You say you care for us, and are anxious about us; but it is a very easy thing for you to come from your clean, quiet home just to visit us. Would you come and bring your family, and live in this court, expose yourself to all these evils day by day, in order to lift us up?" The missionary felt he had hardly enough love for that: but Jesus dwelt with sinners, ate and drank with them, as well as died to save them. (*Biblical Treasury.*) *Sympathetic help*:—A Boston minister a short time ago had occasion to look up a very poor family, and climbed up four flights of stairs in a noisome tenement house on his errand. His tap at the door was answered by Dr. Phillips Brooks, with a baby in his arms. Inquiry revealed the fact that the woman had been very ill, and sorely needed fresh air, but had no one with whom to leave her little baby. Phillips Brooks found her out, gave her tickets for a tram-car ride, and was staying tending the baby while she enjoyed it. Only from a large heart filled with the spirit of Christ could such an act of real kindness have sprung. (*American Paper.*) *Frigid selfishness*:—A great poet has represented the souls of thoroughly selfish men as encased in ice, alternately shivering and benumbed, with only enough of life to be conscious of the surrounding all-pervading death. This supreme selfishness, or rather indifference—this insensibility to what is generous and lofty, this prudent self-complacent, self-indulgent regard for one's own interests, is what our modern civilization, with its wonderful development of material wealth, has been drifting towards. And nothing can be more fatal to the highest interests and happiness of man. A splendid frost-work of society—sparkling like what we sometimes see around us after snow or rain on a winter's day—as beautiful, but also as cold and as fatal to all spontaneous outgushing of warm and generous life. (*J. H. Thompson.*) *Christ in the company of social outcasts*:—The Jews and Egyptians, and indeed other peoples, were very scrupulous with whom they ate, much as are the Hindoos to the present day. It will be remembered that Joseph (Gen. xliii. 32) ate with his brethren apart, and the Egyptians by themselves, for it was an abomination to the latter to eat with Hebrews. And so the old Tobias, during the Assyrian captivity, exhorted his son not to eat and drink with sinners. Christ, by sitting down to table with these despised and excommunicate publicans, and with heathen, broke through the caste rules, of which separation at table was the most conspicuous symbol. He showed that this holding aloof from others, whether it were national or individual, was contrary to the principles of the gospel, against the fundamental laws of His Church. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *The Saviour and the publicans*:—This question was asked partly in ignorance and partly in ill-will. Our Lord would not leave to His simple and timid disciples the task of answering the critics. First, He rebukes with stern irony the self-righteousness of the questioners, and then He explains. I. THE ANSWER SET FORTH THE GLORY OF OUR DIVINE SAVIOUR. "The Friend of sinners" is one of our Lord's most glorious titles. God's condescensions reveal His glory more completely than His magnificence. 1. The glory of His work—"To call sinners to repentance." 2. The glory of His character—"Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" II. A COMMENT ON THE ACTION AND HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. Like her Lord, the Church of Christ has entered into the life of sinful humanity to purify and elevate it. She may not cease to eat and drink with publicans and sinners. III. SUGGESTIVE AS TO THE DUTY AND CONDUCT OF PRIVATE

CHRISTIANS. In consorting with those who openly deny the truth of religion, or who live in flagrant violation of its precepts, there are two dangers to be guarded against. 1. We must keep clear of Pharisaism, that rank weed which so soon springs up in the souls of believers. 2. We must not voluntarily expose our souls to risks which are palpable and overwhelming, when no good can be done for the souls of others. Let us endeavour, when we are thrown with others, be they who they may, to think of our Lord at Matthew's feast, and pray Him for His gracious help that we too, sinners though we be, may speak a word in season to him that is weary. (*Canon Liddon.*)

Ver. 31. **They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.**—*The soul's malady and cure:*—The occasion of the words is set down in the context; Levi was called from the receipt of custom (he was a custom-house man), but Christ called him, and there went out power with the word, "he left all, rose up, and followed Him." "Levi made Him a great feast in his own house"; a better guest he could not invite. Levi feasted Christ with his cheer, and Christ feasted him with salvation. I. THE DYING PATIENTS. They that are sick. Whence observe—Doct. 1. That sin is a soul-disease—"He hath borne our griefs"; in the Hebrew it is our sicknesses. Man at first was created in a healthful temper, he had no sickness of soul, he ailed nothing; the soul had its perfect beauty and glory. The eye was clear, the heart pure, the affections tuned with the finger of God into a most sweet harmony. I. In what sense sin is resembled to sickness. 1. Sin may be compared to sickness for the manner of catching. (1) Sickness is caught often through carelessness: some get cold by leaving off clothes. (2) Sickness is caught sometimes through superfluity and intemperance. Excess produceth sickness. 2. Sin may be resembled to sickness for the nature of it. (1) Sickness is of a spreading nature, it spreads all over the body, it works into every part, the head, stomach, it disorders the whole body: so sin doth not rest in one part, but spreads into all the faculties of the soul, and members of the body—"The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint." The memory is diseased; the memory at first was like a golden cabinet in which Divine truths were locked up safe; but now it is like a colander, or leaking vessel, which lets all that is good run out. The memory is like a searcer, which sifts out the flour, but keeps the bran. So the memory lets saving truths go, and holds nothing but froth and vanity. Many a man can remember a story, when he hath forgot his creed. Thus the memory is diseased; the memory is like a bad stomach that wants the retentive faculty, all the meat comes up again: so the most precious truths will not stay in the memory, but are gone again. The will is diseased; the will is the soul's commander-in-chief, it is the master-wheel; but how irregular and eccentric is it! The affections are sick: the affection of desire; a sick man desires that which is hurtful for him, he calls for wine in a fever; so the natural man being sick, he desires that which is prejudicial for him; he hath no desire after Christ, he doth not hunger and thirst after righteousness; but he desires poison, he desires to take his fill of sin, he loves death: the affection of grief; a man grieves for the want of an estate, but not for the want of God's favour; he grieves to see the plague or cancer in his body, but not for the plague of his heart: the affection of joy; many can rejoice in a wedge of gold, not in the cross of Christ. Thus the affections are sick and distempered. The conscience is diseased; "their mind and conscience is defiled." (2) Sickness doth debilitate and weaken the body; a sick man is unfit to walk: so this sickness of sin weakens the soul—"When we were without strength Christ died." In innocency Adam was, in some sense, like the angels, he could serve God with a winged swiftness, and filial cheerfulness; but sin brought sickness into the soul, and this sickness hath cut the lock where his strength lay; he is now disarmed of all ability for service; and where grace is wrought, though a Christian be not so heart-sick as before, yet he is very faint. (3) Sickness doth eclipse the beauty of the body. This I ground on that Scripture, "When Thou with rebukes dost correct man, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." The moth consumes the beauty of the cloth; so a fit of sickness consumes the beauty of the body. Thus sin is a soul-sickness, it hath eclipsed the glory and splendour of the soul, it hath turned ruddiness into paleness; that beauty of grace which once sparkled as gold, now it may be said, "How is this gold become dim!" That soul which once had an orient brightness in it, it was more ruddy than rubies, its polishing was of sapphire, the understanding bespangled with knowledge, the will crowned with liberty, the affections like so many seraphim, burning in love to God; now

the glory is departed. Sin hath turned beauty into deformity; as some faces by sickness are so disfigured, and look so ghastly, they can hardly be known. (4) Sickness takes away the taste; a sick man doth not taste that sweetness in his meat; so the sinner, by reason of soul-sickness, hath lost his taste to spiritual things. (5) Sickness takes away the comfort of life; a sick person hath no joy of anything, his life is a burden to him. II. WHAT THE DISEASES OF THE SOUL ARE. Only I shall name some of the worst of these diseases. Pride is the tympany of the soul, lust is the fever, error the gangrene, unbelief the plague of the heart, hypocrisy the scurvy, hardness of heart the stone, anger the phrenzy, malice the wolf in the breast, covetousness the dropsy, spiritual sloth the green sickness, apostasy the epilepsy; here are eleven soul-diseases, and when they come to the full height they are dangerous, and most frequently prove mortal. III. The third thing to be demonstrated is, THAT SIN IS THE WORST SICKNESS. To have a body full of plague sores is sad; but to have the soul, which is the more noble part, spotted with sin, and full of the tokens, is far worse; as appears. 1. The body may be diseased, and the conscience quiet: "the inhabitant of the land shall not say I am sick." He should scarce feel his sickness, because sin was pardoned; but when the soul is sick of any reigning lust, the conscience is troubled—"There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God." 2. A man may have bodily diseases, yet God may love him. "Asa was diseased in his feet." He had the gout, yet a favourite with God. 3. Sickness, at worst, doth but separate from the society of friends; but this disease of sin, if not cured, separates from the society of God and angels. 2. If sin be a soul-sickness, then how foolish are they that hide their sins; it is folly to hide a disease! 3. If sin be a soul-sickness, then what need is there of the ministry? If sin be a soul-sickness, then do not feed this disease; he that is wise will avoid those things which will increase his disease; if he be feverish, he will avoid wine which would inflame the disease; if he have the stone he will avoid salt meats; he will forbear a dish he loves, because it is bad for his disease: why should not men be as wise for their souls? Thou that hast a drunken lust, do not feed it with wine; thou that hast a malicious lust, do not feed it with revenge. Doct. 2. That Jesus Christ is a soul-physician. Ministers (as was said before) are physicians whom Christ doth in His name delegate and send abroad into the world. I. That Christ is a physician; it is one of His titles—"I am the Lord that healeth thee." II. Why Christ is a physician. 1. In regard of His call; God the Father called Him to practise physic, He anointed Him to the work of healing—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel: He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted." 2. Jesus Christ undertook this healing work, because of that need we were in of a physician. Christ came to be our physician, not because we deserved Him, but because we needed Him; not our merit, but our misery, drew Christ from heaven. 3. Christ came as a physician out of the sweetness of His nature; He is like the good Samaritan, who had compassion on the wounded man. A physician may come to the patient only for gain; not so much to help the patient as to help himself: but Christ came purely out of sympathy. III. The third particular is, that Christ is the only physician—"Neither is there salvation in any other," &c. IV. How CHRIST HEALS HIS PATIENTS. There are four things in Christ that are healing. 1. His word is healing—"He sent His word, and healed them." 2. Christ's wounds are healing; "with His stripes we are healed." Christ made a medicine of His own body and blood; the physician died to cure the patient. 3. Christ's Spirit is healing; the blood of Christ heals the guilt of sin; the Spirit of Christ heals the pollution of sin. But if Christ be a physician, why are not all healed? 1. Because all do not know they are sick; they see not the sores and ulcers of their souls; and will Christ cure them who see no need of Him? 2. All are not healed, because they love their sickness—"Thou lovest evil"; many men hug their disease. 3. All are not healed, because they do not look out after a physician. 4. All are not healed, because they do not take the physic which Christ prescribes them; they would be cured, but they are loath to put themselves into a course of physic. 5. All are not healed, because they have not confidence in their physician; it is observable when Christ came to work any cure, He first put this question, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" Millions die of their disease, because they do not believe in their physician. V. The fifth and last particular is, THAT CHRIST IS THE BEST PHYSICIAN. That I may set forth the praise and honour of Jesus Christ, I shall show you wherein He excels other physicians; no physician like Christ. 1. He is the most skilful physician; there is no disease too hard for Him—"Who healeth all thy diseases." 2. Christ is the

best physician, because He cures the better part, the soul; other physicians can cure the liver or spleen, Christ cures the heart; they can cure the blood when it is tainted, Christ cures the conscience when it is defiled; "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works?" 3. Christ is the best physician, for He causeth us to feel our disease. 4. Christ shows more love to His patients than any physician besides. 5. Christ is the most cheap physician. 6. Christ heals with more ease than any other: other physicians apply pills, potions, bleeding; Christ cures with more facility. Christ made the devil go out with a word. 7. Christ is the most tender-hearted physician. He hath ended His passion, yet not His compassion. 8. Christ never fails of success. 9. Christ cures not only our diseases, but our deformities. The physician can make the sick man well; but if he be deformed, he cannot make him fair. Christ gives not only health, but beauty. Sin hath made us ugly and misshapen. 10. And lastly, Christ is the most bountiful physician. Other patients do enrich their physicians, but here the physician doth enrich the patient. Christ prefers all His patients; He doth not only cure them, but crown them. Christ doth not only raise from the bed, but to the throne; He gives the sick man not only health, but heaven. But mine is an old inveterate disease, and I fear it is incurable. Though thy disease be chronical, Christ can heal it. But after I have been healed, my disease hath broken out again; I have relapsed into the same sin; therefore, I fear there is no healing for me. It is rare that the Lord leaves his children to these relapses. If Jesus Christ be a spiritual physician, let us labour to hasten the cure of our souls. Consider (1) What a little time we have to stay here, and let that hasten the cure. (2) Now is properly the time of healing, now is the day of grace, now Christ pours out His balsams, now He sends abroad His ministers and Spirit; "now is the accepted time." (*T. Watson.*) *The sick need the physician*:—I. CHRIST IS MOST CONCERNED WITH THOSE WHO NEED HIM MOST. II. SICKNESS OF SOUL IS THE NEED WHICH CALLS FOR CHRIST AS THE GOOD PHYSICIAN. III. IT IS NECESSARY FOR A MAN TO CONFESS HIS SICKNESS OF SOUL BEFORE HE CAN BE HEALED BY CHRIST. (*W. F. Adeney, M.A.*) We have recently been told that there are no less than 1088 definite forms of disease to which our mortal bodies are liable. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *The moral disease of humanity*:—I. THERE IS A MORAL DISEASE IN THE HEART AND CHARACTER OF MAN. 1. Depraved mental appetite. 2. The faculty of vision is impaired. 3. Moral stupor and lethargic disposition of mind. 4. Feverish excitement of disposition. 5. Moral weakness and want of activity. II. THE PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS BY WHICH THIS MORAL DISEASE IS DISTINGUISHED. 1. It is universal in extent. 2. It is inherent in our constitution. 3. It is disastrous in its results. 4. It is incurable by anything less than Divine agency. III. THE REMEDY PROPOSED FOR HEALING THIS DISEASE: the healing medicine of the gospel. 1. Universally adapted. 2. Absolutely free. 3. Infallibly efficacious. (*W. Urwick.*) *The art of healing*:—That the sick need a physician is an assertion which appeals to the dictates of common sense. 1. The ministrations of the art of healing are a beautiful imitation of those of Divine providence. Both are designed to restore what was lost, and to repair what is disordered. 2. How striking is the contrast between the art of medicine and the art of war. 3. The erection of hospitals and infirmaries for the poor is one of the distinguishing ornaments and fruits of Christianity, unknown to the wisdom and humanity of pagan times. (*R. Hall, A.M.*) *Christianity a remedy for all diseases*:—The gospel is not meant for the salvation of men who are so good that they hardly seem to need it, but for men that are bad—for the very worst of men. Admit all that can be said of the badness of the Chinese; admit the blackest portrait that can be correctly painted of them; admit that they are as bad as men can be out of hell—if I understand the matter rightly, you only make out a stronger case for sending them the gospel of Christ. There is a story told of a vendor of quack medicine, who sent out an advertisement to one of the Australian newspapers, and after enumerating all the diseases of which he could think, he added, "If there be any disease peculiar to the colony, put that in, for my medicine will cure that too." A statement that was not true of the quack medicine we can apply to the gospel of Christ. If there be any wickedness peculiar to the Chinese; if they are the worst specimens of humanity; if human depravity has assumed a type there which it does not present in any other part of the world, put all these in, for the gospel will cure them too. It is a remedy for all diseases, even the worst. (*W. Landels.*) *Eagerness to find the Great Physician*:—Years ago, the bargemen who were associated with the coal mines on the River Ruhr, in Germany, were regarded as uncivilized and wicked beyond reclamation; but on one

occasion a religious awakening broke out among them which astonished all who beheld its varied and striking phenomena. There was one man more particularly whose name of Wolf suggested only a few of the traits of his character: for a savage beast of the forest would have used its offspring better than this man used his household. To crown all, he was a drunkard, and no wolf could ever be charged with that abomination. Though too illiterate to read, the man still came under the influence which was abroad, and conscience smote him on account of past iniquities, until life was almost unendurable. In a state of despondency he went to a relative who was a Christian man, who after listening a while, remarked, "I know a Physician who can cure you." "Where does he live?" cried Wolf, in extreme eagerness, "I would gladly walk ten miles this night to find him." The only reply to this was to preach Christ as the Great Physician, who saves from the effects of sin. When the penitent returned home he prayed long and earnestly, until his agony of mind was relieved, and he found peace. His appearance among his companions in labour struck them all with surprise. Instead of beating his wife, he became instrumental in her conversion, while the earnest power with which he preached Christ among the workers on coal barges was viewed with astonishment. Dr. Pinkerton, who sent home the particulars, remarked, "the Holy Spirit confirmed his testimony. The holy fire spread from boat to boat; drunkards, thieves, and abandoned characters were made penitent." Hundreds were converted, and houses which had been given up to riot and squalor became clean and attractive—the abodes of peace and love. (*Sword and Trowel.*) *Conviction of sin necessary to a just sense of God's grace in salvation:*—In multitudes of cases, they are entirely insensible of the malady that is preying upon them and hastening to its fatal issue in the death of the soul. And so long as they entertain this opinion of themselves, or remain insensible to their real condition as perishing in sin, it is plain that they cannot feel their need of the remedy provided for them in the gospel, and will not apply to the Divine Physician for the healing of their souls, or their recovery to spiritual health. Let us illustrate this point in a few particulars. And—1. I remark—those who feel themselves to be whole, in the sense of our text, can have no sincerity or earnestness in using the means of spiritual recovery. A man who is in doubt whether he is sick or well, will of course hesitate whether he shall ask advice of a physician, and after having asked it, he will show the same indecision and hesitancy in regard to taking the medicine prescribed by him. 2. While a man feels himself to be whole he can of course have no true conviction of sin. 3. While a man imagines himself to be whole, he cannot feel his need of mercy, and of course cannot ask for nor receive it as it is offered him in the gospel. 4. While a man feels himself to be whole, he cannot receive Christ as his Saviour, nor acceptably apply to Him for any one blessing of His mediation. 5. That while a man imagines himself to be whole he can have no real, abiding gratitude for redeeming mercy, even should he flatter himself that he has embraced Christ as his Saviour. In conclusion, I am led to remark—1. We see in view of our subject who they are that are in the greatest danger of being lost. 2. We see the necessity of preaching the law. By the law is the knowledge of sin. 3. We see why there is so little of deep and fruitful religion in many who profess to be Christians. They are wanting in a deep and abiding sense of the great evil of sin, and of their infinite indebtedness to the mercy of God in Christ in delivering them from the wrath to come. 4. We see why it is so difficult to persuade impenitent men to accept the salvation of the gospel. It is because they do not feel their need of such a salvation. (*J. Hawes, D.D.*) *The Physician of souls:*—The text hath three parts. 1. The patients. 2. The Physician. 3. The cure. I. THE PATIENTS ARE PROPOUNDED NEGATIVELY—"not the whole." Affirmatively—"but the sick." Is any man whole? 1. No man is whole by nature; in Adam all are deadly sick. 2. Some are whole in conceit only. And another cause of conceited soundness is the extenuation of sin. Let this therefore serve to convince these whole men, and let them see their estate, so as they may seek to the Physician, and not die senseless. The marks and spots of a deadly disease are these: 1. An ill stomach argueth bodily disease; so spiritual, if the Word be bitter, if thy mind rise against it, and the mouth of thy soul be out of taste, if thy memory keep not the doctrine of God, if by meditation thou digestest it not, and so sendest it into all parts of thy life, thou art sick indeed, though thou seemest never so whole. 2. When the body consumeth, the parts are weakened, the knees bow under a man, and with much ado he draggeth his limbs after him, there is certainly a bodily disease, though there be no complaint. So in the soul; when men are weak to deeds of piety, have no

strength to conquer temptation, to suffer crosses and trials; to works of charity, mercy, or justice; but all strength of grace seems to be exhausted, here is a dangerous disease. 3. When the senses fail, the eyes grow dim, the ears dull, it is an apparent sign of a bodily or spiritual disease. A senseless is the sickest man, because he is sick though he be not sensible. Even so, when the eye-strings of the soul are broken, that they see not the light of grace, nor of God, which as the sun shines round about them; the ears hear not the voice of God, the feeling is gone, they have no sense of the great gashes and wounds of the lusts of uncleanness, drunkenness, covetousness, swearing, lying, malice against God and His servants; nay, no complaint, but rather rejoicing in these; the soul of such a man lies very weak, as a man for whom the bell is ready to toll. 4. Difficulty of breathing, or to be taken speechless, is a sign of a disease and death approaching. So in the soul, prayer being the breath of the soul, when a man can hardly fetch his breath, cannot pray, or with much ado can beg mercy, strength, and supply of grace; or when he is speechless, a man cannot hear him whisper a good and savoury word, but all is earthly, fruitless, or hurtful; here is a living corpse, a painted sepulchre, not a man of a better world. Thus negatively of the patient, or party, fit for cure. Affirmatively it is the sick man. And he is the sick man, that feels and groans under the pain and burden of his sin. The point this: Sin is the most dangerous sickness in the whole world, and fitly resembles bodily sickness. For—1. Sickness comes by intemperance: the temperate body is never sick; while we were in innocency we were in sound health, but through distemperature in our nature we were poisoned at first, and ever since our sins and lusts conceiving, bring forth sin and death. 2. Sickness weakeneth the body, and impaireth the vigour of nature; so doth sin in the soul: experience showeth that after some sin we very hardly and weakly attempt any good thing for a long time. Sin hath weakened the faculties, darkened the understanding, corrupted the will, disordered the affections: thence this sickness. 3. Sickness brings pain and torment into the body; so doth sin into the soul. 4. Sickness continuing and lingering on the body, threateneth death, and without timely cure bringeth it; sin also, not removed by repentance, menaceth and bringeth certain death to body and soul. 5. Sickness is generally incident to all men. So the souls of all men are diseased by nature; even the souls of the elect, till they be healed by Christ. II. WE COME NOW TO THE PHYSICIAN. The Physician is our Lord Jesus Christ; as in the next word, "I come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." "I am the Lord, that healeth thee" (Exod. v. 26). God challengeth this as a part of His own glory, by Christ to heal us. "He maketh sore, and bindeth up; He woundeth, and His hands make whole" (Job v. 18). "Who healed thee of thy infirmities?" (Psa. ciii. 3). 1. As a skilful Physician He knoweth every man's estate perfectly: "He knoweth what is in man" (John ii.), so doth no other physician. He saw the woman at the well to be an harlot. And (Matt. xvi. 7) He saw the reasoning of their hearts, when they thought He spake because they had no bread. 2. He knows the cure as perfectly as He doth the disease. No physician knows all the virtues of all the simples and drugs he administereth; and besides, he is wholly ignorant of many. But Christ our Physician knows the infallible work of His remedies. 3. As a skilful Physician He prescribeth the fittest remedies. For in His word He appointeth physic for every disease of the soul; for pride, envy, covetousness, trouble of conscience, and other. 4. As a physician prepareth his patient for his physic, so Christ prepareth the party by faith to apply His remedies; by persuading the heart to believe, and to apply to the sore and wounded conscience the precious balms which Himself hath prepared. Else, as physic, not in the receipt, or box, or cupboard, or pocket can profit, unless it be applied and received, though it be never so sovereign; no more can this. 5. Christ goeth beyond all physicians, two ways. (1) In the generality of His cure. Some diseases are desperate, and all the physic in the world cannot cure them. But Christ can cure all; no disease is so desperate as to foil Him. (2) In the freedom of His cure. For first, He offereth His help and physic even daily in the preaching of His gospel. Now if Christ be the Physician, Christ must be magnified for our health. The Pope, by his pardons, masses, pilgrimages, and the like, cannot cure us. It is too great a price to pay. Nay, the angels can confer nothing to this cure. Lastly, if Christ be the Physician, here is marvellous comfort for afflicted souls pained and pined under the burden of sin. 1. He is a skilful doctor, He knows all our diseases and the remedies; thou mayst safely commit thyself into His hands, as His mother said to those servants, "Whatsoever He commands, that do" (John ii.). Simple obedience is required, without reasoning or inquiry. All

His sayings must we do. 2. He is able enough to cure us, because He is God! Omnipotent, able to work an infinite cure: and only such a physician can bestead us, for all created power cannot help us. 3. He is as willing to help as able; being a merciful High Priest, compassed with infirmities, to have compassion on them that are out of the way. III. Having spoken of the patients, and of the Physician, we come now to the CURE, which is the third general; wherein consider—1. The confection. 2. The application. In the confection are—1. The Author. 2. The matter. 3. The virtue. The Author must be a man, and above a man. He must be a man, because man had sinned, and man's nature must satisfy; else God's justice and menace had not taken place. But withal, He must be above a man; even our Emmanuel (Isa. vii. 14), God with us. All this must our Physician do, by His lowest abasement. He must satisfy God's justice, appease His anger, triumph against enemies of salvation, subdue sin, foil the devil, overcome death, discharge all debts, cancel all obligations and handwritings against us, and after all be exalted to glory. Thirdly, He must be God to procure us those infinite good things we need, viz., to restore us God's image lost, and with it righteousness and life eternal. To defend soul and body against the world, the devil, hell, and all enemies. Next, the matter of the cure, and that is, the Physician's own blood, by which is meant His whole passion: "By His stripes we are healed" (1 Peter ii. 19). His sickness brings us health. Next the virtue and preciousness of this cure. Oh, it was a powerful and precious blood! and that in five respects. 1. In respect of the qualtity: it is the blood incorruptible. All other diseases are cured with corruptible things (1 Pet. i. 18). 2. In respect of the person: it was the blood of God (Acts xx. 28). 3. In respect of the subject of it: no other cure or remedy can reach the soul. All other drugs conduce for healthful life, and work upon the body; but this makes for an holy life, and works upon the soul, the sickness whereof the most precious thing in the world cannot cure. 4. In respect of the powerful effects of it, above all other cures in the world: for—(1) They may frame the body to some soundness of temperature, but this makes sound souls, according to the conformity of God's law. (2) They may preserve natural life for a while, but this brings a supernatural life for ever. (3) They may restore strength and nature decayed, but this changeth and bringeth in a new nature, according to the second Adam. (4) They cannot keep away death approaching, but this makes immortal. (5) They cannot raise or recover a dead man, but this raiseth both dead in sin, dead in soul, and dead in body. 5. In respect of time. All other physic is made of drugs created with the world, but this was "prepared before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. i. 18). Again, all work of all other physic is done in death, but the perfection and most powerful work of this is after death. By all this take we notice of our extreme misery by sin; seeing nothing else can cure us, but the blood of the Son of God. If we had such a disease as nothing but the heart-blood of our dearest friends alive (suppose our wife, husband, mother, or child) could cure us, what a hopeless and desperate case were it? It would amaze and astonish the stoutest heart. But much more may it smite our hearts, that we have such a disease as nothing else but the heart-blood of the Son of God can cure. But those never saw their sin in this glass who conceive the cure as easy as the turning of a hand, a light "Lord have mercy," or an hour of repentance at death. 2. In this cure we may observe a world of wonders—(1) Wonder and admire this Physician, who is both the Physician and the Physic. Was ever the like heard of in all nature? (2) Admire the confection: that the Physician must temper the remedy of His own heart-blood. He must by passion be pounded in the mortar of God's wrath; He must be beaten, smitten, spit upon, wounded, sweat water and blood, be trodden on as a worm, be forsaken of His Father; the Lamb of God must be slain; the just suffer for the unjust. Dost thou not here stand and wonder? (3) Admire the power of weakness, and the Omnipotent work of this cure by contraries, as in the great work of creation; there the Son of God made all things, not out of something, but out of nothing; so in this great work of our cure by redemption, He works our life, not by His life, but by His own death; He makes us infinitely happy, but by His own infinite misery; He opens the grave for us, by His own lying in the grave; He sends us to heaven by His own descending from heaven; and shuts the gates of hell by suffering hellish torments. He honours us by His own shame; He breaks away our temptations, and Satan's molestations, by being Himself tempted. Here is a skilful Physician, tempering poison to a remedy, bringing light out of darkness, life out of death, heaven out of hell. In the whole order of nature one contrary resisteth another, but it is beyond

nature that one contrary should produce another. Wonder. (4) Admire the care of the Physician, who provided us a remedy before our disease, before the world was, or we in it. (5) Admire His matchless love, who to save our souls, made His soul an offering for sin, and healeth our wounds by His own stripes. A physician showeth great love, if he take a little care above ordinary, though he be well rewarded, and made a great gainer by it. But this Physician must be a loser by His love; He must lose His glory, His life. Wonder, and wonder for ever. 3. How may we testify our love to Christ? (1) In profession and word we must magnify His great work of redemption, and advance it in the perfection and virtue of it, as able of itself to purchase the whole Church. (2) As God's love was actual, so we must settle ourselves to His service. (3) According to His example, let us not love our lives to the death for His sake (Rev. xii. 11). Now we are to consider it in the application. For, what would it avail, to have the most skilful and careful physician, and the most rare, proper, and powerful medicine under the sun prescribed by him, if either it be not for me, or not applied to the disease or sore? And so our heavenly Physician hath taken care, not only for direction and confection, but also for application. Medicines must be received; for we must not look to be cured by miracle, but by means. Where consider—1. The persons to whom the cure is applied. 2. The means whereby. 3. The time when. For the persons, the text saith, "all that be sick"; that is, sensible and languishing under their sickness. And Psa. cxlvii. 3, "He heals those that are broken in heart, and binds up their sores." For the means whereby the cure is applied, it is faith; we must bring faith to be healed. But when is this medicine applied? For time, there is no application but in this life; no curing after this life. Again, seeing there is a time to heal, come in season (Eccles. iii. 3). Again, content not thyself only to hear of this remedy, but seek to know that it is applied to thee in particular, and to feel the virtue of it in thyself. How may I know it? As physic taken into the body works often so painfully, that men are even at the gate of death in their present sense, and no other but dead men, so this physic worketh kindly, when it worketh pain in the party, through the sense and sight of sin, apprehension of God's anger and utter despair in themselves. As physic kindly working delivers the party, not only from death, but such humours as were the cause of his sickness, at least that they be not predominant; even so must this physic rid us of our sin, and these peccant humours which were the matter of our sickness. As after application of proper physic we find a great change in our bodies, as if we had new bodies given us; so after the kindly work of this physic we may find ourselves cast into a new mould; this blood applied makes us new creatures, new men, having new minds, new wills, new words, new affections, new actions, new conversations. Our strength is renewed to Christian actions and passion; we are strong for our journey, for our combat, and strong to carry burdens, with a strong appetite, and digestion of the word; every way more hearty and cheerful. Thus having received our health, by means of this cure, wisdom commands us to be as careful to preserve our health as to attain it. Every wise man will be as careful to keep himself well as to get himself well. And to this purpose, we must remember the counsel of our Physician for maintaining our health attained. Among many direction prescribed, I mention four. 1. Not to be tampering with our own medicines, nor the medicines of Egypt, merits, pilgrimages, penance, or the like; nor any quintessence or mineral from the hand of any libertine teacher; but only such as we find prescribed in the Word of God, by our great Doctor. 2. To keep our health, we must keep good diet, both for soul and body. The best diet for the soul is to keep God's hours for our daily repast by the Word, in reading and meditating on it; which David regarded above his ordinary food. A liberal diet is best for the soul; but the best diet for the body is a spare diet, a sober and moderate use of meat, drink, and pleasure, for beating down and mortifying corrupt affections and lusts. 3. To preserve our health, we must strive to live in a good and wholesome air. If thou livest in a corrupt air, change it for a better. The worst air that can be is where worst men and worst company are. The air of a hot plague house is not so infectious as the contagious air of wicked company. 4. To preserve health, physicians prescribe the use of good exercises. The best exercises to use for the health of the soul are hearing and reading of God's Word; pray also, and meditate when thou art alone; with conference of good things in company. These are notable helps to bring thee through weaknesses, and keep thy soul in good plight, health, and cheerfulness. (*T. Taylor. D.D.*) *Christ the Physician of men*:—The grand design of Christ's mission into the world was

that He might be the Physician of souls—that He might heal those who were subject to the disease of sin, and restore them to spiritual health, life, and happiness. I. OUR LORD WAS DIVINELY AUTHORIZED AND APPOINTED TO THIS IMPORTANT OFFICE. II. CHRIST, AS THE GREAT PHYSICIAN OF SOULS, HAS PROVIDED A REMEDY OF TRANSCENDENT EFFICACY. III. OUR HEAVENLY PHYSICIAN IS POSSESSED OF INFINITE SKILL. His understanding is infinite. He perfectly knoweth our frame. He knows all the distempers of our minds, with all their diversified forms and symptoms. IV. THE PHYSICIAN OF SOULS IS POSSESSED OF INFINITE POWER AND COMPASSION. If with one hand He extends to us a bitter potion, with the other He upholds, strengthens, comforts us. V. HE IS GENEROUS AND DISINTERESTED. He seeks not ours, but us. His sole object is to do us good. VI. HE IS ALWAYS ACCESSIBLE. No disadvantage of place or condition can exclude from His aid. Nor is there a single individual who may not, on every occasion, obtain from Him the healing that he needs. (*Peter Grant.*)

Ver. 32. **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.**—*The sin healer*:—This conduct of Christ was not official or symbolic. It was His feeling as very God that led Him to this course. It opened to the world the very Divine nature. A disposition to heal men of sin is a greater manifestation of Divine rectitude than to exterminate sin by punishment. It is this thought that I shall attempt to draw out briefly, and apply to our own case and experience. I. TO HEAL SIN EVINCES HATRED OF EVIL EVEN MORE THAN A SUMMARY PUNISHMENT OF IT. Consider the patience, the self-sacrifice, which is required to win men from evil habits, and from wicked dispositions. Now we measure our moral likes or dislikes by what they lead us to undergo. How much we love we can tell by how much we will bear for our affections; how much we dislike, by what effort we are willing to put forth to resist or avoid what is offensive to us. Consider a teacher who shall avenge himself of a pupil's disobedience by punishing, or by summarily excluding that pupil. How cheap is such riddance of mischief from his school! How is all summed up in one outburst of feeling! It is very painful and disagreeable, but it is short. But suppose that, instead of resorting to expulsion, with its disgrace, the teacher shall enter into the sympathy of the pupil by gentleness, by winning kindness, by forbearance, by devoting his very life to him, and shall set him upon reformation, and wait for him to reform, and endure while he is reforming. How much more does he, by such a course of conduct as this, evince his dislike of evil, than by merely excluding the pupil! What we will bear for the sake of getting rid of evil, measures how much we dislike it. II. A DISPOSITION TO HEAL SIN IS THE CLEAREST POSSIBLE EXPOSITOR OF MORAL RECTITUDE. Men do not always see it to be so. It is a part of our lower thinking to believe that a thunderous exhibition, with a display of wrath and punitive judgment, is a more solemn and conclusive manifestation of the Divine abhorrence of sin. But an abhorrence of sin is more illustriously marked by gentleness and patience in healing it, than by any display of justice in punishing it. He that once conceives of the God that presides over the universe, and keeps all its elements intact and unharmed, as a God that makes Himself the medicine for those that are led away from purity, and becomes Himself the Saviour of sinners—he that once does this has a conception of rectitude in God, and of the Divine hatred of evil, such as he can get in no other way. III. A DISPOSITION TO HEAL SIN DOES NOT TAKE AWAY FROM SIN ANY OF ITS DANGERS. It removes no barriers, and yields no encouragements. There are ways of dealing with evil that lead to the presumption that it is safe to sin because there is a chance for recovery, if harm begins to come upon the sinner; but the way in which Christ dealt with evil led to no such presumption. Where men fall into sickness by their excesses, is the tenderness on the part of the nurse an argument for the repetition of those excesses. The care and the kindness of a parent in restoring a son from downfall are never a reason with a grateful son for falling again. And the grace of God in Christ Jesus, that bears with sin, not because it is to be allowed, but because, being hateful, God addresses the whole energy of His Being and administration to the rescue of men from it—this does not take away anything from the fear of sin, nor furnish motives to transgression. IV. On the part of those who are healed, A DISPOSITION TO HEAL SIN PRODUCES A GENEROUS REPENTANCE, WHICH GROWS OUT OF THE NOBLER SENTIMENTS OF THE MIND, and which is therefore a true repentance—one that does not need to be repented of. It is no longer fear of consequences, nor even self-condemnation or conscience, that inspires reformation; it is an action of gratitude; a work of love. V. SUCH A DISPOSITION PRESENTS THE DIVINE CHARACTER

IN A LIGHT WHICH TENDS TO UNIVERSAL ADMIRATION AND UNIVERSAL CONFIDENCE. It takes nothing away from the essential authority and monarchy of God; but it brings God into vital sympathetic relations to His creatures—especially where the remedy has been wrought out at the expense of His own life. The spectacle of a God that is clothed with a spirit of justice made firm in the administration of a righteous government, and of one that, loving justice, still finds rescue and release for the transgressor through the interposition of His own self—that spectacle is one that cannot but fill the heart of every pure and noble creature with admiration and confidence and love. God, by the very pains with which He sought to cleanse the heart and the conscience, testified to how dangerous was that sin that had disfigured the conscience and soiled the heart. With this brief statement, I remark — 1. There is great encouragement for men that have given way to temptation and transgression, to turn back from evil, to repent, and to enter upon a course of right-living. One of the most wonderful of doctrines was the declaration of Christ that a man might be born again; not merely that he *must* be—which it true, if he would see the kingdom of heaven—but that he *might* be; that a man who had for years and years gone wrong, might, as it were, go back and call all the past nothing, and start over again. What would men give if they could do this in their secular affairs! Only God is on the side of the man that wants to return to the path of holiness. There is no parallel to the Divine helpfulness towards the erring anywhere out of the family. When men in secular relations and social connections have done wrong, nothing is on their side—everything is against them. The influences of this world tend to hold a man up in the beginning. 2. This exhibition of God in healing sin instead of punishing it, is the model for Christian dispositions. We must have the Spirit of Christ, or we are none of His. The mother that watches over her child, and that, seeing its faults, not so much punishes it as trains it out of those faults, devoting her life, day and night, to its welfare; the mother that wins her child out of evil into good—that mother stands as the child's saviour, reproducing the example and conduct of Christ towards her little one. Are there those round about you that need succour and help? Have you done some things for them? 3. What will be the glorious disclosure of this Divine nature in heaven —the lovableness of God, the attractive beauty that there is in Him, so disclosed by the Saviour! (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Self-righteousness giving way to penitence*:—The man who thinks he is not so very bad, is no true penitent. "I am the chief of sinners," said holy Paul, and that is sure to be the feeling of the man who is truly penitent. A good Quaker told me once how he visited a sick neighbour, and began to talk to the man about soul-matters. Religion was all very good, the poor sick man acknowledged, but he could not see what need he had to concern himself about it, for he had never done anybody any harm in his life. The good Quaker tried to convince him that he had lived without hope and without God in the world, and that he was not fit to die; that he had neither prayed nor worshipped, nor read his Bible, nor trained up his children in the fear of God, and he ought to feel himself a sinner in the sight of his Maker. The good Quaker knelt and prayed with him, and visited him again and again, and began to observe that the man gradually forgot to boast of his innocence; and, at last, seemed to be growing very tender, for he observed him in tears. At last he could conceal his state no longer, but burst out into weeping — "I am too great a sinner," said he; "there is no mercy for me!" "Thank God!" said the good Quaker, "I have hope of thee now. Let us pray once more, and see if there be no mercy for thee." The Quaker prayed, and the poor sinner prayed; and before they gave over, the sinner's soul was set free, and he rejoiced in the pardoning love of God. (*Thomas Cooper.*) *Christ's errand*:— I. WHAT IS THE PURPORT OF CHRIST'S COMING INTO AND WORK IN THE WORLD AS ANNOUNCED IN THE SCRIPTURES GENERALLY? Universal and all-inclusive. The world. Whosoever. II. HERE, HOWEVER, AN APPARENT LIMITATION. Some whom He did not come to call: the righteous. Who were these righteous? Were they really righteous? No, but only self-righteous. III. ARE THERE, THEN, ANY WHOM CHRIST DID NOT COME TO SAVE? No. But so long as a man is self-righteous he is not saveable, he cannot hear and obey the call of Christ. Christ's errand is to the needy and the sinful. Let the self-righteous become conscious of his unrighteousness and sinfulness, and he becomes at once one of those whom Christ came to call. For—IV. IN COMING TO CALL SINNERS HE TRULY CAME TO CALL ALL, for all are sinners. And thus is the apparent limitation, so far as His desire and purpose are concerned, shown not really to exist. He will have all men to be saved and to come to a

knowledge of the truth. (*J. R. Bailey.*) Criminality certainly appeared to Christ more odious and detestable than it did to His contemporaries. How strange, then, to find Him treating it more leniently! perfect justice here appears to take the very course which would be taken by injustice. It is true that the extremes do in a manner meet. Christ, representing the highest humanity, treats crime in a manner which superficially resembles the treatment of it by those in whom humanity is at the lowest stage. But the other toleration was barbarous. Christ's toleration is the newly-revealed virtue of mercy. (*Ecce Homo.*) There are two classes of men—the righteous who believe themselves sinners; and sinners who believe themselves righteous. (*Pascal.*)

Vers. 33, 34. **And they said unto Him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers?**—*Christian mutual tolerance*:—The whole passage illustrates the breadth and tolerance of our Lord's teaching. He is claiming for His disciples that their spiritual life be left to unfold itself naturally, that they be not fettered by forms, that they be not judged by religious traditions and old habits, that they be free to show themselves glad when they have cause of gladness, and that their expressions of sorrow and their self-discipline follow their feeling of sorrow and their need of discipline. He adds also a plea for the sincere among the Pharisees and John's disciples; He tells His own followers that they must be tolerant of these. No man accustomed to old wine will readily relish new. These parables have a perpetual application. They affirm the propriety of all forms of religious life that are the true outcome of spiritual experience, and they plead for consideration of one another in the differences which perpetually arise between Christians of varying experience and habitude. I. CHRIST'S VINDICATION OF FREEDOM TO ALL HIS DISCIPLES. II. CHRIST'S PLEA FOR CONSIDERATION OF ONE ANOTHER. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *Wisdom justified of her children*:—The outward religious life of Christ differed from that of John. One was social, the other ascetic. To the astonishment created by this difference among worldly people and Pharisees, Jesus vouchsafed no reply but "wisdom is justified of her children." Once, however, He did condescend to explain the difference between His life and the life of John. And the reply goes deep into the grounds of a religious life. I. THE REASONS FOR THE ASTONISHMENT WHICH CAUSED THE QUESTION. 1. The Divine life was social, whereas the popular conceptions of religious life are drawn naturally from those evidences which are most visible, fasting and prayers. 2. There is a tendency in disciples to copy and idolize the peculiarities of a master. Matthew tells us that it was John's disciples who put the question of the text. 3. The indifference of Christ to ascetic forms astonished, because there is a real influence in asceticism. The principle of Christianity is from within outwards. The ascetic principle reverses this. II. THE REASONS FOR WHICH JESUS DID NOT IMPOSE THE ASCETIC LIFE ON HIS DISCIPLES. 1. Because it is unnatural. "Can the children of the bridechamber mourn?" &c. 2. Because of the results. The result of the forcing system is twofold: (1) The destruction of religion. The weak old wine-skins, the weak old cloth, are rent. (2) Hypocrisy. The piece agreeth not. No harmony between the form and the life. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Privileges as well as duties to be attended to*:—When Dr. John Mason Good, the distinguished and excellent author of the "Book of Nature," was on his death-bed he said, "I have taken what unfortunately the generality of Christians too much take. I have taken the middle walk of Christianity. I have endeavoured to live up to its duties and doctrines, but I have lived below its privileges." Is not this, alas! but too true of the great body of those of us who call ourselves Christians, and who may indeed be so? Are we not living below the spirituality, and of course without the enjoyment, which God designs for His children, and so without the example and usefulness that should mark the life of every Christian? Far better, with Whitefield, to pray that he might be "an extraordinary Christian," and to endeavour, by God's grace, so to live as to be an example to all of a true and living Christianity.

Ver. 35. **But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them.**—*Duties are not to be pressed indiscriminately on all persons and at all times*:—Our Lord makes fasting a duty, but, nevertheless, He excuses the children of the bridechamber while the bridegroom was with them, and then gives, as one reason for excusing them, the inexpediency of prescribing austerities to those yet young in His religion: it would only be likely to alienate and disgust them, driving them back to what they had abandoned, and thus making the rent worse, even as would

the new cloth fastened on the old. Attend carefully to this. There is all the difference between keeping a duty entirely out of sight, and enjoining it only at a certain stage in Christian experience. Undoubtedly, as a Christian grows in grace he grows fitted for sacrifices, privations, and endurances, which would have quite overcome him if demanded at an earlier point of his career as a believer; and it is not so much Christian prudence as Christian truth to avoid requiring from the young convert what may justly be required from the practised disciple. If our duties grow, as they certainly do, with our Christian age, it is not merely inexpedient, it is actually erroneous, to ask a beginner to perform a task, or to bear a burden, for which he may not have strength till grown into a veteran. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Vers. 36–38. **No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old.**—*The patched garment*:—We appreciate easily the offensiveness of what is incongruous. It is fatal alike to beauty, to symmetry, and to effectiveness. A sparrow is not as beautiful as a bird of Paradise, yet the little brown bird is a pleasant sight. Try to fasten upon him the gorgeous plumage of the other bird, and you make him ridiculous at once. His beauty consists in being simply himself. An inferior thing that is constant to its own ideal, consistent, true, is a far more useful and a far more pleasurable thing than when you try to make it look like something else, or do the work of something else, or take it out of its place and put it in circumstances to which it has no adaptation. Take a plain stone wall, for instance. There is nothing very artistic about it, but if it be well and truly built, a simple wall and nothing else, it is not an unpleasing object. But now go to the ruins of that Gothic church, and bring away the sculptured keystone of an arch, the fragments of a carved screen, a column with an elaborately cut capital, and sundry pinnacles and gargoyles, and work these into the masonry of your wall, and set up your pinnacles along the top, and let your gargoyles protrude their hideous heads at intervals: you have made a ridiculous thing out of your stone wall. People at once see that something is there which belongs to quite another order of things. Everybody acknowledges the difference between the church and the plain wall, and the difference offends no one so long as each keeps its place and is simply itself. But the attempt to patch one with the other emphasizes the difference offensively. The rent is made worse: the beauty is taken from the church, and the wall is made ugly. (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*) *Theology must tally with experience*:—I remember an old farmer who, when he was about sixty years of age, professed faith in Christ. He was full of zeal, and, for a time, was like a flaming torch in the neighbourhood. I never saw a man who seemed to feel so keenly the awful risk he had run in delaying his salvation so long. He could not be in a prayer-meeting without rising to warn his fellow-men against his mistake. But he was also an ignorant man, and his new experience only deepened his sense of his ignorance of the things of God; and he used to shut himself in his room with volumes on systematic theology, and painfully wade through their contents, and then come down to the prayer-meeting and attempt to reproduce what he had read; and you can easily imagine the result. So long as he kept to his own experience, so long as he was just himself, speaking of what he knew and felt, he spoke with power. The moment he tried to patch the theologian upon the plain farmer, he spoiled it all. The theology was ruined, and so was the personal experience. The ignorance which no one would have thought of in the plain man speaking out of a full heart, was thrust into prominence by the ridiculous attempt to play the part of a theological teacher. The rent was made worse. (*Ibid.*) *The unity of the gospel*:—The gospel is a unit, one and inseparable. It is sufficient unto itself. It asks no aid from any source outside of itself. It needs no combination to develop its peculiar virtues. The great truth it sets before men is Christ all, and in all. And it does its work for and in man upon the condition that it be received as it is; entire, adding nothing and subtracting nothing. It does not engage that there shall be virtue in its fragments apart from the whole. You may take up the lock of that rifle, and pull and snap it as much as you please, and it will be a good while before you shoot anything. You must combine it with the barrel and the stock. Neither lock, stock, nor barrel is good for anything, except as they together make up a rifle. Similarly, I cannot answer for the effect of a single Christian precept or doctrine disjoined from the whole. It is only a patch, cut out from a good, solid garment, and refusing to match with any other fabric. (*Ibid.*) *No patch-work morality*:—You say, and say honestly no doubt, that you want to be right and to do right, but you can accept the gospel only in part. Christ's moral code is all very well,

but the doctrine of the new birth you cannot accept. So you go to cutting patches again. You cut the moral code clean from the new birth. You will keep Christ's precepts without being a new creature. You will sew the new code upon the old nature. Very well. Some people in a city think they will build a fountain. They engage an engineer, and a noted sculptor. A beautiful design is carried out in stone or bronze. The water is to pour from vases in the hands of sea-nymphs, and to spout from the horns of tritons. At last all is ready. The crowd assemble to witness the opening of the fountain. The signal is given, there is a little spirt from a jet here and there, and then all is dry as before. The stupid engineer has drawn his water from a point almost as low as the base of the fountain, and there is no head to send the water through the pipes. But a more competent workman comes to the rescue. He lays a large main. He leads it to a deep lake or reservoir far up above the town; and now, at the signal, the crystal waters shoot high into the air, and drape the beautiful forms with their falling spray. Oh, my friend, I greatly fear you have not rightly estimated that moral system of Christ. It is grander than you think; higher than you are aware; and to make your life flow through it to refresh the world, you will need something besides the pressure of your feeble will. Your reservoir is too low down. If your life is to fill that godlike out-line of virtue, its impulse must be Divine. If your impulse is earthly, your life will be earthly. That moral code was meant for a new man, and nothing but a birth from above, nothing but an impulse generated and maintained by God Himself, will ever enable you to live it. The new code and the new man will not be separated. If they shall not go together the gospel will be caricatured by you, and the new precepts will break loose continually from the old will and the old passions and the old habits, and the rent will be worse. (*Ibid.*) *Worthlessness of a patched character*:—Men talk of turning over a new leaf—of beginning over again. How many times you hear it. "Yes, I have been careless, self-indulgent, hasty and passionate; I am going to try to do better." Never does the old year strike its last hour, that hundreds and thousands of people are not lying wakeful and thoughtful upon their beds, or sitting with sober meditation in their closets, and gathering up their faculties into mighty resolutions for the year to come. "I will swear no more. I will drink no more. I will go to the house of God. I will begin to read my Bible." The resolutions are good and honest, no doubt. It is a good thing that one's attention has been called to those faults. It will be a better thing if he can carry out his resolution and master them; but, alas, neither the good resolutions nor their accomplishment go far enough. It is patch-work still; patching pieces of the gospel on the old nature; a temperance piece, and a Bible-reading piece, and a church-going piece, upon a nature which, in its very quality and essence, is estranged from God. The man gives up an indulgence here and there, says to God in effect, "Your moral law may come and occupy this ground which has been occupied by my misdoing"; but such an entrance of God's law is like the occupation of some remote outpost of a fortified town by an invader. The citadel is still unreached. The situation is commanded by the garrison of the town. There is no conquest until the invader gets in there. (*Ibid.*) *Christianity will not amalgamate with Judaism*:—If any of the Pharisees, moved by the miracles which Christ wrought, had felt disposed to receive Him as a teacher from God, the thing which they would most naturally have attempted would have been the making a compound of their own religion and the Christian, so that, whilst they kept what they liked most in their tenets and observances, they might have the advantage of the new revelation; and therefore, what Christ had to denounce in the case of these Pharisees was the lurking notion that Christianity might admit some admixtures from other religions, so that men might bring into its profession their own favourite theories, and find them amalgamate very well with its doctrines. This notion Christ denounces most emphatically. Christianity, though far enough from being a new revelation, required that the scene should be swept clear for its institutions, peremptorily refusing that there should be blended with the revealed mode of a sinner's acceptance anything of ceremonial ordinance, demanding to be received without admixture, or rejected without reserve. And it is against this that men in every age have rebelled. They have wanted not only to keep some part of their own favourite systems, but to keep it for the very end which, according to their own theory, it had heretofore answered. Thus generally with good works. It does not content them that Christianity demands good works, that it makes salvation impossible without them, and thus transfers to its system the favourite part of their own; they

have been accustomed to account their works meritorious, and they would fain have Christianity account them so too; and this Christianity will not do. If it require and retain fasting and almsgiving, it will not allow them any justifying merit; it may be said to alter their character in granting them admission. Thus, whilst it has much in common with other systems, it is wholly against the being compounded with those systems, in order that the produce may give a mixed mode of obtaining salvation. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Christianity a new dispensation:*—Our Lord is referring to the proposal to enforce the ascetic leanings of the forerunner, and the pharisaic regulations which had become a parasitic growth on the old dispensation, upon the glad simplicity of the new dispensation. To act thus was much the same thing as using the gospel by way of a mere adjunct to—a mere purple patch upon—the old garment of the law. The teaching of Christ was a new and seamless robe which would only be spoilt by being rent. It was impossible to tear a few doctrines and precepts from Christianity, and use them as ornaments and improvements of Mosaism. If this were attempted (1) the gospel would be maimed by the rending from its entirety; (2) the contrast between the new and the old system would be made more glaring; (3) the decay of the evanescent institutions would only be violently accelerated. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Suitable external forms:*—Jesus here applies a great principle to all external rites and ceremonies. They have their value. As the wineskin retains the wine, so are feelings and aspirations aided, and even preserved, by suitable external forms. Without these, emotion would lose itself for want of restraint, wasted like spilt wine, by diffuseness. And if the forms are unsuitable and outworn, the same calamity happens, the strong new feelings break through them, "and the wine perisheth, and the skins." The coming of a new revelation meant the repeal of old observances, and Christ refused to sew His new faith like a patchwork upon ancient institutions, of which it would only complete the ruin. Thus He anticipated the decision of His apostles releasing the Gentiles from the law of Moses. (*Dean Chadwick.*) *A mixed garment:*—Just as it was forbidden by the law of Moses to wear a mixed garment of linen and of wool, so there was a deeper and a more essential incongruity involved in every attempt to patch the old and tattered garments of the law with the new and seamless robe of the gospel. Just as the insertion of a piece of undressed cloth, which shrinks when wetted, and takes along with it a part of the old and worn garment, does but increase the rent which it is designed to mend; just as the unfermented wine put into old skins, bursts the skins and perishes with them, even so our Lord declares that all attempts to combine the bondage of the law with the liberty of the gospel involves a fundamental ignorance of the nature and design of both. The two similitudes employed by our Lord seem to exhibit this truth in different ways. 1. The similitude of the old garment patched with a piece of new cloth seems more immediately applicable to external rites and ceremonies, such as the observance of those prescribed days and months and years which caused St. Paul to stand in doubt of the Galatian Church. 2. The similitude of the new wine seems to have reference to the inner life and spirit—the very life and soul of the Christian dispensation which could not be restrained within the trammels of the worldly sanctuary of Judaism. The history of the Church, in all after ages, teaches how greatly this lesson was needed, and how imperfectly it has been learned. (*C. J. Elliot, M.A.*) *New cloth on an old garment:*—This, we may add, is what the Church of Christ has too often done in her work as the converter of the nations. Sacramental ordinances, or monastic vows, or Puritan formulæ, or Quaker conventionalities, have been engrafted on lives that were radically barbarous or heathen, or worldly, and the contrast has been glaring, and the rent made worse. The more excellent way which our Lord pursued, and which it is our wisdom to pursue, is to take the old garment and to transform it, as by a renewing power from within, thread by thread, till old things are passed away and all things are become new. (*Dean Plumptre.*) *The broken bottles:*—The doctrines of religion demand a certain suitableness, or preparedness, in the persons to whom they are taught; and if there be no attempt in the persons to fit themselves for the doctrines—to adapt the bottles to the wine—there is nothing to be looked for but that the doctrines will be wasted, and the persons, like the bottles, be only injured by what they have received. It may be the pure, the generous wine which is poured forth—the preacher may dispense nothing but the unadulterated gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the great mass of hearers come up to God's house without the smallest preparation of heart, with scarce a thought given beforehand to the solemn duty in which they are

about to engage. In place of having been secretly in prayer that God would give unto them the hearing ear and the understanding heart; in place of having been endeavouring to purge out the old leaven of worldliness and prejudice, that so they might bring with them candid and unoccupied minds; they rush to the sanctuary, as they would to some scene of business or pleasure; conversing, perhaps, up to the moment of entering it on politics, or scandal, or commerce, or fashion; and continuing to give the same things their thoughts, when restrained by the place from giving them their tongues. And what is to be looked for from the attempt to pour the new wine into these unseasoned bottles, but that the wine will be lost and the bottles themselves broken? Yes—you are not to overlook this peculiarity in the parable—the bottles are broken through the action of the wine; not through any external violence, but simply through the workings of the generous liquid. It is thus with the moral facts which the parable illustrates. The preaching of the gospel is no inefficient thing, producing no injury where it produces no benefit. It is "the savour of death unto death," where it fails to be "the savour of life unto life." This may be little thought of by numbers who, perhaps, attend church regularly on Sundays, and spend the intermediate days as those who are ignorant of judgment to come. Yet it is of all hardening things the most hardening, to remain unrenewed under the preaching of the gospel. Alas! for an audience accustomed to hear the gospel, but to hear it only with the understanding whilst they shut up the heart! I may pour in the wine—but, at every fresh pouring, there is, so to speak, a fresh rent in the bottles. Every Sunday does but make the matter worse, dismissing the hearers to their engrossing pursuits, and their ensnaring amusements, but with another unimproved opportunity for which to account, another warning neglected, another effort on God's part resisted, and, therefore, another nerve added to the power of resistance. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *New wine in old bottles*:—As the action of organized churches has too often reproduced the mistake of sewing the patch of new cloth on the old garment, so in the action of enthusiastic or mystic sects, in the history of Montanism, Quakerism in its earlier stages, the growth of the so-called Catholic and Apostolic Church, which had its origin in the history of Edward Irving, we have that of pouring "new wine into old bottles." (*Dean Plumptre.*) *Permanence of the old*:—When Mr. Lincoln was a young man, he was awakened one night by the good deacon with whom he boarded, and told that the stars were falling and the world coming to an end. He looked out of the window, and saw the air full of meteors, but, looking beyond, he saw the grand old constellations firm in their places where he had always seen them from childhood; and he went to bed, feeling that all was well so long as the old constellations were unmoved. (*D. E. Lancing, D.D.*)

CHAPTER VI.

VERS. 1, 2. **And it came to pass on the second Sabbath after the first, that He went through the corn-fields.**—*The second-first Sabbath*:—This is a very difficult phrase, and all explanations of it must be conjectural, as there is apparently no Sabbath designated by this name in any Rabbinical writing. One of the two following explanations seems most likely: 1. Either that it was the Sabbath which occurred during the Octave of Pentecost—the greatest Sabbath of the year being the Passover Sabbath ("that Sabbath day was an high day"—John xix. 31); and the one occurring at the next greatest feast, that of Pentecost, would be the next greatest, or next-first, or "second-first," the Passover Sabbath being the first-first, or by far the greatest. The feast of Tabernacles would be the third. 2. But very many take it to be a Sabbath at the Passover, either the first Sabbath after the second day of that festival, from which the Sabbaths to Pentecost are numbered, or the last day of the feast, which was to be observed as a Sabbath. Whichever of these is the true meaning, it appears to me that St. Luke does not designate this day as the second-first, to mark the date when the transaction occurred, but to mark the peculiar holiness of the day. The disciples were, in their estimation, breaking no ordinary Sabbath, but one of the most sacred of all. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *Pleasing Sabbath impressions*:—That Sunday of my childhood; the marvellous

stillness of that day over all Lichfield town hill; that wondrous ringing of the bell; the strange interpretation that my young imagination gave to the crowing of the cock and to the singing of the birds; that wondering look which I used to have into things; that strange lifting half-way up into inspiration, as it were; that sense of the joyful influence that sometimes brooded down like a stormy day, and sometimes opened up like a gala-day in summer on me, made Sunday a more effectually marked day than any other of all my youthful life, and it stands out as clear as crystal until this hour. It might have been made happier and better if there had been a little more adaptation to my disposition and my wants; but, with all its limitations, I would rather have the other six days of the week weeded out of my memory than the Sabbath of my childhood. And this is right. Every child ought to be so brought up in the family, that when he thinks of home the first spot on which his thought rests shall be Sunday, as the culminating joy of the household. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Exemplary Sabbath-keeping*:—The *Mayflower* a name now immortal, had crossed the ocean. It had borne its hundred passengers over the vast deep, and after a perilous voyage had reached the bleak shores of New England, in the beginning of winter. The spot which was to furnish a home and a burial-place was now to be selected. The shallop was unshipped, but needed repairs, and sixteen weary days elapsed before it was ready for service. Amidst ice and snow it was then sent out, with some half a dozen pilgrims, to find a suitable place where to land. The spray of the sea, says the historian, froze on them, and made their clothes like coats of iron. Five days they wandered about, searching in vain for a suitable landing-place. A storm came on; the snow and the rain fell; the sea swelled; the rudder broke; the mast and the sail fell overboard. In this storm and cold, without a tent, a house, or the shelter of a rock, the Christian Sabbath approached, the day which they regarded as holy unto God; a day on which they were not to "do any work." What should be done? As the evening before the Sabbath drew on they pushed over the surf, entered a fair sound, sheltered themselves under the lee of a rise of land, kindled a fire, and on that little island they spent the day in the solemn worship of their Maker. On the next day their feet touched the rock, now sacred as the place of the landing of the pilgrims. Nothing more strikingly marks the character of this people than this act, and I do not know that I could refer to a better illustration, even in their history, showing that theirs was the religion of principle, and that this religion made them what they were. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *The corn-field*:—There are many lessons that the corn-fields teach. The world, children, is one great cornfield, and you are growing in it. Now a question arises, are you growing there as corn, or as the poppy, the cockle, and the blue-bottle? Whoever passes by, through the corn-fields, sees the purple flower, and admires it. But the farmer loves it not, for its seeds contain a noxious element, which greatly injures the corn around, and fills his flour with black specks. When ripe, the capsule contains black glossy aromatic seeds, and in them is the mischievous saponine. While the wheat has been ripening wholesome grain, the corn-cockle has been maturing poisonous seeds. Both plants drank of the same dew, basked in the same sunlight, were fanned by the same breezes; the wheat made little show of flower, but has produced a precious grain; the cockle blazed with beauty, and ripens an injurious seed. I would have you, children, make up your minds early what you are going to be in God's field, wheat or poppies; whether you are going to yield grain or blossom; whether you will be profitable or ornamental. I speak first to you girls. You will be called to live in the world, and to be, to some extent, ornaments in it. You will dress more gaily than boys, wear smart gowns, and ribbons, and feathers, whereas boys will clothe themselves in sober colours. There is, therefore, much more danger in your growing up to be cockle, and poppy, and blue-flower. I think that all the most showy flowers are without edible fruit. Dress modestly, becomingly, and prettily, against that there is no law; but as you value all that is holy, all that is eternal, do not let dress occupy your thoughts. There was a Duke of Tyrol, who went by the name of Frederick with the Empty Pockets. He had a little money in the coffer, so he spent it all in gilding the roof of the balcony that overhung the public square in Innsbrück. It is there still, with some of the gold still adhering to the tiles. There are plenty of men who act like Frederick with the Empty Pockets; all they have is laid on as exterior gilding, everything goes in making a great display. If they have money, it is exhibited in the most offensive and vulgar profusion; if they have a little learning, it is lugged in by the ears on all occasions; if they have some position it is made the most of. Gathered in bundles to be

burned! Yes, that is the terrible end of the weed. The great lesson that I wish to impress on you, children, to day, is, to live for the future, and not for the present; to be concerned what fruit you shall bring forth, not what show you shall make. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *Christ arguing with the Pharisees*:—We should naturally wish to know how a Divine Being would argue with men. We should expect that His arguments would be clear, convincing, and unanswerable, and, consequently, of that kind best adapted to the subject. In such expectation we shall not be disappointed. 1. Against the opinions of the Pharisees respecting the Sabbath, our Saviour's first argument was taken from the example of David. David, by partaking of the shew-bread, had broken a positive law; but the disciples of Jesus had violated no law. 2. The second argument is still more pointed. The priests in the temple service did not observe rest on the Sabbath; for, according to the strict letter of the law, their duties could not be performed without violating the Sabbath; yet no blame was attached to them. 3. The third argument advances a step higher. God prefers the duties of humanity to positive commandments, when it is impossible to observe both these. Therefore, even if the plucking and eating of ears of corn on the Sabbath had been prohibited, the mercy of God would have overlooked it in a case of necessity. 4. The fourth argument was, that the Sabbath was made for man; therefore it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Thus we see that, according to our Saviour, no act of necessity nor of mercy is a breach of the Sabbath. (*J. Thomson, D.D.*)

Ver. 5. **That the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.**—*A spiritual man Lord of the Sabbath*:—When is a son of man lord of the Sabbath-day? To whom may the Sabbath safely become a shadow? I reply, he that has the mind of Christ may exercise discretionary lordship over the Sabbath-day. He who is in possession of the substance may let the shadow go. A man in health has done with the prescriptions of the physician. But for an unspiritual man to regulate his hours and amount of rest by his desires, is just as preposterous as for an unhealthy man to rule his appetites by his sensations. Win the mind of Christ—be like Him—and then in the reality of rest in God, the Sabbath form of rest will be superseded. Remain apart from Christ, and then you are under the law again—the fourth commandment is as necessary for you as it was for the Israelite; the prescriptive regimen which may discipline your soul to a sounder state. It is at his peril that the worldly man departs from the *rule* of the day of rest. Nothing can make us free from the law but the Spirit. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Jesus and the two ideals*:—I. THE TITLE HE GIVES HIMSELF. Son of Man. We find Him both humbled and exalted as the Son of Man. As the Son of Man He hath not where to lay His head; and as the Son of Man He claims authority to forgive sin, and is Lord even of the Sabbath-day. He applied this phrase to Himself in all the different aspects of His great life. In Him, as the Son of Man, humanity is again in its Sonship of God. II. THE CLAIM HE MAKES ON HIS OWN BEHALF, as Lord even of the Sabbath-day. The perfection of God and the perfection of man, as depicted in the Bible, are two distinct, and, out of their own spheres, incompatible ideals. These two ideals seem to have met in the Christ. He is humble and self-assertive, receptive and full. Authority and obedience meet in Him and blend. (*J. Ogmore Davies.*) *The Sabbath, a saving economy*:—Sunday is God's special present to the working man; and one of its chief objects is to prolong his life, and to preserve efficient his working tone. In the vital system it acts like a compensation pond; it replenishes the spirits, the elasticity and vigour which the last six days have drained away, and supplies the force which is to fill the six days succeeding. In the economy of life it answers the same purpose as, in the economy of income, is answered by a savings-bank. The frugal man who puts asides a pound to-day, and another pound next month, and who, in a quiet way, is always putting by his stated pound from time to time, when he grows old and frail gets not only the same pounds back again, but a good many pounds besides. And the conscientious man who husbands one day of existence every week—who, instead of allowing the Sunday to be trampled and torn in the hurry and scramble of life, treasures it devoutly up—will find that the "Lord of the Sabbath" keeps it for him, and in length of days and a hale old age gives it back with usury. The savings-bank of human existence is the weekly Sunday. (*North British Review.*)

Vers. 6–11. **And there was a man whose right hand was withered.**—*The ability of Christ to heal the withered energies of the human soul*:—The miracle is a picture

of sublime moral instruction. I. THE BEST ENERGIES OF THE SOUL ARE IN A WITHERED CONDITION. 1. Man's intellectual nature withered, and cannot attain to the inner meaning of Divine truth. 2. Man's moral nature withered, and cannot attain to the rich blessings of the gospel. 3. Man's compassionate sympathy withered, and not deeply sensitive to the woe occasioned by moral evil. 4. Hence, seeing that the best energies of man are withered, he cannot render to God the service due to Him. II. THE WITHERED ENERGIES OF THE HUMAN SOUL ARE CAPABLE OF EFFECTIVE RESTORATION BY CHRIST. 1. We see from this narrative that Christ beholds the withered energies of the human soul with tender compassion. 2. That there is an intimate connection between the word of Christ and the restoration of the withered energies of the soul. 3. That the restoration of the withered energies of the soul is immediate, visible, and complete. 4. That the restoring of the withered energies of the soul can only be accomplished by Christ. III. THERE ARE MANY INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE BUT LITTLE SYMPATHY WITH CHRIST IN HIS WORK OF SOUL-RESTORATION. 1. The Pharisees were cunning in their watching of Christ. 2. They were refuted in their contempt of Christ. 3. They were regarded by Christ with mingled feelings of pity and anger. IV. WHY DID THESE PHARISEES OPPOSE THE BENEFICENT ACT OF CHRIST? 1. Because He did not fall in with their views as to the manner and time of the cure. 2. Because they were too proud in spirit to rejoice at the cure thus wrought. 3. Because they saw not the full meaning and blessing of the cure. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *The construction of the hand*:—Tyndal writes of his ascent of the Weisshorn:—"There is scarcely a position possible to a human being which at one time or another during the day I was not forced to assume. The fingers, wrist, and forearm were my main reliance, and as a mechanical instrument the human hand appeared to me this day a miracle of constructive art. . . . I opened my note-book to make a few observations, but soon relinquished the attempt. There was something incongruous, if not profane, in allowing the scientific faculty to interfere where silent worship seemed the reasonable service." (*Hours of Exercise in the Alps.*) *Language of the hand*:—With the hand we demand, we promise, we call, dismiss, threaten, entreat, supplicate, deny, refuse, interrogate, admire, reckon, confess, repent; express fear, express shame, express doubt; we instruct, command, unite, encourage, swear, testify, accuse, condemn, acquit, insult, despise, defy, disdain, flatter, applaud, bless, abuse, ridicule, reconcile, recommend, exalt, regale, gladden, complain, afflict, discomfort, discourage, astonish; exclaim, indicate silence and what not! with a variety and multiplication that keep pace with the words spoken by the tongue. *Promptitude of faith*:—If the man in our text had been a scholar, his thought most likely would have risen up in instant protest against Christ's command. Had he been a physicist, had he in particular been an anatomist, he could hardly have been healed. He would have thought too much. He would instantly have fallen into reasoning upon the utter anatomical and physiological impossibility of a withered hand stretching itself out; and such thinking would have been ruinous. It is here that religion and science break fellowship. Science thinks everything out. Thought is from its very nature surgical; it cuts in pieces. It is analytic, and unjoints and unhinges. Suppose that you are in the presence of a speaker that powerfully affects you. You realize his hand upon you and his mastery over you. This wakes up your inquisitiveness, and puts you upon asking the secret of his power, its elements. Thought begins at once to show how surgical it is; and before the speaker's address is completed you have his oratorical talent accurately and elegantly dissected; such a percentage due to figure, such a percentage to manner, to matter, and the rest. And yet the process of analyzing his power has, so far as relates to you, destroyed his power, and you go home with the pocketed ingredients of his power when you might have gone home with an inspiration. You thought too much and too nicely. And it is remarkable how Christ in His intercourse with His disciples laboured to keep their thoughts quiet. He never provoked argument. He indulges in no definition-making. Hows and wherefores He regularly discouraged. Nicodemus wanted the matter of the rebirth stated analytically. Christ declined. One of the disciples wanted a statement of the methods of the Spirit's operation. Christ declined. One trouble with our thinking powers is that they work at such a level as to create more problems than they solve. They are like a fly caught in a web, whose very struggles and buzzing only draw the tangled skein about it the more imprisoningly. All that saved the man in our story was that he did not stop to think. He proceeded as though there were no difficulties, and forthwith for him there were none. The unconverted men in our congregation can see just where

this presses. All Christ's commands to you are in the present tense, which means that the command is issued without any allowance of time for comprehending the mysteries of salvation, or for acquiring power to become a saved man. It is simply levelled to the range of the instant; not because thought is not advantageous in some circumstances, but because it is not in point here. The paralytic, with never so much thinking, would never have seen his way clear to do as he was told. Giving ourselves to Christ is not a matter of understanding what we are doing, but a matter of doing; something as when you tell your boy to raise his hand; he does not know how he raises his hand, and you know no more about it than he as regards the physiological intricacies of the act. And if he were to decline raising it until he understood the matter, you would tell him to do it first and understand at his leisure; your command was aimed at his will, and his resort to the intricacies of physiology only a side issue raised to divert your attention from his insubordination. God's commands stand out of all relation to human power to grasp the problems, moral or theological, associated with obedience to those commands. God's commands are like the pole-star, which with swift intuition finds out the magnetic-needle as easily by night-light as by daylight, and beats upon it with relentless compulsion equally in the darkness and the sunshine. They are not a question of can, but a question of will; and with the will once trembling obediently on the verge of action, all needed resource of power is at its instant service. This is another lesson of our text. In the case of the paralytic, God's power came in just after the man's will to stretch forth his hand, and just before the stretching act. As he had the will to do, God furnished him the power to do with, and that made out the miracle. It was pretty much the same thing done divinely as is done humanly when a child goes tottering and clambering up a staircase that is too steep for it, and the parent takes hold of the child's hand liftingly. The child has the will to go up, and the parent puts some of his own strength at the service of that will; and in this way weakness does impossibilities by virtue of superior strength temporarily loaned. This is the incident of the paralytic turned into terms and relations of familiar experience. It is of the utmost necessity that we should feel that this case of the paralytic stands in Scripture to represent the continuous action of God, the continuous miracle of God, if you please, in so lending Himself to us as to match our power to the measure of our holy intents, and so making us able to do that which there is in us a righteous will to do; precisely as in our story Christ evened up the paralytic's power exactly to the level of his willingness. This ought not to disturb us as implying a familiar and presumptuous dependence upon the Divine resources and bounty. It is only doing in the spiritual realm what every man does in a greater or less measure in the physical one. The forces that we call natural, that we use in every foot-tread, in the transportation of every pound of merchandise by wind or by steam, in the carrying of every shuttle and revolution of every spindle, these forces are as truly grounded in God as are the influences that emanate from the Holy Ghost, and that work in us holier purposes and affections of heart. It is from Him that cometh down every good and perfect gift. We are His beneficiaries in everything. It is as much making use of God to unfurl our sail in the draft of the west wind as it is to spread out our unfilled capacities of emotion and action in the draft of a spiritual Pentecost. It is a part of God that He yields Himself in all this rich diversity of ways to piece out man's infirmity. There is no way in which we can so well serve Him as by letting Him serve us in our pursuit of holy ends. Religious ideas get their only value from their fitness to serve as conduits for the conveyance of Divine supply. We have all our city under-laid with water-mains, but we prize them only because there is water in the reservoir that works down through those mains and presses up into our dwellings. Ideas do not strengthen us any more than the water-pipe refreshes or gas-pipe illuminates. And faith is not conceiving of God as an idea, but it is laying hold upon Him as a power and utilizing Him to the ends of holy living and Christian achieving, in just the same strenuous and practical way in which we lay hold on wind-pressure and steam-power, and let them even our resources up to the level of our secular ambition. If now the Church would link all its energies, all its devout desires as confidingly to the spiritual influences of God as the world links its ambitions to His cosmic energies of earth, sea, and air, hardly are there any results possible to be named that might not be achieved for the glory of God and the saving of men before the dawn of the approaching new century. And then one other lesson that follows on directly from this is the position of enlarged accountability and responsibility in which we are set. It is a common thing for us to

say that we are responsible for our use of the talents we have; that present power is the measure of accountability. It appears from what we have seen in our story and from the general drift of Scripture in fact, that our responsibility lies all the way around beyond the outer edge of our power and talent. The man in our text was responsible not only for his use of what was in him, but for what, as a result of his faith, he was able to have divinely added to him. All the way through Scripture God was continually commanding men to do more than they in themselves had the means to do, exactly as in our verse. One object of the miracle was to show that by faith we acquire a property in power that to our unfaith lies at an utter remove from us. We need some of the old-time audacity—some Pauline and Petrine presumption, which was audacious, not because it was *un*calculating, but just because it was so grandly and discerningly *calculating*, and calculated not only on its own intrinsic force, but on a magnificent increment of working energy from on high. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *The withered hand*:—I. DISCUSS THAT SPIRITUAL POWERLESSNESS, OF WHICH THE WITHERED HAND IS A JUST AND APPROPRIATE SYMBOL, EXPLAINING WHAT IT IS AND WHEREIN IT CONSISTS. II. I SHALL POINT OUT BRIEFLY WHAT CHRIST REQUIRES TO BE DONE, IN ORDER TO ITS REMOVAL. 1. "There was a man" in the synagogue "whose right hand was withered." Here then are three distinct points to be noticed in our comment. (1) The organ was a hand. The hand, as you know, is the organ of touch. The sense of touch, then, brings us into closer connection with matter than any other sense. If I only saw an object, however steadily it might abide before my eyes, I might imagine it was an unreal vision. Again, if I hear a sound, I experience indeed a sensation; but it is not a sensation which irresistibly forces upon me the conclusion that matter exists. So it is with taste, considered in itself and abstractedly from touch, with which, however it is almost always combined. A flavour is a sensation which, if we did not touch the object that excited it, would not irresistibly force upon us the conviction that such an object existed. But touch—the actual handling of any object—does, as I think you will grant, force upon the mind such a conviction. But there are also realities of eternity, permanent and abiding, which will be felt and acknowledged to be realities, when Time and the mortal body have passed away. These realities are the truths of which revelation assures us—the truths, for example (I select a few as specimens out of a great mass) that an all-seeing Eye is about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways—that God is a God who hears and answers prayer—that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and receive the things done in the body. Can you be said to grasp, to touch them, to live under the influential conviction of their reality? Weigh now in your mind what must infallibly be the effect upon our character of the doctrine of future judgment and the peril of unrenewed men, if we possessed such an impression of its reality as might fitly be compared to the impressions of things material derived from the sense of touch. His hand was withered. While he had all the other senses complete, he had lost the power of feeling, so far as the chief organ of feeling was concerned. And such is the case with us with regard to the things of the Spirit and the realities of eternity. We can (as it were) see them, hear them, contemplate, gaze upon, attend, give heed to them, but we cannot (by nature) touch them. I feel that herein I am powerless, and I am sure that you must feel the same. My understanding follows along with their evidence, even unto the clearest mental conviction, but an abiding energizing persuasion of their deep reality, this I have not, and, what is more, I am incompetent of myself to produce it; my hand is withered. And until the Lord speaks the word of power, it must remain withered. (2) Our second remark on the case of this poor man was, that not both his hands were withered, but the better and more serviceable of the two. He could handle and feel to a certain extent, but it was only with his left hand. By what has already been said, it will have appeared that the spiritual faculty, corresponding to the bodily faculty of touch, is faith. Faith it is which realizes things eternal. And from the study of it we learn that this principle of faith does operate and energize, to a certain extent, even in those who are unrenewed in the spirit of their minds. And such most assuredly is the case. So far as his mere temporal interests are concerned, unrenewed man is no stranger to the occasional workings—nay, no stranger to the continuous life, of faith. Let us cast our eyes around us, and this will become sufficiently and incontrovertibly evident. Here is a man laying up for his family, or for himself in old age, subjecting himself to much self-denial, imposing upon himself many restrictions—with the view of meeting and providing against the future but foreseen emergency of his own death, or the natural decay

of his faculties. And all such provision testifies to the existence of faith, testifies to the existence and operations of a faculty, which realizes things unseen, and what is this but faith? Alas! that when faith approaches the realities of eternity, the solid truths of revelation, and endeavours to realize them, it finds its powers shattered as to their highest and noblest exercise! The man's right hand is withered; he knows, indeed, still, what the sensation of touch is, for he can touch bubbles and toys and trifles, but anything weighty, anything of real substance and worth, he is incompetent to handle. He exercises just enough of the faculty to be aware how powerful it would be, if brought to bear on Divine verities, and to desire that it might be so brought to bear. But this is all. He can do no more, until God visit him in power. When our range of eyesight is for the first time enlarged by the telescope, it is no wonder if we run away hastily with the impression that we have gained a new sense. Such, however, is not the case; it is as the renewal of a withered hand, an old sense made competent to gather things. (3) A third point to be noticed in this man's state is the mode in which the organ was affected. The man originally had the use of the organ—it was the design of nature that he should use it—but disease had thwarted this design. The organ, however, remained still, though it hung powerless by the man's side. It was not cut off—not abolished. Brethren, in so far as man has no power of realizing things eternal, and the Divine verities of which Revelation assures him, he is an imperfect, a fallen being. This lamentable defect is a deviation, a deflection from the original image in which he was created. You know how influentially conversant man's body is with matter, with outward nature. I cannot stir, I cannot lift up my eyes, I cannot walk abroad without a continual influx of impressions from matter. Suppose, now, that my spirit were equally susceptible of impressions from the realities of eternity, that in its every motion it was swayed and influenced by these realities, that it received impulses from the invisible at every turn, this surely would be little less than complete renewal of my nature. It would be the recovery of me from my acquired infirmity, the restoration to health and vigour of the withered limb. And, oh! brethren, in every soul of man there exists a capability of such a restoration. No one is disqualified for recovery. In all there is the organ; if life can but be infused into it from above, all will be well. II. But I hasten on to point out briefly WHAT CHRIST REQUIRES US TO DO, IN ORDER TO THE REMOVAL OF THIS INFIRMITY. We have said that He alone is competent to this removal—that man is utterly helpless and powerless in the work of his restoration. Brethren, God demands exertion and energy on our parts before He will consent to put forth that healing power, which alone can recover us from our soul's infirmity. He bids us act as recovered men, ere yet we be recovered, and only in our sincerely striving so to act, will He visit and bless us. And if there be one holy exercise rather than another to which I must give myself, it is that of prayer. The Lord only can restore me. Shall I not apply to Him for restoration? (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Christ knew their thoughts*:—A paper was recently read before the German Asiatic Society of Japan on the magic mirror of Japan. It really possesses no magical quality, but, owing to the peculiarity of its structure, the reflection of the sun from the mirror on the wall or ceiling reveals the figures or letters written on the back of the mirror. Thus the deepest secrets, the hidden thoughts, the hidden purposes of the heart are brought out by the light God turns upon us, and will turn upon us. What is written out of sight in our spirits shall be written by a sunbeam on the wall. *Not to save life is to destroy*:—See yonder poor wretches whose ship has gone down at sea, they have constructed a poor tottering raft, and have been swimming on it for days; their supply of bread and water is exhausted, and they are famishing, they have bound a handkerchief to a pole and hoisted it, and a vessel is within sight. The captain of the ship takes his telescope, looks at the object, and knows that it is a shipwrecked crew. "Oh!" says he to his men, "we are in a hurry with our cargo, we cannot stop to look after an unknown object; it may be somebody perishing, and it may not be, but however, it is not our business," and he keeps on his course. His neglect has murdered those who died on the raft. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Saving a limb*:—To save a limb is a great thing. A poor young man was in a hospital who had crushed his arm at his work. The doctor said there was no help for it; his arm must be cut off or he must die. But the young man could not bear the thought of losing his arm, and said he would rather die first. But the lady at the head of the hospital did all she could to heal the young man's arm. She dressed it carefully, she watched night and day, and did whatever she could to keep up the young man's strength. And at last the arm was saved. The young man became quite well, and

used to call that arm *her arm*, because she had been the means of saving it. It is a great thing to save a limb, but to save a soul is far greater. (*G. T. Coster.*) *Christ heals without causing suffering*:—My sister got her arm put out of joint. The neighbours of the country place came in, and they tried to put that arm in its place, and they laid hold and pulled mightily; they pulled until she was in anguish, but the bone did not go back to its place. After a while the surgeon came, and with one touch everything was adjusted. So we go out for Christian work, and for the lack of a sympathetic nature, or the lack of this gentleness of Christ, we make the wounds of the world worse, when some kind and gentle spirit comes along after us, and by one touch heals the torn ligaments, and the disturbing bones are rejoined. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The power of faith in the Saviour's word*:—A Sunday-school teacher, when teaching his class on one occasion, left his seat and went round among his scholars with his watch in his hand. Holding it out to the first child, he said, "I give you that watch." The boy stared at it and stood still. The teacher then went to the next and repeated—"I give you that watch." The boy blushed, but that was all. One by one the teacher repeated the words and the action to each. Some stared, some blushed, some smiled incredulously, but none took the watch. But when he came nearly to the bottom of the class a small boy put out his hand and took the watch which the teacher handed to him. As the latter returned to his seat, the little fellow said gently, "Then, if you please, sir, the watch is mine?" "Yes, it is yours." The elder boys were fairly roused by this time. "Do you mean to say, sir, that he may keep the watch?" "Certainly; I gave it to any boy who would have it." "Oh, if I had known that," exclaimed one of them, "I would have taken it." "Did I not tell you I gave it to you?" "Oh, yes; but I did not believe you were in earnest." "So much the worse for you; he believed me, and he has the watch." Saving faith is as simple as this. It just takes God at His word and trusts Him. (*Theodore Monod.*)

Ver. 7. **And the scribes and Pharisees watched Him.**—*The wily watchers of the good*:—I. THEY ARE EVER ON THE OUTLOOK FOR AN APPARENT BREACH OF SOME CONVENTIONAL LAW. 1. These men are cunning. 2. They are diligent. 3. They are malicious. II. THEIR GREAT DESIRE IS TO SLANDER THOSE WHOM THEY WATCH. III. THEY ARE NOT TO BE ALLOWED TO INTERRUPT THE DUTY OF THE GOOD. Lessons: 1. Never be set by Satan to watch the conduct of the good to find defects. 2. Seek to find all the good in men you can. 3. Think of the *heavenly* watchers of the good. (*J. S. Exell, M.A.*) *Unsabbatical*:—The Pharisees are looking with keen hungry eyes upon One whom they have marked as their victim. To cherish these feelings, to be plotting murder, was not in their judgment at all unsabbatical. Their reverence for the law of God led them, so they believed, into this state of mind. (*F. D. Maurice.*)

Ver. 12. **And continued all night in prayer to God.**—*Special protracted prayer*:—If any man of woman born might have lived without prayer it was surely the Lord Jesus. In some parts of prayer He could take no share, *e.g.*, confession of sin. Then again, He had no need for self-examination each night, and no need to pray to be protected from sin each morning. Yet never was there a man more abundant in prayer. 1. Notice the place which Christ selected for prayer. The solitude of a mountain. Why? (1) To prevent interruption. (2) That He might be able to pray aloud. (3) To avoid ostentation. 2. The time selected. The silent hours of night. To some of us, the night might be most inappropriate and unsuitable; if so, we must by no means select it, but must follow our Lord in the spirit rather than in the letter. 3. Again, our Lord sets us a good example in the matter of extraordinary seasons of devotion in the protracted character of His prayer. He continued all night in prayer. I do not think that we are bound to pray long as a general rule. Force is its standard rather than length. When the whole soul groans itself out in half a dozen sentences there may be more real devotion in them than in hours of mere wire drawing and word spinning. True prayer is the soul's mounting up to God, and if it can ride upon a cherub or the wings of the wind so much the better, yet in extraordinary seasons, when the soul is thoroughly wrought up to an eminent intensity of devotion, it is well to continue it for a protracted season. We know not that our Lord was vocally praying all the time. He may have paused to contemplate; He may have surveyed the whole compass of the field over which His prayer should extend, meditating upon the character of His God recapitulating the precious promises, remembering the wants of His people,

and thus arming Himself with arguments with which to return to wrestle and prevail. How very few of us have ever spent a whole night in prayer, and yet what boons we might have had for such asking! 4. Jesus has further instructed us in the art of special devotion by the manner of His prayer. Notice, he continued all night in prayer to God—to God. How much of our prayer is not prayer to God at all! That gunner will do no service to the army who takes no aim, but is content so long as he does but fire; that vessel makes an unremunerative voyage which is not steered for a port, but is satisfied to sail hither and thither. We must direct our prayers to God, and maintain soul-fellowship with Him, or our devotion will become a nullity, a name for a thing which is not. 5. Once more, we may learn from Jesus our Lord the occasion for special devotion. At the time when our Master continued all night in prayer He had been upbraided by the Pharisees. He fulfilled the resolve of the man after God's own heart. "Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in Thy precepts." So David did, and so did David's Lord. The best answer to the slanders of the ungodly is to be more constant in communion with God. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ an example to us in the choice of seasons for prayer*:—I. OUR LORD WAS WONT TO PRAY WHEN ENGAGED, OR ABOUT TO ENGAGE IN ANY RELIGIOUS ORDINANCE (Luke iii. 21). The ordinances of grace must be sanctified to us by prayer, or we shall derive no benefit from them. II. OUR LORD PRAYED WHEN ABOUT TO ENGAGE IN MORE THAN USUALLY IMPORTANT AND SERIOUS BUSINESS. As here before the ordination of the apostles. III. ANOTHER SEASON FOR PRAYER IS A SEASON OF EXCEEDING ENJOYMENT OR HONOUR (Luke ix. 28, 29). Strange as it may sound, yet it is true, that they who receive most of the Lord's grace and goodness stand the most in need of the Lord's grace and goodness; they need grace to use abundant grace and goodness well. Pride of heart is often called into exercise by it; or, if not pride of heart, an undue love of that mercy—giving up the soul to the enjoyment of it. IV. ANOTHER SEASON FOR SPECIAL PRAYER IS WHEN WE SEE OUR FRIENDS IN PECULIAR DANGER OR SORROW (Luke xxii. 32; John xvii.). How can there be Christian love if the sorrows and wants of those we love do not excite prayer in us? V. ONE SEASON MORE I MENTION AS PECULIARLY A SEASON OF SUPPLICATION—WHEN TROUBLE IS ON US OR EXPECTED TO COME (Luke xxii. 44). Severe affliction is the season, of all others, for prayer. (*Charles Bradley, M.A.*) *Private devotion*:—Some, from the nature of their employments, or from mental constitution, or habit, do not find that they can often continue, or profitably continue, long at devotion at once; such may supply this, in a good measure, by frequency. Most clearly, however, sufficient time ought to be taken to get the mind fully engaged. When Christ, after labouring the whole day that was past, and having also to labour as soon as day dawned again, spent the whole night in prayer, it is a shame for any of His professing followers, however busy a life they may lead, not to make a point of reserving from the cares of the day, or it may be, from the slumbers of the night, as much time as is necessary for morning and evening devotions. Mark, Christians, how the airy trifler gives the night-watch to devour the foolish romance; and how the pale student toils over the midnight lamp; and how, for the sake of this world's gain, some rise early and sit up late, and even work whole nights; and how the votaries of dissipating pleasure often spend the whole, or almost the whole, night in its pursuits; and then, though you will by no means think yourselves called on literally to spend whole nights in prayer, yet you will be ashamed and confounded when you think that a moderate tarrying before the throne of grace should ever have been unnecessarily neglected by you, or felt as a burden; and you will desire to give more of your time and of your heart to seasons of communion with your God. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *Jesus praying all night*:—On more than one occasion in the life of our Lord, it is recorded that He continued all night in prayer to God. What need was there that He should sacrifice rest and sleep in this way? He knew that His Father always heard His prayer. He gave us as the model for our prayer a form which can easily be repeated in half a minute. Was His Father unwilling to hear Him? Or was it because He could not bring His mind to the proper prayer-point, and so had to pray for hours, in order to learn how to pray for one moment with real faith? It could not be for either of these reasons. We may suppose then that our Saviour spent that long time in prayer as a delightful employment to Himself. He loved to commune with our God and His God. To Him it was better than meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. So, doubtless, it was more soothing and refreshing than sleep for Him to talk to His Father. Jesus praying and the Father listening; that was a harmony more

entrancing than the songs of angels. But no; it was not for enjoyment alone that Jesus prayed all night. His prayers were poured into the deep heart of God as easily as the water pours over the rock into the chasm below. His heart unfolded to His Father as gently as a flower is kissed open by the breeze of a summer-dawn. But Christ had a definite purpose in the night-long prayer. (*National Baptist*). *A night of prayer*:—I. THE TEXT SHOULD CONVINCE US OF THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER. II. THE TEXT SHOULD IMPRESS US WITH THE NECESSITY FOR PRAYER. III. THE TEXT SHOULD INSTRUCT US AS TO THE MANNER OF PRAYER. 1. Christians should have their seasons of secret prayer and of retirement from the world. 2. Christians should have special seasons set apart for prayer in view of special work. (*D. MacEwen, D.D.*) *Prayer a preliminary to important steps in life*:—We should give ourselves to special prayer when we are about to make any important changes in life: 1. Leaving home. 2. Entering on a business or profession. (1) That the temptations which cluster about our secular callings may not defile and degrade us. (2) That our secular blessings may be made in the highest sense a blessing to us. 3. Marriage. (*B. Wilkinson, F.G.S.*) *A night of solitary prayer*:—I. THE NIGHT OF NEEDFUL REST SHORTENED FOR PRAYER. II. THE SOLITUDE SOUGHT FOR SPIRITUAL PREPARATION. The crisis at which our Lord had arrived—1. Originated the Christian ministry. 2. Began the Christian Church. 3. Involved the selection of His own betrayer. 4. Was a preparation for the full exposition of His doctrines. Sermon on the plain. III. THE CONDUCT OF OUR GRACIOUS LORD COUNSELS US TO—1. Lonely prayer. 2. Preparatory prayer. 3. Self-denying prayer. 4. Leisurely prayer—"All the night." 5. Lingering prayer—"He continued." 6. Blissful prayer—All night with God. (*W. H. Jellie.*) Here is the great secret of much that we see in the active life of Jesus. 1. Secret prayer. 2. Long prayer. Prayer calms and strengthens the soul. After prayer a man descends upon his work rather than rises strainingly towards it. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

JESUS PRAYING.

He songht the mountain and the loneliest height,
For He would meet His Father all alone,
And there, with many a tear and many a groan,
He strove in prayer throughout the long, long night.
Why need He pray, who held by filial right;
O'er all the world alike of thought and sense,
The fulness of His Sire's omnipotence?
Why crave in prayer what was His own by might?
Vain is the question—Christ was man in need,
And being man, His duty was to pray.
The Son of God confess'd the human need,
And doubtless ask'd a blessing every day,
Nor ceases yet for sinful man to plead,
Nor will, till heaven and earth shall pass away.

(*Hartley Coleridge.*)

All night in prayer:—There are three classes of minds which are in danger of making too long prayers. 1. One is the loose, unconcentrative, who cumber thoughts with many words, and make vain, *i.e.*, empty, repetitions of the same idea. 2. Another consists of those who, mistaking the nature of importunity, think that the more they say, the more they shall get—not seeing that in so doing they are virtually making their prayers a purchase-price, which they present in payment of what they ask—and forgetting, or not considering, the true character of prayer—that it is only the opening channel in a man's mind, through which God may pour out into that mind His pre-ordained and ready gifts. 3. And the third are they who, with a superstitious feeling, think that God will be angry if their prayers do not go to a certain extent, and so, in their intercourse with God, they stretch their prayers to a degree either inconsistent with their other duties, or incompatible with their own health. They do not know that oftentimes the very best prayer we ever pray, is not to pray, but to cast ourselves simply on the love of God. The general rule is, pray according to the condition of your heart. Do not let the prayer strain the thoughts, but let the thoughts determine and regulate the prayer. Pray as you feel drawn in prayer—or, in other words, as the Spirit of God in you leads and dictates. Nevertheless, the holier a man is, and the nearer heaven—the more, and the more continuously,

that man will be able to commune with God. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *All night in prayer:*—The Rev. John Welch, of Ayr, was accustomed to retire many nights to his church and spend the whole night in prayer—praying with an audible and sometimes with a loud voice. His wife, fearing he would catch cold, went one night to his closet where he had been long at prayer, and heard him say, "Lord, wilt Thou not grant me Scotland?" and, after a pause, "Enough, Lord, enough." Once he got such nearness to the Lord in prayer that he exclaimed, "Hold Thy hand, Lord; remember Thy servant is a clay vessel, and can hold no more."

Vers. 13–16. **And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles.**—*The call of the twelve:*—Up till this time it can hardly be said that the kingdom of God was set up. At the hour of His widest popularity, yet at a crisis of gathering peril, in face of the people and the adversary together, He virtually sets up His kingdom. It was a moment of decision. It was a policy of safety, because a policy of boldness. It was an act of calm, foresighted courage, full in its simplicity of the moral sublime. Let us gather up and realize the circumstances. 1. Our Lord's night-long preparation for this step is worthy of devout attention. The veil of loneliness and of night is on that prayer. But may we not humbly venture so far at least into that night's solitary and sacred communings? Courage to go forward; wisdom to choose those whom His Father had chosen, and had given Him for that end. Can the Son of God be true brother to us all if at such an hour He needs not to ask these things for Himself? And for them, that they might rise to the height of their high calling. And for us, and for all the long line of Christian generations to be built up on these twelve foundations! May we not so read that long-night prayer of consecration and of intercession by our Priest and King? A lone dark watch on the cool hill-top, with the stars of God looking calmly down on Him, and the great lake spread silently out below, as far from earthly care and sin, as near the heavens in their pureness, as may be—behold the oratory of the Son of Man. 2. When morning broke over the dark wall of the opposite shore, it showed Him pale from sleeplessness, but serene from prayer. Beneath Him, on the hill-side, was the gathering of His disciples. Man by man, He called whom He would by name; and man by man, the elect twelve left their wondering companions to take their places by the Master's side, to be for ever now chief councillors in His kingdom, the next in honour and the next in danger. Most of them have been heard of already in the narrative: Simon the Rock and his lesser brother, with the two sons of Thunder, whom He had called together from their fishing-nets to be four partners in the ministry; Philip of Bethsaida and his friend Nathanael, as together a year ago they found the Christ; two of the Lord's own brothers and the Capernaum publican just called two days before; and one Simon the Zealot and Thomas; and, last and strangest of all, that one, unsuspected as yet by any save Jesus, who was "a devil." "The glorious company of the apostles," the Church has called them in her hymn; but had we seen them that dawn, as they clustered round their King, we must have thought them a strange, unlikely, inglorious band. Twelve Galilean workmen, with average ability and the prejudices of their class; attracted indeed by the superiority of this Man, and yielding to His influence, but neither comprehending who He was, nor what He was to do; ignorant, rude, strong-passioned, ill-assorted: by these Twelve to lay the foundations of the Church of God so broad and deep that on them might be built the hopes of all mankind and the destinies of the saved, regenerated earth! Did ever means seem in more foolish disproportion to the end? Yet He did it. These foolish things (1 Cor. i. 27) God chose to confound the wise. The might of Jesus' Spirit turned them to apostles; and to that dozen workmen on the hill all Christendom in all time has looked back as to the planters and fathers of its faith. It is always the same. For the humbling of human pride, and the practice of Christian faith, God works salvation for men by means which men despise. Look at that morning's scene as the act of God our Saviour, and it will read you this lesson, that by using earthen vessels, soiled even and chipped, He would magnify the treasure of His strength, which groweth mighty to save through very weakness. Look at it as a great venture of the Son of Man launching His Father's cause upon the world, and it is the grandest example of faith, setting itself to achieve the impossible by the help of the Almighty. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *The testimony of the apostles:*—The institution of the apostleship opens a new and solemn era in the ministry of Jesus Christ, and St. Luke tells us that our Lord prepared for it in solitude,

meditation, and prayer. A few days after one of those frequent meetings with the Pharisees, which were as the painful stages of the weary pilgrimage which was to end in the cross, Jesus left His disciples; He went up a mountain, and there, beneath the starry sky of the East, during the long and silent hours of night, He communed with God. Then, when the day came, He selected twelve men from among those who followed Him, and made them His apostles. He chose twelve, to indicate that these men were about to form upon earth the true people of God, the spiritual Israel of which the first was but a type. He chose them, poor, ignorant, weak, in order to show that the power by which they were to conquer the world came not of them, but descended from above. We shall study together the aims of this institution. Why did Jesus institute apostles, and how did they fulfil the mission with which they had been entrusted? I. Who says apostle, says MESSENGER. The twelve were to be the first missionaries of the gospel. Ignorant, poor, and without the least personal *prestige*, they dared to attempt the conquest of the world with no other arms than the Word of which they were the bearers. II. Howbeit, this *rôle* of messengers of God, which the apostles fulfilled with so much power and fidelity, does not constitute the whole of their original and unique ministry. If we study the question closely, we shall see that the apostles are above all, and in a special sense, the WITNESSES of Jesus Christ: the personal, ocular, and duly accredited witnesses of the person, acts, and teaching of their Master. III. THE NECESSITY OF THE APOSTOLICAL TESTIMONY IS NOW OBVIOUS. Let us go one step further, and consider whether this testimony is really worthy of belief. 1. They were sincere. But—2. A man may be mistaken though sincere. Were they? Well, in the name of my reason, I rise up against this revolting hypothesis, a thousand times more miraculous than the miracles it will not own; it is in the name of my reason that I assert that the delusion of a few Galileans cannot have produced moral harmony, that folly cannot have given birth to the loftiest reason, that hallucination cannot have invented Jesus of Nazareth! IV. But is there testimony sufficient for the Church? Evidently, no. It has pleased God that the eternal Christ, as well as the historical Christ, should have His witness from the very first days of the Church, and that is the profound signification of St. Paul's apostleship. V. Will our Protestant Churches continue to be apostolical Churches? Let this be our highest ambition—to be in our turn the witnesses of Christ. (*E. Bersier, D.D.*) *The King choosing His ministers*:—1. The words "when it was day," recall the preceding verse. When the work most expressed His authority, He was still renouncing all independence. Every prayer is a renunciation of independence. Every prayer says, "We can do nothing without Thee." As His prayers were the essentially true prayers, they must have had this meaning perfectly, without any reservation. 2. That night in which He was not alone, because the Father was with Him, prepared Him to come down amidst the disciples whom He had gathered about Him. He had gathered them; they knew it. Each of them had heard a voice, more or less distinctly, bidding him come. Each had yielded to One who, he felt, had a right to command him. And now He takes twelve out of their number. He calls them apostles. They are to be sent forth. 3. Clearly they were distinguished from the other members of the little flock. What had caused the difference? Did He merely like them better that the rest? Had they merited some greater honour at His hands? Had He discovered some peculiar capacity in them? All such questions would occur to these poor fishermen; would occur to them not less because they were poor fishermen. 4. The number which our Lord fixed upon for His apostles of course reminded them of the tribes into which their nation was divided. (*F. D. Maurice.*) *Disciples and apostles*:—Disciple means learner. Apostle means missionary. When, then, Jesus turned His disciples into apostles you see what an event it was! 1. It was really the flowering of that gospel which He had been pouring into them through all their discipleship. The plant fills itself with the richness of the earth. No noise is made. The whole transaction lies between the plant and the rich earth that feeds it through its open roots. All is silent, private, restricted. But some day the world looks, and lo! the process has burst open. Upon the long-fed plant is burning a gorgeous flower for the world to see. The long supply of nourishment has opened into a great display of glory. The earth has sent its richness through the plant to enlighten and to bless the world. The disciple has turned to an apostle. 2. Notice, when Jesus took this great step forward He did not leave behind His old life with His disciples. He chose out of the number of His disciples twelve, whom also He named apostles. They were to be disciples still. They did not cease to be learners when He made

them missionaries. The plant does not cease to feed itself out of the ground when it opens its glorious flowers for the world to see. All the more it needs supply, now that it has fulfilled its life. And so this great epoch in the Christian Church was an addition not a substitution. 3. And notice yet another thing. It is out of the very heart of the discipleship that the apostleship proceeds. It is the very best, the choicest, as we say, of the disciples, that are chosen to be apostles. It is they who have listened to Him longest, and most intelligently, and most lovingly. Always it is the best of the inward life of anything, that which lies the closest to its heart, and is the fullest of its spirit, which flowers into the outward impulse which comes to complete its life. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *The twelve apostles*:—They were not great men, strong men, learned men, but they must have had qualifications of some kind for the position to which they were called. What were these qualifications? 1. They were good men. 2. They were men of sensitive mind, ready for Divine calls, open to Divine impulses. 3. They were men of simple, child-like heart—men who had great capacity for faith. (*J. Foster.*) *The witness of the apostles*:—1. As their name implies, the apostles were men sent to do a given work. They did what they did because they were sent. 2. They were men with a definite work in hand; they had to witness to the world what their Master had been, and had done, and had suffered while they were with Him. 3. This witness they bore in three ways:—(1) By their words—they preached Christ; (2) By their works—they built up the Church of Christ; (3) By their sufferings—they died for Christ. And if fourthly, it be asked why we should trust the witness of these apostles, I answer that their witness, as recorded by themselves or their reporters in the gospels, shows that they were at once sincere and accurate. (*Canon Liddon.*) **Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother, James and John.** *Brotherhood in Christ*:—Two pairs of brothers. Significant and suggestive that twice in the small number of the twelve it should have happened that the natural tie of brotherhood was emphasized by a common call to the new life, and a common work in the same service. The world is covered with a network of brotherhoods. This network of brotherhoods, like every evident fact of life, sets us to ask three questions—1. What is its immediate cause? The cause of this interwoven network, this reticulation of life with life, is the whole system of nature by which each human being takes its start from another human being, and is kept, for a time at least, in associations of company and dependence with the being from whom it sprang, and with the other beings who have the same source with it. 2. What is the direct result of such relationships? They are full of mutual helpfulness and pleasure. 3. What is the final reason of this relationship? Here the answer is not so entirely clear and certain. But as we watch and think it seems to me that we are at least led to wonder whether one final cause or purpose of this interlacing of life with life, by natural and indissoluble kinships, may not be just this, the providing, as it were, of open communications, of a system of shafts or channels piercing this human mass in every direction, crossing and recrossing one another, through which those higher influences, which ought to reach every corner and every individual of the great structural humanity, may be freely carried everywhere, and no most remote or insignificant atom of the mass be totally and necessarily untouched. And if we look at Christ's larger method, at the way in which His work went on after it had gone beyond that earliest stage among his personal kindred, the same thing still appears. His truth ran abroad in the channels which were made by the natural relations of mankind. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *Reflections upon the list of apostles*:—In the service of Christ there is room and work for all sorts and conditions of men—for men of genius, for men of thought, for men of action. 1. Are we impetuous, adventurous, original? Christ has chosen and called us. If we are true to His call, we shall become steadfast as a rock, and, while we blunder on our way, we shall announce the coming and presence of the Lord. 2. Are we of those in whom the pale cast of thought is all sicklied o'er with doubt? Christ has chosen and called us. If we are true to His call, we shall see that we may believe, until we can believe even greater things than we can see. 3. Are we practical men, conversant with affairs, capable of handling them to purpose? Christ has chosen and called us, that we may be with Him, and preach His gospel, that we may bear witness to Him by a life which reflects His own; and if we are true to His call, we shall also be with Him where He now is, seeing and sharing His everlasting and indisturbable peace. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *Our Lord's choice of apostles*:—I. WHY DID OUR LORD CHOOSE APOSTLES? 1. To spread the Christian religion after His ascension. 2. To record and transmit to future ages the most

important facts concerning Jesus—His miracles, doctrines, precepts. II. WHY WERE TWELVE THOUGHT NECESSARY? 1. As the apostles were to be witnesses to the world of facts of the highest importance, it was proper that they should not be too few. The consistent evidence of twelve men must be unexceptionable. Their thorough agreement as to the same facts, doctrines, and precepts, is remarkable and convincing, especially when we consider that after Christ's ascension they were so widely scattered as to shut off all possibility of collusion. 2. They were destined to propagate the gospel among many nations. They were not too numerous, in proportion to the duties assigned them. 3. If it be farther demanded why twelve were fixed on, rather than eleven, or thirteen, we can give no other answer, but that this was probably done to gratify the Jews, who might prefer twelve, as corresponding to the number of their tribes. III. WHY DID JESUS GIVE A PREFERENCE TO THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHOM HE SELECTED? (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *The apostolic band:*—The choice of apostles is one of the most brilliant proofs of the adorable wisdom of the Saviour. 1. He chooses simple-minded, yet already measurably-prepared men. To some has the Baptist's instruction, to others the toilsome fisherman-life, or the active publican's office, been a more suitable school of preparation than a scientific preparation by Hillel or Shammai. 2. Few, yet very diverse, men. He works intensively before He begins to labour extensively on the kingdom of God that is to be founded. He will rather perfect some than only partially train many. Accordingly He trains them with and also by means of one another, and shows how fully His gospel accommodates itself to every point of human development, and how it is perfectly calculated for every one's individual necessities. 3. Some prominent to go with several less noticeable men whom He gathers together into a little company. So far as we can see, the beautiful figurative language used in 1 Cor. xii. 14-27, is also completely applicable to the organism of the apostolic circle. Had all been as distinguished as a Peter, a John, and as afterwards a Paul, the unity would have suffered by the diversity, and the one light would have been broken into altogether too many colours. (*J. J. Van Oosterzee, D.D.*) *The catalogue of the apostles:*—1. A source of knowledge. This catalogue fills (1) a brilliant chapter in the history of mankind; (2) a sublime chapter in the history of Jesus; (3) a noteworthy chapter in the history of the Divine government. 2. A support of faith. It witnesses of (1) the truth; (2) the sublimity; (3) the divinity; (4) the imperishableness—of the gospel. 3. A school of life. It displays the image of the (1) condition, (2) intended work, and (3) prerogatives—of the Christian Church even in our days. (*Ibid.*) *Why was Judas Iscariot selected as an apostle:*—A circumstance calculated to excite our wonder; that He who was perfect Himself, and who came into the world to establish a religion of purity and holiness, should choose for one of His constant attendants a man who was unprincipled and incorrigible. Mistake on Christ's part was impossible (John ii. 25). 1. The testimony of Judas in favour of the purity of Jesus, renders the evidence complete. Judas, after committing his crime, was placed in that situation in which every fault, every accusation, every blemish, that he could bring against his Master, would have a tendency to palliate, if not to vindicate himself. 2. Judas testifies to all ages that the leading passions may be so bad, and the habits so inveterate, that the very best possible opportunities of improvement cannot be of any advantage. 3. The selection of Judas has furnished an excellent opportunity of teaching Christians another important truth: That if the means of instruction and improvement which Jesus Christ employed be neglected or perverted, no other means will be bestowed. (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *The traitor among the twelve:*—It is natural to ask, Why was there a traitor among the twelve? and what good purpose was served by this development of iniquity, which He who rules over all was thus pleased to permit. Now, here was fulfilled, in the most striking way, the declaration that the wrath of men shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath He shall restrain. I. THE HISTORY OF JUDAS ISCARIOT FURNISHES A STRIKING PROOF OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. 1. It is a proof of this, as it is a fulfilment of prophecy (Psa. lxix., cix.; Zech. xi. 12, &c.). 2. It brings forward the testimony of an enemy, and a perfectly well-informed enemy, in support of Christianity. II. This history teaches us that THE OCCASIONAL OCCURRENCE OF GRIEVOUS OFFENCES AMONG PROFESSORS OF RELIGION, SHOULD NOT PREJUDICE US AGAINST RELIGION ITSELF. If even among the apostles such a case occurred, it need not greatly surprise us that something similar should take place in the Church from time to time. III. A MOST AWFUL WARNING TO ALL WHO PROFESS TO BE THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, TO BEWARE LEST THEY FALL IN A SIMILAR WAY. (*James Foote, M.A.*)

Zealots:—Simon called Zelotes has apparently two surnames in Scripture, but they mean the same thing. He is called Simon the Cananite in Hebrew—not because he was an inhabitant of Cana or a Canaanite, but that word, when interpreted, means precisely the same as the Greek word Zelotes. He was called Simon the Zealot. I suppose that he had this name before his conversion. It is thought by some that he was a member of that very fierce and fanatical political sect of the Jews, called the Zealots, by whose means the siege of Jerusalem was rendered so much more bloody than it would have been; but this does not seem very probable, for the sect of the Zealots had scarcely arisen in the time of the Saviour, and therefore we are inclined to think with Hackett in his exposition of the Acts, that he was so called because of his zealous attachment to his religion as a Jew, for there were some in the different classes of Jewish society who were so excessively full of zeal as to gain the name of Zealot. But it strikes me that he must have been a zealot after conversion too, for within that sacred circle which surrounded our Lord, every word was truth, and the Master would not have allowed any of His disciples to have worn a surname which was not expressive or truthful. May we so act and live that we might truthfully wear the title of Christian Zealots. I. LET US POURTRAY THE UNCONVERTED ZEALOT. 1. Zeal frequently expends itself on other things than religion. Politics. Science. Business. 2. The unconverted zealot, should his zeal expend itself upon religion, is generally exceedingly boastful. Jehu. 3. The unconverted zealot is generally an ignorant zealot (Rom. x. 2). Probably there is more zeal to be found among the professors of false doctrine than among the followers of the truth. 4. The zeal of unconverted men is generally partial. It may be a zeal for something good, but not for everything that is good. Zealous he is for sect and party when the whole that the sect may hold is not of more value than the gnat, and yet great fundamental doctrinal truths are forgotten, as though they were of no value whatever. Brethren, may we be earnest men of God, but I pray that we may be zealous for all truth. 5. The zealot, again, while unconverted, is generally (if it be in his power) a persecutor. "Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church." 6. His aims are often sinister. Let us beware of a zeal for lifting up ourselves. Zeal must be pure—fire off the altar. 7. The unconverted zealot is generally but temporary in his zeal. "When he was sick," says an old legend, "the devil a monk would be"; but when he got well—you know how he gave up his fine intentions. II. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN ZEALOT. 1. How his zeal manifests itself. (1) In his private dealings with God. He is zealous in repentance—his tears come welling up from his heart. Sin is not a little distasteful, but is exceedingly disgusting to him. His faith, too, is not merely a trembling recognition of truth, but it is a firm grasp of everlasting verities. The Christian zealot, when he is alone with God, throws his whole heart into His service. (2) In his prayers. He prays like a man who means it, and will take no denial. (3) In his jealousy for God's honour. Elijah. Phineas. Up with truth, and down with falsehood. A man is no zealot and cannot be called Zelotes, unless he has a holy jealousy for the honour of Christ, and His crown, and His truth. (4) In the abundance of his labours and gifts. Zeal labours for Christ. For a picture of zeal take St. Paul. How he compasses sea and land! Storms cannot stay him, mountains cannot impede his progress. O that we could live while we live; but our existence—that is all we can call it—our existence, what a poor thing it is! We run like shallow streams: we have not force enough to turn the mill of industry, and have not depth enough to bear the vessel of progress, and have not flood enough to cheer the meads of poverty. We are dry too often in the summer's drought, and we are frozen in the winter's cold. (5) By the anguish which his soul feels when his labours for Christ are not successful. Zeal must move not merely the tongue, or the foot, or the hand, but also the heart. (6) In a vehement love and attachment to the person of the Saviour. Nothing can make a man zealous like attachment to a person. When Napoleon's soldiers won so many victories, and especially in the earlier part of his career, when against such deadly odds they earned such splendid triumphs, what was the reason? The "little corporal" was there, and whenever it came to a desperate rush he was the first to cross the bridge or charge the enemy, always exposing himself to danger; and their attachment to his person, and their love and admiration of his valour, made them follow at his heels, swift to victory. Have not we heard of those who threw themselves in the way of the cannon ball to save his life? There could not have been such triumphs if there had not been a man who knew how to govern men by attaching them to himself. And oh, the person of the Saviour! What attachment can there be equal

to that which binds a Christian to his Lord? 2. This brings us now, in the next place, to think awhile of how this zeal is maintained and kept up. To keep up a good fire of zeal we must have much fuel, and the fire will partake of the quality of the fuel, so that it must be good firing to make holy zeal. (1) If I understand aright, zeal is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and genuine zeal draws its life and vital force from the continued operations of the Holy Ghost in the soul. (2) Next to this, zeal feeds upon truths like these. It is stirred by the ruin of sinners. The very sight of sinners makes a right-hearted man zealous for their conversion. The wants of the age are enough, if a man has any sense of what eternal realities are, to make us zealous to the highest pitch. (3) And next, Christian zeal feeds itself upon a sense of gratitude. Look to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged, and you will see abundant reason why you should spend and be spent for God. (4) Zeal for God feeds itself upon the thought of the eternal future. It feels that all it can do is little compared with what is wanting, and that time is short compared with the work to be done, and therefore it devotes all that it has to the cause of its Lord. (5) Above all, zeal for God feeds itself on love to Christ. Lady Powerscourt says somewhere, "If we want to be thoroughly hot with zeal, we must go near to the furnace of the Saviour's love." (6) Above all, Christian zeal must be sustained by a vigorous inner life. 3. I have to close by commending zeal. In commending zeal, let me say, methinks it should commend itself to every Christian man without a word of mine, but if you must have it, remember that God Himself is zealous. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Christ was zealous. We read of Him that the zeal of God's house had eaten Him up, and when He took the scourge of small cords and purged the Temple, John tells us that it was written of Him, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." A prophet tells us that He was clothed with zeal as with a cloak. He had not zeal over a part of Him, but was clothed with it as with some great cloak covering Him from head to foot. Christ was all zeal. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 17, 19. **And the whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all.**—*Christ the fountain of health:*—The subject will be found to involve two considerations; what is the virtue which proceeds out of Christ? by what means is it appropriated to men? I. We begin by observing, that in addition to the superiority of our Lord's miracles in point of number over those of every other, there is also a great distinction in the manner of their achievement. The apostles, for example, nowhere pretend to have accomplished the prodigies which they performed by their own ability. The words of healing are, "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The distinction to which we advert is very obvious; the miracles of the apostles were wrought by an agency not their own; their touch, their voice, their shadow, had no inherent power to do cures; from Christ's own person went out immediately the virtue which healed them all. The difference is remarkable. It is as though the indwelling Godhead did so impregnate the human flesh with life-giving energy, that no sickness or weakness could remain after contact with that immaculate frame. There resided in that sinless body a fulness of grace. It was, as it were, a spring of life to the bodies of others; the virtue dwelt in it, and was drawn forth by an act of faith in the diseased. Such we conceive to be the original meaning of the text; and thus understood, it will be found accurately to describe also the influence of Christ upon ourselves. The fact is not only that God chose to regard the offspring of Adam as iniquitous, but that they really were so. Thus, we repeat, it is not sufficient to consider that Adam's fault placed his descendants in the position of criminals; it did really and actually render them corrupt. And what has Christ done for the vast family of man thus contemplated? We reply, in the words of the text, virtue goeth out of His body to heal them all. The Redeemer, we are told, took not on Him the nature of angels, but of men. Christ Jesus, the Second Adam, is set forth to be the Restorer of human nature. He removes the inherent disease, He destroys the natural defilement. From Him a new period commences; to all His disciples He is the new Stock, the Root, the Stem. II. It remains that we very briefly allude to THE MEANS BY WHICH THE HEALING VIRTUE WHICH RESIDES IN CHRIST, IS APPROPRIATED TO MAN. Now as respects the communication of the healing virtue of Christ's Manhood to our souls, we hesitate not to place it in the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are between us and the Second Adam, what fleshly procreation is between us and the first Adam. There is healing virtue in the Second Adam; we obtain a share of it through our union

with Him by His appointed ordinances. By the Sacraments we are spiritually connected with Christ, as closely as we are carnally connected with Adam and Eve. "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." In Him was life, but how was this life to be communicated to others? In Him was purity, but how should it be transmitted? He was the Being set forth to make all things new, but how was a connection to be wrought out between Him and us? Indeed not by any carnal alliance, but in a new and living way. Through these Sacraments, duly administered and faithfully taken, virtue goeth out of Him for the healing of the nations. And in connection with the present subject of discourse, it seems appropriate to remind you, in conclusion, that whilst our Lord's Incarnation as a whole is full of healing virtue for all generations of believers, so are the several events of His life, taken separately, imbued with a similar efficiency. We have been very much struck with that most solemn part of the Litany, in which we call upon God the Son to deliver us, making mention of the various pains which He endured. "By Thy holy Nativity and Circumcision; by Thy Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation"; and then, in deeper and more thrilling strain, "By Thine Agony and Bloody Sweat; by Thy Cross and Passion; by Thy precious Death and Burial, Good Lord, deliver us." It is probable that by many the passage is only regarded as an adjuration to the Second Person to be merciful unto us, by the strong plea of what He has done and suffered. The Church reminds her Lord, if we may so speak, of His own sorrows, and by the thought of them claims His grace. But is this all? We think not. We believe there is implied in the awful supplication the truth, that every one of the Redeemer's acts, one by one recalled, is full of its own peculiar virtue. Thus in praying to be saved by His Nativity, we pray that we may be born anew unto holiness. The Collects for the days on which these single acts of Christ are commemorated, teach us what appropriate power belongs to each act. Turn to the Collect of the Circumcision. We find the mention of Christ's Circumcision connected with the true circumcision of our spirits, the mortification, *i.e.*, of our hearts and all our members. The Fasting and Temptation of the Saviour, as brought before us on the First Sunday in Lent, are to enable us to subdue our flesh to the Spirit. His Cross and Passion are to convey to us the grace of patience like His own. His Burial is to qualify us to be buried with Him, that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection. And thus are we to regard everything that He did; every act of His is as it were sacramental in its nature, associated with its own appropriate grace. You will at once see what a stupendous importance is thus attached to the least action of Christ. Here, then, is the Fountain of our life; there is no sin so great that Christ cannot cleanse; no weakness so inherent which He will not strengthen. Neither time nor distance can set bounds to those health-giving streams which flow from Him. (*Bishop Woodford.*) *Healing for the soul*:—I. Then, as it respects the soul of man, THERE IS A DISEASE WHICH IS COMMON TO US ALL; AND THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE SOUL AND BODY MUST HERE BE MANIFEST TO THE MOST SUPERFICIAL OBSERVER. In the great majority of instances, you need not inform even a child of the existence in any individual of bodily disease; for, however incompetent he may be to investigate the cause, he is perfectly familiar with the effect. Sometimes the morbid affection disfigures the countenance, sometimes it distorts the shape, sometimes it impedes the motion and paralyzes the limbs; in one it affects the utterance, in another it obscures the faculties of the mind, in a third it is betrayed at intervals by convulsive starts and spasms of sudden agony, in a fourth it antedates the halting step and wasted form of age ere yet the noon of life is past, and causes its victim to walk abroad amongst the living, impressed in their sight with the ghastly lineaments of death. And are not the effects, or symptoms, of the spiritual disease precisely similar? But here, again, an important feature in the analogy is presented to us, by the expedients which men employ, whether of business, or pleasure, or intemperance, or excess, in order to stifle thought. These things act upon the soul like opiates on the body; they mitigate the present suffering, but they aggravate the symptoms of the disease; they obscure the perception of danger, but they enhance and accelerate the danger itself. Under this head, moreover, we may learn another lesson, namely, that a knowledge of the disease is a prerequisite to the seeking of the remedy. They who brought to the Lord Jesus all that were diseased, laid the sick before Him in the streets; but neither would the sick have consented to be brought, had they not been conscious of the malady within, nor would their friends and kindred have brought them, had they not discerned the symptoms of it, as developed and exhibited without. II.

Such, then, being the disease, WHAT, IN THE NEXT PLACE, IS THE REMEDY? Now, there can be no reasonable doubt, that on the occasion to which my text refers, and on other similar occasions, many sad effects of human infirmity and suffering, not a few of them incurable, and acknowledged to be so, by all human skill, because inaccessible to all known remedies, were exhibited in the presence of the Lord. We must set ourselves in right earnest to apply to the throbbing festering conscience the balm of Christ's atonement, and to embody in the life the features of Christ's example. III. Since, then, THE REMEDY FOR OUR SPIRITUAL DISEASE IS JUST AS UNIVERSAL AS THE EXTENT OF IT—for "all that believe are justified freely" by God's grace—and since it is also unfailing in its efficacy, for "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin"; the narrative of the context is to teach us, next, the process of its application. In every case they did what they could; and we should at least learn, from their example, this lesson, that what we can do we are not to leave undone. IV. It only remains, then, that we complete our view of this most instructive and interesting analogy, by looking at THE RESULT OF THE APPLICATION OF SUCH A REMEDY—that remedy being the blood of Christ applied by the prayer of faith, or, if you will, the prayer against unbelief. What this will be, we may gather from the narration of either evangelist, which speaks of recovery at once universal and complete. "As many as touched Him," said St. Matthew, or rather, as the margin reads, "as many as touched it" (that is, the hem of the garment), "were made whole"; and as you have heard by St. Luke in the text, though there was a multitude around Him, "there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all." If the sick had not come, or had not been brought to Jesus, they would not have been healed; many blind were there in Israel, many lame, many palsied, many lepers, many demoniacs, many lunatics, who did not come, and therefore were not healed. But the amount of our individual responsibility depends upon the amount of our individual knowledge and of our individual opportunity; and if we know that all were healed who did come, or who were even brought, in faith, what greater encouragement and inducement can we desire for ourselves? (*T. Dale, M.A.*) *Christ healing bodily disease, emblematic of the Church's function*:—"The whole multitude sought to touch Him; for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all." 1. Familiar as this statement must be to us, there is something in it truly wonderful and most worthy of admiration—I mean, that there is in the gospel this universal power to adapt itself to man. It constitutes perhaps its most wonderful and distinctive feature. We shall search in vain in any other system for its resemblance. In many systems, more or less of human invention—in systems of philosophy, so called—we may find attempts to remedy some of the evils under which man labours; one applies itself to one kind, and another to another; but often the remedy for one is fatal to the other. But the gospel is a universal remedy. In a word, there is truly no form of evil which the gospel of Christ does not meet and rectify; no want which it does not supply; no real good which it does not impart. 2. And scarcely less remarkable is it to observe how it takes hold of all the natural forms of character, and turns them to due account; how it enlists on the side of what is good even the natural temperaments of men. The burning zeal of a Peter, the restless energy of a Paul, the fervour and impetuosity of a John and James—it takes them all, sanctifies them all, concentrates them all on one holy end. These, and such like human dispositions, left to their natural courses, would have branched off into various forms of evil. But lo! they are touched by God's Spirit from above, the gospel pours down upon them its sanctifying influences, turns the dross into gold, and makes what would have been natural imperfections (to say the least) to become noble features in the Christian character. Such, my brethren, is the power of the gospel; such is the virtue which goes out of Christ to heal. For if we inquire how the gospel possesses and exerts this influence, the reply assuredly is—By making Christ known to us. And here, too, the incident before us is strikingly emblematic. The thronging multitude were healed by touching Christ; and to us the gospel is made "the power of God unto salvation," simply by bringing us, so to speak, into spiritual contact with Christ. The power of His blessed sacraments consists in this: holy baptism uniting us to Christ and giving us spiritual life in Him—the holy Eucharist sustaining that life through the communion of the body and blood of Christ. And so the Word of the gospel is effectual to its appointed end by testifying of Christ. He is the centre and the source of all its blessings. 3. But now let us carry this emblematic style of our blessed Lord's teaching one step further. If we study the character of His ministry, there is no feature in it which we shall find more promi-

nent than this: that it bore on its very front the aspect of mercy, and this not only in respect to the salvation of the soul from sin and misery, but also in a compassionate care for the bodily necessities of men. And now, my brethren, let us consider the application of this matter to ourselves. It is the high and holy prerogative of the Church to be on earth the representative of her Divine Master. Her highest and most glorious function—nay, we may say her only function—is to carry on and perfect the work of mercy which He began; of spreading the knowledge of salvation through the world, and of blessing all who come within the influence of the Church's sphere. We all know, from the history of the Acts of the Apostles, how well the early Church sustained this blessed office; not only by working miracles while that power lasted, but also by her self-denying charity—by a common fund, abundantly supported by the liberality of the first Christians, for the relief of every want and of every woe, to which our fallen human nature is subject. Wherever the Church was planted, there a fountain of mercy and goodness was opened; there a tree was planted, "whose leaves were for the healing of the nations." It brought, indeed, richer mercies than the natural eye could see or the natural ear could hear—salvation for the immortal soul, deliverance from the bands of sin and death, and "the glorious liberty of the children of God"; but in its zeal for the salvation of the immortal soul, it did not overlook the transient sufferings of the perishing body. It did not wait until the blind eyes and the dull hearts could perceive and appreciate those higher blessings which it had to bestow; but it accompanied the Word of grace with acts of more ostensible mercy. (*W. Dodsworth, M.A.*) *Christ's healing power:*—Miracles, according to the records of Christ's life, were of most frequent occurrence, not occasional. They were the simple details of His life, coming as naturally from Him as acts of kindness from the benevolent heart or gifts from the charitable. It was thus He expressed His sympathy with the poor and suffering. In this way Christ showed His message of mercy to man, and revealed the nature of that redemption of the race which He began by living and dying for the world. In no other way could He so deeply have impressed the world with the distinctive character of His redeeming power. I. CHRIST'S POWER TO HEAL THE SOUL IS IN HIMSELF ALONE. It is not easy to understand this—that Christ, and Christ alone, is the source of all healing. We can understand that a doctrine received by the mind shall restore the mind to health; or that the heart may find rest in some object on which it shall place its affections; but that it is only from Christ that this healing power comes—why, it is hard to conceive. Men cannot apprehend the truth of God, even as Jesus reveals it, without Divine aid. The reason is strong, the will vigorous, the understanding clear; but there is need of the power of God's Spirit, and that can only come through our personal touching of Christ. Power goes forth from Him—as the soul receives the Holy Ghost. II. CHRIST'S POWER TO HEAL IS NOT EXERCISED INDISCRIMINATELY, BUT ONLY UPON THOSE WHO GO TO HIM. There are always many who see Him, and yet do not know Him, and are not healed by Him? Why? Because they do not seek to touch Him. You must go to Him, not trust a mother's prayers—you must go yourself. Observe here, too, that the touch was effectual; touch His body and bodily disease was cured, because it was the touch of faith. Not the accidental touch, but the touch on purpose; not the touch which may be put forth out of curiosity, nor to escape the evil consequences of your sin; but the touch of the soul that wants to be healed. III. CHRIST'S POWER IS EXERCISED TO HEAL ALL WHO TOUCH HIM. None were disappointed. None were too ill, too diseased. There was no asking, "How came you in this state? Your own faults," &c. (*H. W. Butcher.*) *The philanthropy of Christianity:*—The power which Jesus Christ exercised over physical disease was a guarantee that as long as He lived He would be surrounded by great multitudes of people. Those who would never go to Him for spiritual gifts would be sure to find Him in the time of physical pain and fear. It is thus that, even now, God binds the human race to Himself. They hunger and thirst; they are in sorrow and great distress; times of impoverishment and desolation overtake them; and under such circumstances the better nature rises and yearns for protection and comfort. The Church should create for itself a large sphere of practical service, because there are many who cannot understand the metaphysics of Christianity who may be touched by its philanthropy. Jesus Christ's plan was to take hold of human nature as it chose to present itself to his attention; hence we find him not only speaking essential truths to Nicodemus, but attending to the bodily necessities of those who had no understanding whatever of the spiritual kingdom which He came to establish. (*Dr. Parker.*)

Ver. 20. **Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.**—*Blessedness rather than happiness, the want of man:*—It is not merely happiness, whatever our shallow moralists may say, that is "the aim and end of our being." Happiness implies merely the undisturbed enjoyment of the man. It may belong to the child, or to the selfish votary of the world. It may be spoken of the miser's gold, or of the successful prizes of ambition, or of the gilded baubles of social folly. There is no moral meaning in it. But it is blessedness that alone can satisfy the mind and heart, which are living for another end than self; blessedness, which has no hap in it, no chance, no merely outward success. (*E. A. Washburn, D.D.*) *The spirit of gospel morality:*—The whole spirit of the gospel of Christ is in these beatitudes. It is at once a religion and a morality. It teaches us the essence of all Christian truth, which is in that real love of God, that is manifest in love of men, and holiness. Yet it is a Divine, a perfect morality. No other faith ever revealed itself in such personal teaching, in such living beauty, not of word, but of character. The Divine humanity of Christ and His religion stands forth here in this code, human yet more than man. If I were to put into language the morality of mankind, I should write the very opposite catalogue of beatitudes: Blessed are the rich. Blessed they who do not mourn. Blessed are the high-minded. Blessed they who hunger and thirst after the selfish gain. Blessed they who need no mercy. Blessed the cunning and cold of heart. Blessed they who win the battle of life. Blessed they who are prudent enough to escape persecution. It is this very excellence which always makes it appear to the mass of selfish men an unreal thing. Take any of those rules, and try for an hour to follow them out in practice, and the end would be that the Christian would be the laughing-stock of the crowd. And what is the inference? Why, the Author and Founder of this kingdom was probably one of the pure-hearted ideal enthusiasts of His time: His religion succeeded doubtless awhile, while it was the faith of a few poor devotees. But in proportion as it entered into the world, it lost of necessity this moral severity; and the Christianity of the Church and the world is little more than a civilized heathenism. We may admire much in the New Testament that is pure and beautiful. But we cannot call its morality a basis in any sense of human conduct, a Divine or authoritative standard for mankind. Such is the argument. And there is much that is plausible in it. It falls in with doubts that sometimes naturally rise in us as we read the gospel. It needs careful thought. For, if it be really so, it is plain that the gospel is no longer a standard of action, and cannot be Divine. Now, I would endeavour so to meet it as to set at rest such doubts, and to convince you that your religion is no gospel of dreamers, but a real, a practical morality for the man and the State. 1. I shall begin by granting freely everything that is fairly said of the Divine, absolute, ideal purity of Christ's morality. Nay, I shall claim it as its noblest character. He sets before us the highest ideal of personal conduct. And I maintain that there is no domain, where the mind and will of man are employed, which does not recognize and demand such an ideal. It is so in science. It is only as the man, who holds up before him always the noblest standard of knowledge, a perfection beyond what any has reached, who never acknowledges a limit to his growth—it is he who reaches a stature above the crowd. It is so in art. A Thorwaldsen works in the clay model, conscious that in his mind there is an ideal which guides his fingers as he slowly sees the clay take shape. It is so in social order. And is it not true, is it not far truer, of the moral law of life? There must be, not for the monk in his cell, not for the dreamy recluse, but for the man in his daily sphere, an ideal above the common standard of the world in which he lives. If I shoot my arrow at the mark, I aim above it; and why? Because the necessary power of gravitation will carry it to a degree below the straight line; only the higher aim can guide it aright. If I will reach the bank, I steer above it, because the tide draws the boat downward, and my course is made of the two forces. But this law of physics is as much verified in morals. There are in the atmosphere of the world, in our own weakness, and the weight of selfish passion around us, forces that always drag down the will, the affections, below even the mark of attainable goodness. If there be no nobler aim than the common law of society, the outward fear of justice, the rule of a selfish prudence, it will make us but an inferior character. And thus the religion of Christ gives us the ideal and perfect standard. It plants it in the motive. It claims the pure desire of an unselfish heart. It proves that its truth is Divine, because it does not compromise with our false passions, with our earthly appetites, with our worldly dissimulations. 2. This ideal morality is not unreal, but more real, from this very character. It has entered

into every human calling. It has inspired every class of mankind. It has taught the lowliest labourer honest thrift. It has taught, too, the highest humility. It has purified the vices of trade. It has nourished domestic love. It has no less presided over the councils of State than over the private heart. It alone has inspired the enthusiasm of humanity. Even in its extravagances, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been the source of all that is heroic, beautiful, pure, Divine, in mankind. Yet it is no less real. If its tides thus reach by such high water-marks the superhuman power it may at times attain, it is no less in its ordinary flow we are to reckon the breadth of its channel. 3. And thus I reach its noblest witness, in the life of society. Am I told by the sceptic that it is this powerless ideal, this gospel of the anchorite, this lofty yet fruitless morality of a faded age? Bear witness for me, this miracle, grander than all of the New Testament, of Christendom itself. (*Ibid.*) *The upward tendency of gospel morality* :—We are often told that the tendency of religious teaching is to make men indifferent to social improvement; to urge the poor to submit to false distinctions; to flatter the rich into the idea that they can keep their wealth, if they are charitable in alms. This is not the gospel. There is not a sentiment more contradictory to it. Not a cause of justice, of wise reform, not a true channel of social good it does not enforce; not a false barrier of caste it does not frown upon. It tells the wealthy that he is God's steward; it tells the poor he is to labour in every honest calling, yet to remember that his aim is the wealth of a pure conscience and a holy life. It makes all men one in the spirit of unselfish equality. It is our disposition, not our position, which makes the real difference between man and man in the standard of the gospel morality. It is the Christian principle of social union. Who has the Christian intellect? It is he who pursues knowledge in the desire, not of personal reputation, but of a truth that shall make the world wiser and happier for his toil; and in that poverty of spirit, whether it be a Kepler studying the stars, or a Raphael painting his Madonna, or a Hooker expounding the laws of his Church, it is a sacred calling. Who is the great man in Christ's definition? He who, if God hath made him a ruler in the State, rules in His fear, and loves justice and mercy more than his ambition. It is so in every calling. We may pursue our trade or profession for the noble end of a Christian life, or for money-getting and its rivalries. It is here we want our religion. (*Ibid.*) *Relation of this discourse to the Sermon on the Mount* :—Men have doubted whether the discourse in Matt. v.–vii. is to be regarded as an ampler account of that which begins with this verse. Many passages occur in both. The general scope and purport is the same. Yet, as St. Matthew says expressly that Jesus spake sitting, on the mountain, and St. Luke that He spake standing, and in the plain, it seems not very unnatural to suppose that the one (that given by St. Matthew) was a discourse delivered, as it were, to the inner circle of His disciples, apart from the crowd of outside hearers; the other (that preserved by St. Luke), a briefer and more popular rehearsal of the chief topics of the former, addressed, immediately afterwards, on descending from the hill-top, to the promiscuous multitude. And the formation of the hill which tradition has marked as the Mount of the Beatitudes lends itself naturally to this supposition. For modern travellers have marked, upon its eastern summit, a little circular plain exactly suited for the gathering of a smaller and more select audience; and again, on the lower ridge, between that eastern and another western horn of the same mountain, a larger space, flattened also to a plain, corresponding, it would seem, with singular exactness to the scene described by St. Luke, and to the presence of that larger concourse to which the second and briefer discourse is thus conceived to have been addressed. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *A description of a poor-spirited man* :—But now, I say, suppose God hath given grace, yet still there is a great deal of poverty. 1. As, in the first place, That grace thou hast, it hath need of continual supply. There is no Christian can live upon the grace he hath without new supply. God will not trust thee with the stock of grace; it is not in thy hand, but in the hand of Christ: and this is the condition of the strongest godly man in the world; he must go daily and continually to Christ to fetch new supply, or he cannot subsist. And this is the poor condition that we are in— this spiritual poverty even of the saints. 2. The poverty of the saints consists in this: the graces that they have are but small. Thy grace is like a little spark wrapped up in a heap of embers, so that the maid is raking a good while before she can see it. Surely thou art but poor, then. 3. Even those that are godly, they are very poor, for they are always needy. We use to say of a man or woman that is always in want, and always complaining, Surely they are poor people. 4. Their services are very poor services that they do perform.

5. Again, poor are the very saints, the godly, for little temptations doth overcome them; at least, unsettle them and put them out of frame. 6. Poor they are, further, for they have but little ability to help others. (*J. Burroughs.*) *Poverty of spirit helpful to prayer:*—Men that are men of estates, and rich men, when they come to a door for business, if so be that they cannot have presently what they desire, away they will go; they will not stand waiting. Why? Because they are rich, and so proud in a suitable way to their riches. But now, one that is poor, and come for an alms, is content to wait, especially if he knows that there is no other door for him to go to at that time; if, indeed, he thinks he may have it at some other door, he will not wait, but if he comes for an alms, and he must have it here or nowhere, he is content then to wait. So those that are truly poor in spirit, they are content to wait at God's gates, knowing that there is no other door that they can have their alms only at the gates of God. (*Ibid.*) *The reason why God regards poverty of spirit:*—1. The great reason why the Lord hath such regard unto such, it is because this disposition doth best serve the great design that God hath of glorifying Himself in the world, namely, the lifting up of His free grace. God would have His glory from the children of men. But what glory? The lifting up of free grace, that is the glory that God would have above all other. God would have the glory of His power, the glory of His wisdom, the glory of His bounty, of His patience; aye, but that is not the glory that God doth look at most; but that He might magnify His free grace in His Son, that is the glory that God doth most delight in. Now, of all dispositions in the world, this disposition of poverty of spirit is that that serves God's end and God's design best; and therefore no marvel though God doth so much accept of it. 2. Such a disposition makes the soul to be conformable even unto Jesus Christ. Now, when Christ shall see a spirit that hath a conformity to His, Christ looks upon it and saith, "Here is one that is conformable to My Spirit. I was willing to be poor; and so is such a one. I was willing to empty Myself, and to be anything for the furtherance of the glory of My Father; and so do I see here such a poor creature that is willing to empty itself of anything that it hath, and is willing to give up itself for the glory of My Father and Me. Oh, blessed are these poor!" (*Ibid.*) *Promises to the poor in spirit:*—1. The first is this, that God loves to honour those that are willing to debase themselves. 2. That blessedness doth not consist in any worldly thing—"Blessed are the poor." There in nothing in this world can make them blessed; it *is* the kingdom of heaven that must make them blessed. If you would be happy, you must look beyond the world. 3. In that it is said in the present tense, theirs is the kingdom of heaven. From whence the note is this, that the saints of God live not only upon comforts that they shall have hereafter, upon the assurance of what they shall have, but upon present comforts. They have enough for the present to uphold their hearts, in all their poor and mean condition in which they are in respect of the world. 4. That heaven is now to the saints. There is comfort indeed! There is certainly no man or woman upon the earth shall ever go to heaven but such as hath heaven come down to them. First: To open to you what is the meaning of this; what doth Christ mean by the kingdom of heaven? And then, secondly, to apply the kingdom of heaven to such as are poor in spirit. I. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. There is the kingdom of God's power whereby He rules over the world; and then there is the kingdom that He hath given to His Son the Mediator. It is the second kingdom that is here meant. When God had made this world, He Himself reigned over it, and was the King of it. But the world that He made was spoiled with sin, and so God could not have that glory from the world that He made it for. Therefore, the Lord He was pleased to erect a new world, another spiritual, heavenly world, to glorify Himself in in another manner, more spiritual and heavenly than in the former world; and He makes His Son to be the King of that spiritual world—that new world which the Scripture speaks of when it saith, "All old things are done away, and all things are become new"—which new world is begun in the work of grace in the hearts of the saints, and so carried on till it comes to eternal glory. Jesus Christ, He is the King of that world. Why is it called the kingdom of heaven? 1. It is called the kingdom of heaven because Christ is from heaven, who is the King thereof. 2. In distinction and opposition from or unto the kingdoms of the world. 3. Because that Christ His seat is now at the present in heaven. 4. Because that the way of His government it is spiritual and heavenly, not in an outward way. 5. Because it will certainly bring both soul and body to heaven at last. There is infinite blessedness in this kingdom of heaven. 1. For it is Christ the Mediator that gives the laws. But in this kingdom of heaven, that is a blessedness that thou

hast a law from Him that loves thee more than His life; He was willing to lay down His life for thee that gives thee thy law. 2. The second thing in the blessedness of this kingdom of heaven is this, that Jesus Christ He now rules in the hearts of His saints, by His word and Spirit, a great deal more fully than He did in the times of the law, or in any way can be conceived. 3. All transactions between God and them are in this kingdom, and not to go out of this kingdom. So now, wert thou in the kingdom of God's power, as He is Creator of heaven and earth, and so rules the world, certainly any offence of thine would be eternal death to thee; and it is so with all those men and women that are, I say, only under the kingdom of God's power—that is, they are God's creatures, and God is their Creator, and so they have to deal with God as under the kingdom of His power; if they offend as creatures, God in that kingdom deals in a way of exact justice, so as to punish with death upon every offence. But now a believer brought into another kingdom, the kingdom of the Messiah, there he comes to have other privileges; so that when a believer offends he doth not go to answer in that court of His—to wit, the kingdom of His power—but he is to answer before the court of Jesus Christ, and Christ is to be the judge, and Christ He is to deal with them in that administration of His that He hath received from the Father, and so comes a believer to stand with comfort before God, notwithstanding all his offences and weaknesses, for the transaction is between God and Him within this kingdom, and not without it. 4. And then, further, from hence thou hast protection. Though thou beest poor and mean in thyself, thou hast Jesus Christ the Son of God that undertakes to protect thee, to deliver thee from evil, and to supply thee in all thy wants; that is the work of a king. 5. In this kingdom Christ undertakes to subdue all the enemies that are against thy spiritual and eternal good. 6. He, as a king, gives ordinances and gifts and administrations. All the ordinances, gifts, and administrations of the Church, they are given by Jesus Christ as the King of it, and thou that art poor in spirit, thou has right to them. 7. All the world is brought into subjection to this kingdom. 8. For this will bring thee at length to reign with Christ. (*Ibid.*) *Comfort to the poor in spirit*:—1. Consider He that is the King of this kingdom of heaven, He was poor Himself; your King was poor. 2. Consider this, Christ's poverty it was to sanctify your poverty. 3. This kingdom of heaven, it is so ordered out for the most part, that the poor in the world are the subjects of this kingdom. 4. The Lord hath so ordered things that the great transactions of this kingdom of heaven—that hath been opened unto you—hath been carried on by those that are mean and poor, not by the great ones of the world. 5. Hence follows, therefore, in the fifth place, that poverty it is no hindrance to the highest degree in this kingdom of heaven. Indeed, poverty it is a hindrance to degrees in the honours of a worldly kingdom. 6. Even those that are outwardly poor, if godly, they have right to all things in this world so far as may be good for them. It is said of Abraham (Rom. iv. 13) that he was "the heir of the world." 7. In this kingdom are spiritual riches that may countervail to the full, and are infinitely good beyond all outward riches. 8. And then from all these follows, that hence the great temptations that those that are poor people are troubled withal may from the consideration of the blessing of the kingdom be taken away. What are they? 1. As, first, I am afraid that God goes out against me, and doth not bless me in anything that I go about; and so they are afraid, and under great bondage. 2. The second is, I am in a poor condition, and therefore despised. 3. And then a third temptation is, they are useless in the world. Nay, this text will answer this temptation, Thine is the kingdom. (*Ibid.*) *Our Lord's first text*:—A fitting text for Christ's first sermon, for He came to this earth to bless. His life was a life of blessing; His one thought how He might bless others, make others happy. He died to bless, and His arms outstretched on the cross, His hands wide open, told how He yearned to bless to the last. He rose to bless, and with words of blessing He greeted those who mourned Him as dead. And when He ascended, He was still true to the work of His life, for the last His disciples saw of Him as He disappeared, were His hands outstretched in blessing. And still He lives to bless; on high He ever liveth to make intercession for souls; here on earth He draws nigh to bless in every Sacrament, in every act of worship, in each meditation, in each sermon, in each hour of prayer, always present by His Spirit to bless. I. HAPPINESS WAS THE END FOR WHICH MAN WAS CREATED. God's intention for man was a life of beatitude. From God there came to him nothing but blessing. That the curse took the place of the blessing, misery of happiness, was not God's work, but man's, in abusing the power of free-will. But God would not leave man in his self-wrought misery. And so Jesus

came to take away the curse of sin, and to bless mankind. II. THIS BLESSEDNESS CAN ONLY BE OURS ON CERTAIN CONDITIONS. 1. It is a blessedness to be found in God alone. To reach it, we must climb. Above the city of Edinburgh there is a great rock, overhanging it like a crouching lion. It is a dim, misty, foggy day, such as sometimes envelopes even the modern Athens of the North. We leave the busy streets, go out of the town, and find ourselves on the path which leads up the side of Arthur's seat. We have hardly taken a few steps ere we feel the mist is thinner, and we breathe more easily. Still we climb on, for the top is far above us; we can see it through the fog above us standing out sharp and clear against the sky. Still we climb, and the air becomes at every step more keen and bracing, and our lungs drink it in more freely, until at last we stand on the summit in the brightness of God's sunshine, while at our feet lies the city buried in the mist. Cannot you read the parable? We are always seeking for happiness; we cannot help it. It is a craving of our being as irresistible as that of hunger or thirst. It will not be crushed out or destroyed. And there are times when we think we have attained to it, and we laugh and sing as we stand in the sunshine. But it is short-lived. The mist creeps over us again, we shiver as we feel its cold dampness, and we murmur and complain in our disappointment. What is wrong? Ah! we have forgotten to climb. We have thought to find what we want on earth, apart from God, and we have failed, as thousands of souls have failed before us. 2. Jesus tells us this blessedness may be ours now. He speaks of the beatitudes in the present tense. Some people will tell us that the innocent joys of earth, the pure affections of home, the pleasures of the intellect, the beauties of nature or art, are only as the fading tints of the sunset, or the falling golden autumn leaves. Ah! but they forget that there is a Power which will fix these fleeting colours, permanize these passing joys. Use them as God intends, as guide-posts to Himself. 3. But Jesus tells us this blessedness is hereafter too. If He speaks in the present tense, He speaks still more in the future. Yes, it must be so, for true blessedness is in God, in God known and realized; and here we see through a glass darkly, here we know only in part; it is yonder that in a fuller knowledge of God we shall find a fuller blessedness. 4. Blessedness can never be selfish. No one can be happy save as he seeks to share his happiness with others. 5. There are degrees of blessedness. It is a mountain which we have to climb. (*C. J. Ridgeway, M.A.*) *True happiness*:—Beatitude is the perfect being of every creature. It is that condition in which there remains nothing to be desired, nothing to be obtained. I. MAN WAS MADE EXPRESSLY FOR THIS PERFECT BEATITUDE. It is because he was created for it, that his whole life is spent in the pursuit of it. The human soul must strain after happiness, it cannot help doing so, for happiness is its necessary object. It seeks it with the energy with which the stone detached from the mountain rolls to its foot, drawn by gravitation. Not only so, but the sinner himself, in all his errors, seeks happiness. He is mistaken in the place where he seeks, but it is happiness which he seeks; and when he find out that he has not obtained that which he desired, he falls back into disgust, and gropes for it elsewhere. The traveller in the desert rushes forward when he sees the mirage, thinking it water, and plunges among sand-hills; he is mistaken in looking for water there, but it is a true thirst which has impelled him towards the spot. II. EVERYTHING THAT IS GOOD AND BEAUTIFUL IN THIS WORLD IS GOOD AND BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE IT DERIVES ITS GOOD AND BEAUTY FROM GOD. Riches, pleasure, gaiety, &c., are not evil in themselves, but only when sought as final ends, without thought of God. When they are sought as sources of happiness, and not as reflections of the perfections which are in God, then they are evil. The creatures which God made are good, but if we content ourselves with loving and devoting ourselves to the creatures, we are falling away from the Creator. A great bishop and doctor of the Church (Bellarmine) wrote a very lovely book, called "The Ascent of the Mind by the Ladder of the Creature to God." The creatures of God are guide-posts to God, not goals to which we are to run, and at which we are to lie down to rest. III. PERFECT HAPPINESS OR BEATITUDE IS ONLY TO BE FOUND IN GOD. All secondary good things are imperfect because they are created, and for the same reason they are not imperishable. The soul must have that which is perfect and enduring. What is perfect and enduring is in God alone. (*S. Baring-Gould, M.A.*) *Christ's standard and the world's*:—How thoroughly Christ's conception of blessedness contradicts the popular estimate of happiness. This Preacher seems studiously to reverse the world's judgment. He frames His words so as to fly in the face of public opinion and the consent of men. This startling contradiction

between Christ and the world rests on a radical difference in their way of looking at human life. They do not mean quite the same thing with their beatitudes. It is of condition the world is thinking; Christ of character. When society claps hands to the cry, "Oh, Felix!" "Oh, lucky fellow!" "Oh, rare success!" it is the fortunate circumstances of a man's lot of which society is thinking. It is the blessedness of having a great deal of money, of being always comfortable, of being environed with what may minister to pleasure, and able always to command what one desires—it is this blessedness of condition which society crowns with its beatitudes, and to which men pay the tribute of enjoying it. Alas for this blessedness, which is outside the man; the blessedness of circumstance, and accident, and transient condition; the blessedness which Time's scythe mows down like grass to be cast into the oven! Not condition does Jesus bless, but character. The happy man is the good man. Not what a man *has*, but what he *is*, is the ground of his blessedness. (*J. Oswald Dykes, D.D.*) *God's grace is the source of blessedness*:—The ground of blessedness is not made by our Lord to rest in the possession of character itself, but in that promised grace of God of which character is the condition. Some of the qualities here (Matt. v.) called blessed might seem even to us to be their own reward. We can understand how it should be a blessed thing to be merciful, or pure, or pacific, though no promise were attached to these states of heart at all. With others it is not so. It is not in itself a good thing to be poor, or to mourn, or to hunger; but for us it becomes good, because otherwise we cannot be enriched, or comforted, or filled. Here the blessing is plainly not in the state of heart, but in that appropriate Divine gift which meets and answers such a state of heart. In every case, therefore, there is a deeper Divine reason for the blessedness, which Christ's eye sees, where man's sees none. The sum of all the blessings which are here dropped along the course of a Christian's life, or rather, that comprehensive blessing which opens out as a man needs it into many forms: which becomes to the mourner comfort, to the meek inheritance, food to the hungry, and mercy to the merciful; which gives to the pure-hearted the vision of God, and adoption to the peace-makers: this inclusive formula of beatitude is "the kingdom of heaven." (*Ibid.*) *The distinctively Christian character of the beatitudes*:—The beatitudes may be truly regarded as an exposition of morality purely Christian; and in attempting to make some examination of them, we are to consider ourselves as being under the full light of Christian truth and grace, not dealing with abstract or general morality, but with that which belongs to God's saints in the Church of Christ, and is only possible to them—and to them possible only by the help of that Holy Spirit of whose blessed influence the saints are permitted to drink in the Church. (*Bishop Moberly.*) *Passive virtues first*:—Mark how Jesus puts passive virtues in the foremost place. We can easily understand why He does this. 1. They are the foundations on which alone the superstructure of the active virtues can be built. 2. They are out of sight, and therefore are easily overlooked, their importance forgotten. 3. They were little thought of in the days when Jesus lived on this earth. (*C. J. Ridgeway, M.A.*) *St. Luke's version of the Beatitudes*:—In Luke's version of the Beatitudes they seem to refer to literal poverty, hunger, and sorrow. If the question be asked which of the two forms is the most original, our judgment inclines to that of Luke. Speaking generally, the more pregnant, kernel-like form of any saying of Jesus is always the more likely to have been that actually used by Him. Then the very breadth of the announcements in Luke is in favour of their being the authentic utterances of Jesus. It is intrinsically credible that He had something in His doctrine of happiness for the many, for the million; some such words as Luke puts into His mouth. The poor in spirit, the mourners for sin, the hungerers for righteousness, are a very select band; only a few of them were likely to be found in any crowd that heard Jesus preach. But the poor, the hungry, the sad, are always a large company; probably they embraced nine-tenths of the audience to which the Sermon on the Mount was spoken. Had He nothing to say to them; to catch their ears, and to awaken hopes in their heavy-laden hearts? Who can believe it that remembers that in His message to John Jesus Himself described His gospel as one specially addressed to the poor? We may, therefore, confidently assume that the Preacher on the Mount began His discourse by uttering words of good cheer to those present, to whom the epithets poor, hungry, sad, were applicable, saying, in effect, to such, "Blessed are ye whom the world counts wretched." It was a strange, startling saying, which might need much exposition to evince its truth and reasonableness,

but it was good to begin with; good to fix attention, provoke thought, and awaken hope. Proceeding now to consider the import of these surprising declarations, we understand—1. That our Lord did not mean to pronounce the poor, hungry, and weeping "blessed," simply in virtue of their poverty, hunger, and tears. 2. The connection between these classes and the kingdom of heaven and its blessings is not quite so immediate. Yet Christ was not mocking His hearers with idle words. He spoke gravely, sincerely, having weighty truths in His mind, every one of which much concerned the children of want and sorrow to know. One of these, the most immediately obvious, was that the classes addressed were in His heart, that He cared for them, sympathized with them, desired their well-being; in a word, that He was the poor man's Friend. This at least is implied in the opening sentence of the sermon, "Blessed are ye poor." The mere fact that this was the opening sentence was most significant. 3. But Jesus meant to say more than this to the poor and sorrowful; more than, "I feel for you"; or, "The bliss of the kingdom is possible for you." He meant to say this further; "Just because ye are poor, and hungry, and sad, the kingdom of heaven is *nearer* to you than to others." (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *Christ's paradoxical teaching*:—He who taught in parables taught also in paradoxes. His thoughts are not our thoughts. It is as though He had said, Happy are the unhappy, honourable the disbonoured, great the little, and rich the poor. Well, we must follow Him. We must learn His language, we must judge His judgment, if we would ever rejoice in His salvation. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The title to the kingdom*:—Surely this first opening of His mouth in systematic teaching was at once a gospel. The more we are poor, the more we are rich! O blessed and life-giving announcement to the sorrowful and self-despairing! Your sense of poverty is the very title-deed of your kingdom. (*Ibid.*) *The possession of the kingdom*:—The kingdom is theirs. Theirs already, by a right all their own. In this life they possess it. For they, alone of all men, live their citizenship. They know that without their King they are beggars; without their franchise they are outlaws; without their home above, they are houseless and shelterless and comfortless exiles. Whatever others can do, they cannot do without their kingdom. They declare plainly, at each step of life's journey, that they are seeking a country. And therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city. And as they get nearer to its golden gates, and have nothing between it and them but that narrow stream of death which a Saviour once crossed for them, it may well be that the ownership of which the text speaks becomes at last scarcely more a faith than a sight; they can catch the very sounds of the heavenly song, and discern the bright forms of those who were once faithful unto death, and now follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. (*Ibid.*) *The kingdom for the poor*:—The kingdom of God comes down to meet the sinner as low as is at all possible; asks the very least; takes us up just where sin and the law left us, stripped and wounded; and at the outset, when a man is at his poorest, it enriches him with its royal riches. Are you only "poor"? There is no question yet about what some human teachers are ready enough to put foremost, express or vehement mourning for sin. The seed of that, indeed, is in poverty of spirit. But anxious souls often impede their own coming to Christ, by exacting of themselves a certain keenness of feeling, so much heaviness of heart, or so many tears. Be content. Mourning will come soon enough in the order of Jesus. It is not our poverty by itself, but God's grace to us in our poverty, which makes sorrow flow. Jesus asks not for tears before He will bless; He asks only poverty. If you are so poor in grace that you cannot mourn, cannot hope or hunger as you would, can hardly pray, can only stand in dumb, desolate spiritual want before God, then you are poor enough. Poor enough to bring nothing but empty hands to God, and an empty heart; poor enough to take the heavenly kingdom as a gift from the most rich and bountiful Lord of it; poor enough to have a simple accepting faith when He says, "It is yours!" (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *Poverty runs through every act of spiritual citizenship*:—Poverty of spirit runs through every act of citizenship; it is the secret of its beginning, continuance, and final fruition. It is the secret of entrance into the kingdom, for it is the very essence of baptism. We bring the infant to be baptized because it is nothing, has nothing, can do nothing, and therefore we ask God, of His great mercy, to make the child an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. It is the secret of perseverance, for poverty of spirit is the only fitness for the right use of every means of grace. In confirmation, he who comes urges this as his plea, "I am weak, strengthen me by Thy Spirit, O my Father." In holy communion the communicants pray, "We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under

Thy table." In prayer our very posture reminds us that we are suppliants at the throne of grace. In every effort after holiness the Master's words are ever sounding in our ears, "Without Me ye can do nothing." In every work of love we can only hope it will be accepted with the words, "She hath done what she could." In every almsgiving we must say with David, "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee." And in final blessedness the attitude of the redeemed tells us that poverty of spirit belongs to the subjects of the heavenly kingdom, for see, they fall on their faces and cast their crowns at the feet of Him who sitteth upon the throne; and this is the song they sing, "Thou art worthy," &c. (Rev. iv. 11). (*C. J. Ridgeway, M.A.*) *How poverty of spirit may be attained*:—We cannot attain humility by directly striving to become so; it must be caught by guile, not taken by storm. It can be ours only by the power of faith. What is faith? It is the eye of spiritual sight by means of which we see God. This is what we need, is it not? We make a false estimate of life; we miscalculate ourselves and what we are; we weigh with false scales what we have; we measure with an imperfect standard what we do; we go on our way deceived as to the true value of all around us by the mists of the valley through which we are journeying; we neglect to climb, to try to get into the clearer atmosphere where God is; nay, we forget God, we leave Him out of our lives, we neglect to give Him His rightful claim; even in our acts of worship He is sometimes absent from our thoughts. And so it must be with us to the end of life, unless by God's help we attain to the spirit of recollectedness of God's presence, in the power of which David sang, "I have set God always before me; for He is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall." . . . Remember, this faith is ours already. It is God's gift to each one of us in our baptism. But it needs to be exercised, developed, trained by use; left alone it will grow weak until it dies. (*Ibid.*) *Poverty favourable to piety in early times*:—The word "poor" admits of different degrees of extent. Being here opposed to the word "rich" in ver. 24, it probably includes vaguely all who are not usually called rich. It will naturally be asked, How can such persons be declared blessed, or happy, or fortunate? Can any happiness arise from mere indigence? No, certainly, if we mean by happiness present feelings of pleasure. But might there not be circumstances attending indigence which might lead to beneficial consequences, or future happiness? That this is the meaning of our Saviour is evident from what is added: "For the kingdom of God is theirs." What, then, are we to understand by this? All that we can conclude is, merely that there were certain circumstances in the condition of the poor that would dispose them to receive the invitation of Christ more willingly than the rich. A rich man would not be inclined to make those sacrifices, and to expose himself to those sufferings to which all Christians, during the first ages, were liable. On the other hand, it was comparatively easy for a poor man to become a Christian; for he could lose little in this world, and would gain much in the world to come. (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *Our Lord's love of poverty*:—Let us see how Jesus by His example and word teaches the love of poverty, and wherein that poverty consists which He loves so tenderly. I. HIS EXAMPLE. No one of us has chosen the circumstances of his birth. One is born in a poor hut, another in a magnificent palace. Our Saviour, being God as well as man, could have surrounded His human nature with a splendour surpassing human powers of conception. He who so clothes the lilies of the field that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed as one of them, could have clad His human body in a beauty far transcending that of all the lilies and flowers upon earth. He who created the precious stones and the glittering gold in the veins of the earth, and who gives the sun and the stars their splendour, could have built for Himself a palace, compared with which all palaces of men were mere hovels. But more than the beauty of flowers, more than the gorgeous glitter of diamonds and gold, more than the magnificence of palaces, more than the splendour of the sun, He loved poverty. He would be born as the bride of poverty, and the brother of the poor in spirit. In poverty came the Expected of nations into the world; in poverty He lived all His lifetime; in poverty He died on the cross. His whole life teaches us His love of poverty. II. HIS WORD. As Jesus commenced His earthly life with poverty, so His first doctrine preached in His Sermon on the Mount was, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," thus intimating that, unless we be poor in spirit, we are not even able to understand His doctrine. He also pointed out to His disciples in the strongest terms the danger of worldly wealth. III. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN POVERTY. Now the question arises, Wherein does the poverty, without which we cannot be saved, properly consist?

We distinguish four classes of men. 1. The first class comprises those who have both riches and the love of them. These men are, in most cases, avaricious also. Men of this description are the farthest from Jesus Christ. 2. The second class comprises those who are enamoured with worldly goods, which, nevertheless, they do not possess; those who live in want, but vehemently, and with disquietude, long for the riches of which they are destitute. These men are in a worse condition than those who belong to the former class, for they have only the torment of an ungratified desire. 3. The third class comprises those who, although endowed with worldly wealth, preserve, nevertheless, poverty of spirit; who abound in temporal goods, but make good use of them, and are free from a lasting, vehement, and disquieting attachment to their possessions. 4. The fourth class comprises those who to temporal poverty unite poverty in spirit. Oh! that the poor would recognize how priceless a treasure is hidden in their poverty, if they be content with their condition, and joyfully embrace poverty for the sake of Christ. The world having neither joys nor consolations for those who are poor, doubly unhappy are they who forfeit the blessing belonging to poverty, by discontent and injustice. Christ repudiates them for their wickedness; the world for their poverty. (*Bishop Ketteler.*) *Music chiefly the inheritance of the poor:*—It is a curious fact that nearly all the great music of the world has been produced in humble life, and has been developed amid the environments of poverty and in the stern struggle for existence. The aristocracy has contributed very little to music, and that little can be spared without detriment. The enduring music has been the child of poverty, the outcome of sorrow, the apotheosis of suffering. Sebastian Bach was the son of a hireling musician. Beethoven's father was a dissipated singer. Cherubini came from the lowest and poorest ranks of life. Gluck was a forester's son. Lulli, in his childhood, was a page, and slept in palace kitchens. Haydn's father was a wheelwright, and his mother, previous to marriage, was a cook in the kitchen of Count Harrach. Mozart's father was a musician in humble circumstances, and his grandfather a bookbinder. Handel was the son of a barber and surgeon. Meluel was the son of a cook. Rossini's father was a miserable strolling horn-player. Schubert was the son of a poor schoolmaster. Cimarosa's father was a mason, and his mother a washerwoman. Schumann was a bookseller's son, and Verdi the son of a Lombardian peasant. Weber's father was a strolling actor and musician. Among all the prominent composers, but three were born in affluence—Auber, Meyerbeer, and Mendelssohn. *Joy the inheritance of the poor:*—The sunniest hearts I have ever found in my pastoral rounds have often been lodged in houses so poverty-stricken and obscure that even the tax-collector never found them. They were people who had very little of this world, but a great deal of the next. They took short views of this life; but long ones of the life to come. Living pretty much from "hand to mouth," they learn to trust God a great deal more than their prosperous brethren, who secretly trust—their own bank-accounts and government bonds. The happiest heart I encounter in Brooklyn belongs to an aged cripple, who lives on charity in a fourth storey. She is old and poor, and without relatives, and lost even the power of speech twenty years ago! By dint of hard effort she can make a few words intelligible. But I never saw that withered face distorted by a frown; and a few Sabbaths since, when she was carried in to the communion-table, I looked down from the pulpit into that old saint's countenance, and it "shone like the face of an angel." She lives every day on the sunny side of Providence, and feeds hungrily on the promises. Jesus knows where she lives. He "ofttimes resorts thither." She is one of His hidden ones. That old disciple will not have far to go when the summons comes from her Father's house. She lives near the gates now, and catches the odours and the music of that "marriage supper" for which she has her wedding garment on. Would to God that some of the sour-spirited, morose, and melancholy Christians of our acquaintance could drop in to that old woman's garret occasionally, and borrow a vial of her sunshine! (*Dr. Cuyler.*)

Ver. 21. **Blessed are ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled.**—*Hunger and thirst:*—Consider how much is conveyed in this figure. 1. Hunger and thirst are real things. We need no argument to prove this; we have all felt them for ourselves, even though it may have been in a very slight degree. Ay, how real they are He who spake of them well knew, for had He not but now ended His long fast of forty days in the wilderness? 2. They are active feelings that will assert themselves. The poor man may know his poverty, and yet be so accustomed to it as to have no wish

to escape from it. The sick man may be too ill to want to get better, his only wish being to be let alone and die in peace. But hunger and thirst tell of a want within, a reaching after that without which they cannot be stilled. 3. They are intense, overpowering, and gain the mastery over the man, making him act contrary to the instincts of reason. What stories we have heard or read of the terrible extremities to which hunger or thirst have reduced men. Maddened by the desire of drink, they have drunk salt water, plunged into the sea to put an end to their sufferings, or drawn lots which should die to save the rest alive. Driven by gnawings of hunger, men have faced disgrace, and stooped to steal rather than suffer any longer. 4. They are universal, for they are felt by rich as well as poor; they are inseparable from our being, constituted as we are; they are God-implanted instincts. 5. They are lifelong. The man dying of thirst, able no longer to speak, opens his poor parched mouth, or looks his longing with his fevered eyes. The man perishing for lack of food holds out his thin, emaciated hands, and without a word begs for bread. But we need not to be told that Jesus is not speaking of bodily hunger, any more than of bodily poverty or bodily mourning. Just as the poverty He tells of may exist in the midst of the abundance of riches, and just as the mourning which He recommends may be found where eyes have never shed a tear, so hunger and thirst may be where there is plenty of food and drink. For every man is a sort of living sacrament. He has an outward and visible part—his body; but he has, too, an inward and spiritual part. And there is a close analogy between them. They have each similar feelings, desires, longings. And so the spirit of a man has its hunger and thirst. And this spiritual hunger and thirst are real things, are they not? They are active, asserting themselves, refusing to be ignored; they are intense, soul-agonizing, bringing, when unsatisfied, anguish and torment; they are universal, found in men of every age, and circumstance; they are life-long, with the man still as the breath of life quits his body. (*C. J. Ridgeway, M.A.*) *Hunger fits man to embrace the kingdom:*—The metaphor here chosen by our Saviour is the best and fittest that can be conceived to express a strong, powerful, active principle; for hunger is one of the strongest principles we know—it is an importunate desire, never satisfied till it obtains the means of gratification. The feeling of thirst is, perhaps, still stronger; for it is sufficient to absorb every other feeling, every other thought, and to confine the attention to the most immediate means of removing the distressing pain. For the same reason, that those who were not rich were in a favourable state to embrace Christianity, the hungry, who are also poor, would be in a similar situation; for, by embracing Christianity, all their nobler desires would be gratified. (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *Times of righteousness promised to the Church:*—First, We shall open what this righteousness of Jesus Christ is which the saints do hunger and thirst after. Secondly, We shall show what their hunger and thirst is; the working of their hearts in their hungering and thirsting after this righteousness. Thirdly, What a desirable object this righteousness is; what there is in this righteousness that makes the saints so desire after it. Fourthly, Those that do thus desire after it are blessed. They are blessed for the present. Fifthly, That they certainly shall be filled with this righteousness. I. For the first, What this righteousness is that now we are speaking of. It is the righteousness which is for justification. II. Now the second thing that is to be opened, it is the work of the soul in the hungering and thirsting after this righteousness. 1. The soul doth clearly apprehend and is thoroughly convinced that it hath need of a righteousness to enable it to stand before the holy and righteous God. That is the first thing that raises this hunger and thirst. 2. The soul comes to be convinced of the insufficiency and imperfection of its own righteousness. 3. The soul comes to see that there is another righteousness beyond its own. 4. The soul likewise must be enlightened in the way of the gospel's making over this righteousness to the creature. Then mark how the soul puts forth itself in the hungering and thirsting after this righteousness. 1. In the first place, It doth feel it, it gets an assurance of it, it feels a mighty pain for the want of it; as you know in hunger and thirst there is a very great pain in the body till nature be supplied. 2. All other things whatsoever that you can tender unto a man that wants bread or drink, that is ready to perish for want of those things, tender what you will they are all nothing to him—he regards them as nothing, there is no savour in anything; come and bring him bags of gold or silver, it is bread that he must have; come and bring him brave suits of satin and velvet, what is that if he be ready to perish for want of bread? 3. As all things are nothing to him till this comes, so in hunger and thirst there is a mighty

strong desire, such a strong desire as the body is ready to faint if the desire be not satisfied, even to faint and die. So it is with the soul here; if I have not this righteousness I die, I faint and die—yea, I die eternally. 4. There are strong endeavours after it; that must needs be in hunger and thirst. We use to say that hunger will break through stone walls; there is no work accounted difficult to a man to get bread. 5. One that hungers and thirsts, his desires are resolute; there is power, and endeavours, and they are resolute; he doth not stand upon conditions, to indent this or that way, but let the endeavours be what they will be, and indeed this is the work of grace in the heart where a hypocrite fails. 6. Which is very observable: The soul is unsatisfied in this hunger and thirst till this righteousness doth come. A child that doth but play with his meat, or whose belly is full, may be crying after something that he sees, but you may put off a child with a rattle when his belly is full; but if he be thoroughly a-hungry, then offer him what rattles you will, yet he must have his hunger satisfied if he be hungry indeed: and so it is with the soul. (*J. Burroughs.*) *Hunger a sign of health*:—It is a good sign of a thriving Christian; not only of a living Christian, but of a thriving Christian. As you find it by experience in the body, when a man or woman begins to have a good appetite to their meat, to be hungry, we say, then they mend. A man that begins to have a stomach, to be hungry, and to taste his beer, he begins now to thrive; so it is with the soul. Thou hast not that growth that thy soul desires, but hast thou a stomach to thy meat, canst thou taste thy drink, canst thou taste the waters of life, canst thou say, These are sweet, oh that I might have more, I am athirst and desire after more? When thou comest to the Word, thou gettest some milk to nourish thee, and thou hungerest after more. It is an argument that thou art in a thriving condition, it is sign of health, that thy soul is hale, that thou hast not those distempers and corruptions that other men have. (*Ibid.*) *Desires meet*:—Your desires and God's meet. There is nothing in the world that God doth more freely bestow than righteousness. (*Ibid.*) *No vacuities in nature*:—If God will fill vacuities in nature, and will hear the ravens when they cry unto Him, will He not fill the emptiness of thy soul? God hath so ordered things in nature that there shall be no vacuity. Philosophers say "that the world will sooner fall to nothing than there should be the least emptiness in the world," but it must be filled with something or other. Now hath the Lord so appointed that there must not be the least vacuity in nature, but there must be something to fill it, surely the Lord will not suffer a vacuity in an immortal soul; but He hath something to fill that soul of thine that is empty for the present, and the Scripture tells us that the Lord fills every living thing with His blessing, and shall not a soul that hungers after righteousness, and the image of God, and the grace of the Spirit of God, shall it not be satisfied? (*Ibid.*) There are many that desire, but their desires are cold and lazy desires, such as shall never do them good; and therefore false desires they may be known by these characters: 1. Their desires are false who satisfy themselves with ignorant desires. Hath God enlightened your hearts to see the excellency of grace, that is more precious than rubies, of more worth than the gold of Ophir? If it come not from these grounds they are but false desires. Many have a false appetite. 2. Such desires are false who satisfy themselves with foolish desires. Will we not account that man a foolish man that shall desire food—Oh that I had something to eat! oh that I had bread or meat!—but will not seek for it, will not take pains to get it? 3. When men's desires are absurd, such desires are false. They desire grace, and yet live in that which is quite contrary to grace. 4. Such as satisfy themselves in cold and weak desires, whose desires are turned all into wishings and wouldings; they could wish that they had grace, and oh that they had righteousness, oh that they were delivered from wrath to come! but they are not so peremptory upon it as to conclude, I must have it or I die. Now these desires they come to nothing, they will not grow up. 5. When men's desires are conditional. Conditional desires are false desires; that is thus, they would have grace and holiness so far as might stand with such and such ends, and to carry on such and such designs of their own—as to keep their estates and their liberty, their ease and credit in the world. 6. When men's desires are fleeting and unconstant desires, they have desires in some good moods, and in some pangs of conscience when the terrors of God are upon their spirits. But such desires as these they are hypocritical; they desire grace merely to serve their own turn, to stop the mouth of conscience, and not for grace sake. 7. When their desires are lazy desires, such are false desires; they are not willing to take pains for what they do desire. (*Ibid.*) **Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.**—*The blessedness of tears and mourning*:—It sounds

a paradox! We are wont to regard mourning and tears as evil things that come of sorrow and suffering. But here we are told of a mourning that, coming from some hidden source, flows on until it pours itself into the ocean of everlasting consolation. What can it mean? Certainly not that God really likes us to be always sad. The world of seen things around us, so bright, so beautiful, tells a very different tale. And yet methinks it tells us, too, that tears and blessings have to do with one another. Nature has its storms and rain; it has the bleak winds of spring, the thunder-clouds of summer, the falling leaves of autumn, the cold, dark days of winter, and we know now that this sad side of things is not the evidence of the existence of angry deities who dwell in the unseen, but that under the overruling hand of a wise and loving God there is in these things a blessing brought to us, and to the world in which we live. Ah, yes, it is true. Continual laughter is not profitable. There are times when laughter is unseasonable. Even the world pronounces those happy who can weep. Too much ease, and pleasure, and happiness, as the world counts happiness, wean the spirit away from Him in whom alone true blessedness can be found. There is need of sorrow to bring us back to Him (Psa. cxix. 67). God chastens to bless. His punishments are always corrective, never vindictive. Test by this touchstone all that men say of God's dealings with mankind. Ay, answer with it the troubled promptings of your own conscience in the hour of trial and mourning. (*C. J. Ridgeway, M.A.*) *The seriousness of the kingdom*:—This is expressed in the same proverbial form as the two preceding beatitudes; and in proverbs, it is to be observed, that one example is selected to represent a class, or one feature to suggest a whole character. Thus, as weeping is generally accompanied with a serious frame of mind, or is the external symptom of sorrow, so it was probably employed to represent such a state (see Eccles. vii. 2, 3). Never did any teacher present religion to the world with an aspect so forbidding as it is done by our Saviour in this passage. The Jews expected that the reign of the Messiah would be distinguished by wealth, grandeur, and joy. Our Saviour, therefore, took an early opportunity of undeceiving them, by showing them that those who possessed few or none of the good things of this world were much better fitted to be subjects in that kingdom, and even to exercise authority, than those who were favoured in a high degree with opulence and plenty. (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *The blessing to Christian weepers*:—It is obvious that this blessing cannot apply to every kind of weeping; for there are tears shed for reasons altogether earthly, and there is a sorrow of the world that worketh death. But on all who weep as the disciples of Christ, or for the sake of Christ, or because of any penitential or truly Christian feeling, on all such this blessing rests. All such "shall laugh," that is, shall greatly rejoice. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *The true joy of Christianity*:—He bade them even rejoice; not merely be resigned, but jubilant, and here He struck that keynote of resounding triumph and exhilaration which remains to this day the most original and characteristic sign of the Christian life. Inextinguishable joy in the dungeon—at the stake—amidst ruin and physical pain and loss; that is Christianity. The Stoic *bears;* the Epicurean *submits;* the Christian alone *exults*—"sorrowful, and yet always rejoicing." (*H. R. Haweis, M.A.*) *Spiritual mourning*:—For the first, I may expound the point and the text both under one. You see the proposition what it is, every good mourner is in a happy condition. Here let us consider a little the terms to explicate them. Who is the party in speech? "Blessed is the mourner," saith Christ, in Matthew; "Blessed," saith He, in Luke vi. 21, "are the weepers." Both these, mourning and weeping, are fruits of the same tree and root. There is a carnal mourning, when a man mourns for the presence of goodness, and for the absence of sin, because he is restrained, and cannot be so bad as he would be. There is a natural mourning, when a man mourns upon natural motives, when natural losses and crosses are upon him. There is a spiritual mourning, when a man mourns in a spiritual manner, for spiritual things, upon spiritual motives, as afterwards we shall show; when he mourns, because good things that are spiritually good are so far from him, and spiritual ills are so near to him. This is the mourner that Christ here speaks of, and this is the mourning that hath the blessing. Other mourning may occasion this through God's blessing, and may give some overture to this mourning, but the blessing belongs to the spiritual mourner and the spiritual mourning. "Blessed are the mourners, *for* they shall be comforted." This reason will not hold in all kind of mourning and all kind of comfort. It is no good argument to say, Blessed is the man that is in pain, for he shall be refreshed and relieved; blessed is the man that is hungry, for he shall be fed and have his wants

supplied. But yet this argument holds good, "Blessed are they that mourn, *for* they shall be comforted"; namely, with God's comforts, with the comforts of the Spirit, with the comforts of the Word, the comforts of heaven. The comforts of God are beyond all the miseries and sorrows that a man can endure in this life; and though he do mourn and weep for them, yet notwithstanding, the comforts, the wages, will so far exceed all his sorrows that he is happy in this. He cannot buy spiritual comforts too dear, he cannot have them upon hard terms possibly. Yea, further, spiritual mourning carries comfort with it, besides the harvest of comfort that abides the mourner afterwards. There are first-fruits of comfort here to be reaped, so it is that the more a man mourns spiritually, the more he rejoiceth; the more his sorrow is, the more his comfort is. 1. He that mourns spiritually hath a good judgment, and therefore is happy. Spiritual affection it argues a spiritual judgment and understanding. For the affections work according as they receive information. A creature that is led by fancy hath brutish affections; a man that is guided with matter of reason hath rational affections, as we term them; but a man that hath his mind enlightened and sanctified hath holy affections. 2. It argues a good heart too. (1) A tender and soft heart. For a stone cannot mourn, only the fleshy heart it is that can bleed. (2) As his heart is tender, so also it is sound. It is a healthful soul and a healthful temper, as I may speak, that he hath. For mourning proceeds out of love and hatred; out of agreement, if it be a spiritual mourning, with that which is good, and out of a contrariety and opposition between us and that which is bad. And this is a right constitution and temper of soul, that makes a man happy. 3. As he is happy in the cause, so he will be happy in the effect, too, of his godly mourning. For godly sorrow and mourning brings forth blessed fruits and effects; the apostle in 2 Cor. vii. 10, *seq.*, delivers divers of them, as there you see. (1) This is one thing in spiritual mourning; it secures and excludes a man from carnal and hellish mourning; yea, this orders him and saves him harmless from all other griefs. The more a man can mourn for his sins, the less he will mourn for other matters. So that this mourning prevents a great deal of unprofitable mourning. When a man bleeds unseasonably and unsatiably, the way to divert it is to open a vein and to let him blood elsewhere, and so you save the man. If he weep in a holy and spiritual manner, he shall be secured and preserved from poisonful and hurtful tears. (2) This is another happy effect of godly mourning, that spiritual and godly mourning alway doth a man good and never any hurt. Worldly sorrow, saith the apostle, causeth death. The more a man dies this way, the more he lives; the more he weeps, the more he laughs; and the more he can weep over Jesus Christ, the more lightsome and gladsome his heart is, and the more comfortably he spends his time. (3) This spiritual and godly sorrow and mourning is a sorrow never to be repented of, as the apostle there implies. All other sorrow a man must unsorrow again. (4) Spiritual mourning works repentance, saith the apostle: that is to say, it works reformation and amendment; it sets a man further from his sin, and brings him nearer to God, and nearer to goodness. 4. He is happy in regard of the event and issue of his mourning, because all shall end well with him, and all his tears shall one day be wiped away, and joy and gladness shall come in place; yea, he is happy in this, that spiritual mourning it is always accompanied with joy: that is a happy estate that tends to happiness. Use 1. If it be a happy man that mourns aright, we have reason, first, to bewail our unhappiness; unhappy time and unhappy men may we well say, touching ourselves, that vary so much from the mind and prescription of our blessed Saviour. "Blessed," saith our Saviour Christ, "are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." "Woe to you," saith He, "that now laugh." We, on the other side, say, Woe to them that here mourn; happy are they that can here laugh and be merry. And as we vary in our judgment from our Saviour, so much more we vary in our practice from His direction and counsel. God saith, "Humble yourselves that you may be exalted." We on the other side say, Exalt ourselves, and we shall not be humbled. God saith, Throw down yourselves; we say, Secure ourselves. God saith, Afflict yourselves, and then you shall have comfort. The Lord saith, Let your laughter be turned into mourning, that so you may laugh. We on the other say, Let our mourning be turned into laughter, that so we may not mourn. And therefore when any grief, natural or spiritual, begins to breed or to grow on us, presently we betake ourselves to company, to sports and exercises, that may drown the noise of conscience, that may put out of our minds motives to spiritual grief and sorrow, and that may provoke us to carnal, or at the best to natural mirth and rejoicing. We think

many times carnal sorrow, which in truth is but poison, will do us good, a great deal of ease; and when men have crossed us, and disappointed us, or dealt unkindly with us, we think we will go and weep it out; and when we have cried and blubbered a while, we think that we give ease to our souls, and content to our hearts. But when we come to spiritual mourning, which only is comfortable mourning, we think that undoes us. Many a man thinks he forfeits all his joy, all his peace, all his liberty, all his happiness, and he shall never see a merry day again in this world if he gives way to mourning for sin, to sound repentance, to works of humiliation, and examination of his own heart and ways. Use 2. Well, in the next place, we have another use, to take Christ's direction for comfort. Who would, who can be without it? Life is death without comfort. Every man's aim is to lead a comfortable life. Mark the way that Christ chalks out: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." 1. We must first show you how spiritual mourning differs, and is discerned from other mourning. 2. How it is gotten. 3. How it is exercised. 1. For the first of this: Spiritual mourning is known by the objects. Such as the object is, such is the faculty. Spiritual mourning hath spiritual objects, either materially or formally, as they speak in schools. This spiritual mourning is busied about spiritual goods and spiritual ills. We will instance in this first. For, first, if a man would know whether his sorrow be spiritual sorrow or no, let him see how he mourns for the absence of spiritual good things, how he mourns for the absence of God, the chief good. That is spiritual sorrow, when a man mourns because he hath lost God in his graces, in his communion, and in his comforts. Now, in the next place, how shall a man do to get this spiritual mourning? First, He must labour to have a heart capable of grief and sorrow that is spiritual, a tender and soft heart. He must see that he have a disposition to holy mourning, able and inclinable so to do, when just opportunity and occasion is offered. Now how shall a man get this tender heart? Why surely he must go to God in His means and ordinances, who hath promised, as you heard, in the covenant, to take "the stone out of our hearts, and to give us soft and fleshy hearts." 1. Consider of a method that he must use; and then—2. Of motives to stir him up thereunto. 1. For method. (1) He must have respect to the time, that he do not let his heart lie fallow too long. Jer. iv. 3, it is said, "Plough up your fallow ground." Ground, if it lie long unploughed, will require much pains to rear it and fetch it up, but if it be oft done, it will be the easier. To this end a man should every day be exercised in the duty of a godly mourning, every night reckon for the passage of that day, and say with thyself, What sin have I committed? What have I done? (2) For the time, a man must be sure to take God's time. When God calls on him, when God gives them the heart, and is ready to close and to join with him, then take the advantage, set upon godly mourning. So when the nature of grief is stirred by the occasion of the Word, then take the advantage of this, seize upon this for the king's use; set upon sorrow whilst it is there, turn it into the right stream, into the right channel; turn it for sin, weep for sin, and not for outward losses and crosses. Thus much for the time. 2. There is another thing to be done for the order, and that is this, that a man must be sure to give over carnal mirth and carnal mourning, if he will mourn spiritually. His carnal laughter must be turned into mourning, as James speaks (iv. 9); and his carnal mirth must be turned into spiritual mourning, too, or else he will never come to spiritual mourning. The motives are many. He that will mourn must look to these. Now, in particular, consider these motives. 1. It is needful for us to mourn. 2. It is seasonable for us to mourn. 3. It is profitable. And—4. It is comfortable. 1. It is needful to mourn in a spiritual manner. Whosoever hath sin must mourn. 2. As it is needful, so also it is very seasonable. The very time tends that way, as it were; the season is the time of weeping; the Church of God weeps abroad. For sin is now grown to a fulness, to a ripeness. 3. As it is seasonable, so it is profitable: for godly mourning it never hurts, it always helps. Carnal sorrow leaves a man worse than it finds him. It makes him more sick and weak than it finds him. Spiritual sorrow leaves him better. 4. It is very comfortable. It doth wondrously refresh a man. We pass, therefore, from the doctrine here delivered, "Blessed are the mourners," and come to the reason of it, "for they shall be comforted." Let us join these together, and see how they do depend. The point will be thus much—1. That spiritual mourning it ends in spiritual mirth. He that can mourn spiritually and holily, he shall undoubtedly and certainly be comforted. Holy tears, they are the seeds of holy joy. For the clearing of it further, let us know that we have good security for it.

1. The promise of God: and then—2. The experience of God's people. The best proofs that may be. First, the Lord undertakes in His promise two things touching our comforts. 1. That all our godly sorrow shall end in true comfort. The next is—2. That all our godly mournings are attended and accompanied with comfort for the present. 1. For the first of these, you know the promise, sorrow and weeping shall fly away, and joy and gladness shall come in place (Isa. xxxv., last verse), which place will refer you to many more. God hath made a succession of these things, as of day and night. His children's day begins in the night and in darkness, and ends in the day. God hath promised it shall be so; God hath appointed Christ, and fitted Him, and enabled Him to this word, that so it may be. God will take off the garment of mourning, and put on the garment of gladness in due time. 2. To this promise of God let us add the experience of God's people. If all this suffice not, let us consider of these reasons, and then we shall see that it is but reason that we should do so. 1. The first reason is drawn from the nature of sorrow and mourning. Sorrow is a kind of an imperfect thing, as it were. It is not made for itself, but for a higher and for a further end, to do service to something else, as it fares with all those that we call the declining affections. Hatred is servant to love; fear doth service to confidence; so likewise doth sorrow to joy. For God hath not appointed sorrow for sorrow's sake, but to make way for joy and true comfort. The physician doth not make a man sick for sickness' sake, but for health's sake. But now the joy of a Christian man, a spiritual joy, it is a safe joy. It hurts no man, but doth a man good; it settles a man's mind, it strengthens his thoughts, it perfects his wits and understanding. It makes him to have a sound judgment; it makes for the health of his body; it makes for the preservation of his life; it doth a man good every way. There is no provocation in it, there is no danger in it. Thirdly, as a Christian's joy is best in that respect, that it is the safest, so in this, that it is the surest joy. For this joy is an everlasting joy. The righteous, then, hath the start of the wicked for matter of comfort and joy. He hath a more solid, a more safe and sure joy, a more sweet joy, a more reasonable joy a great deal than the other hath. As he is beyond him in his joy, so, in the next place, he is beyond him in his sorrow too. Our life must have comfort and sorrow. It is compounded of sweet and sour. As the year is compounded of winter and summer, and the day of day and night, so every man's life is made up of these two. He hath some fair and some foul days, some joy and some sorrow. Now, as the righteous is beyond the wicked in his joy and comfort, so is he beyond him in his sorrow. First, his sorrow is far better; it is a more gainful, a more comfortable sorrow than others' is. They are beyond the sorrows of the wicked in all the causes and in all the circumstances of them. (1) The sorrow of the righteous proceeds from a better spring and fountain than the sorrow of the wicked. The sorrow of the godly comes from a sound mind, from a pure heart, from an inside that is purified from hypocrisy, from self-love, from private respects. Whereas, on the other side, the sorrow of the wicked comes from distemper of brain, from an utter mistake. Again, his sorrow comes from distemper of heart, from pride, from passion, from cursedness of heart and spirit, that he cannot stoop. (2) The sorrow of the righteous, as it hath a better spring, so it is busied and taken up about better objects, about better matters. A wicked man howls and cries, and takes on many times for a trifle, for a bauble; yea, many times, because he is disappointed and crossed in his lusts, in his base sins. The child of God finds himself somewhat else to do than to weep and to cry, and take on for trifles and vanities. He looks up to God, and is sorry he hath displeased Him. (3) The sorrow of the righteous is better than sorrow of the wicked in regard of the manner of their mourning. For the mourning of the righteous is a composed kind of sorrow. He mourns in silence; he weeps to the Lord; he carries it with judgment and discretion. His sorrow is a moderated sorrow; he holds it within banks and bounds. Whereas the sorrow of the wicked is a tempestuous, a boisterous, a furious kind of mourning and lamenting. He knows no mean. It is without hope. (4) Last of all, they differ much in the end and upshot of their mourning. Godly sorrow, it doth a man good. It humbles him, as we said. It drives him from all purpose, from all practice of sin; it makes him resolute against sin. This sorrow of the wicked, it hath not so good an issue. There is great difference when a woman breeds a disease and when she breeds a child. Well, then, to shut up this first reason, for information—upon which we have stood the longer, because carnal judgment will not credit this point—it is clear, the righteous man in prosperity is better than the wicked, and in adversity better. Whence he hath occasion to rejoice. A surgeon doth not lance

and sear men because he would put them to pain, but because he would give them ease. The Lord of heaven delights not in wounding and grieving of His children; but therefore He calls them to sorrow, that so they might come to comfort. 2. The second reason may be drawn from the nature of this spiritual comfort and joy that we speak of. For spiritual joy is very strong: "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. viii. 10). A strong thing is spiritual joy, and therefore it will overmatch, and overcome, and drink up, as it were, all our sorrows and fears in due time, as the sun overcomes the darkness of the night, and the fogginess of the mist in the morning. 3. A third reason may be drawn from the cause of our spiritual mourning and spiritual joy; for these are fruits that grow both from the same root. Spiritual joy and spiritual mourning, they come from the same fountain, from the same Spirit. The same Spirit, it causeth us to weep over Him whom we have pierced, and it causeth us also to rejoice in the Lord whom we have pierced: "The fruit of the Spirit is joy," saith the apostle (Gal. v. 22). The same Spirit manageth and guideth both the one and the other. Carnal passions and affections they oppose one another, they fight one with another, because they are carried on headlong, without any guide or order at all. But spiritual affections they are subordinate and subservient one to another; the one labours to further and to advance another. Thus the more a man joys, the more he grieves; and the more he grieves, the more he joys. Joy melts the heart, and gives it a kindly thaw; grief, on the other side, it easeth the heart, and makes it cheerful and lightsome. 4. Lastly, a reason may be drawn from the effects of godly mourning. If they be considered, it will be cleared, that he that mourns spiritually shall end in comfort at the last; for this spiritual mourning, what will it do? First, it takes off the power and strength of corruption. It weakens sin, it pricks the bladder of pride, and lets out our corruption. Spiritual mourning it takes down a man, it humbles him; and an humble heart is always a cheerful heart, so far as it is humbled. Spiritual mourning, again, makes way for prayer. For spiritual mourning sends a man to God. It causeth him to utter himself in petition, in confession, and complaints to his Father; to pour out himself to the bosom of his God in speeches, in sighs, and tears, in lamenting one way or other. All this tends to comfort. The more a man prays, the more he hath comfort. "Pray," saith Christ, "that your joy may be full" (John xvi. 24). Now, the more a man mourns spiritually, the more he prays; and therefore the more he is filled with true joy. Again, this spiritual mourning, it is a wondrous help of faith. It is a hopeful mourning; it helps a man's faith in the promises touching remission of sins. Now, the more a man's faith and hope is furthered, the more his joy is furthered. Still, the apostle speaks that they should rejoice in believing. Now, the more he mourns, the more reason he hath to believe that that furthers his faith; and therefore it advanceth his joy and comfort. This point, then, being thus cleared, let us a little make some use of it to ourselves. The use is threefold. 1. Here is one use of information touching others. Who is the happiest man in the world? And for the deciding of this question we must not go with it to Solon, to Plato, or to the philosophers, but come to a judge, the Lord Jesus. And what saith He to the point? Blessed and happy, saith He, are they that mourn. His reason is, "for they shall be comforted." So that here, then, is the trial of a man's state that is blessed. So that that man, then, that hath the best sorrow and the best joy, that man, then, is the happiest man. Now the Christian man is this man. (1) In many respects, this joy is a more solid joy than the joy of the wicked. The wicked man rejoiceth in face, but not in heart. This joy is rather in show than in substance. His joy is not rooted in himself. A wicked man hath no matter of comfort within himself, but his comforts they hang upon outward things. His comfort sometimes lies in the bottom of a pot; sometimes it lies in the bottom of a dish; sometimes in the heels of a horse; sometimes in the wings of a bird; sometimes in some base lust, or in some such filthy sin. Here lies the comfort of a wicked man; but now the comfort of the godly is not so. The joy of the righteous, it is a massy and a substantial joy. His afflictions indeed are light and momentary, but then his joy is everlasting, as I shall show anon. It is a joy that hath substance in it. The joy of the wicked, at the best, it is but a little glazed, it is but gilt over, but it is naught within; but the joy of the righteous it is a golden joy, it is beaten gold, it is massy and substantial and precious. As we said before, the root of his joy he hath it in himself, he hath matter of comfort in himself. There is faith and grace, there is truth. Nay, it is not rooted in himself only, but the root of it is in heaven, in his Head, in Christ. (2) The joy of the righteous, as it is a more solid, so it is

a more safe joy than the joy of the wicked. A carnal joy is many times prejudicial to a man in his safety, therefore we may safely conclude the godliest man is the happiest man. 2. Now the next use is to the godly. First, a word of exhortation, and then a word of consolation. Stop up, my brethren, all the passages, dam them up if you can, that make way for worldly sorrow and for carnal grief, for this will come but too fast upon you; but, on the other side, pluck up the floodgates, and open all the passages, and give all the way to spiritual mourning and to godly tears. (1) Labour to mourn after spiritual things and spiritual persons. (2) Again, Is it so, that the Lord withdraws Himself in His ordinances, that we hear not the voice of His word, that we see not our signs? "There is not a prophet among us to tell us how long" (Psa. lxxiv. 9); let us then set ourselves to mourn, as the Church in that psalm. "Lord, we see not our signs." (3) Is it so, again, that in our mourning, we see the Church of God, those sorrowful-spirited men, that they are distressed and afflicted? Let us weep for these too. (4) Is it so, that the Church of God is foiled at any time by the adversaries? Let us take on, as Joshua did, "rend your garments, and cast down ourselves before the Lord, and say, What shall we say, when Israel shall turn their backs and fly before their enemies?" (Joshua vii. 8). (5) In short, is the Church of God in heaviness and lamentation? Oh, but how shall I know that my mourning is spiritual mourning? I suspect it much this way. And why? First of all, my sorrow begins in the flesh; I never mourned, I never went to God in prayer and fasting, or any exercise of religion, till God tamed me and took me down with crosses and afflictions; then when He laid load on me, I went to it, and not before. Well, my brethren, thus it may be: thy sorrow may begin in the flesh; but, if it end in the Spirit, all is well. Ay, but, will some say, my sorrow is more for outward things than for spiritual matters. I grieve when I am sick, but it is for pain more than for sin. I mourn when I am poor, but it is because I am poor in purse, because I am poor in state, rather than in regard of my spiritual wants; and so for other matters too. My brethren, this is easily granted. There is no floor here but there is chaff as well as wheat with it. There is no precious mine here so rich but there is some dross as well as good gold, as well as good metal. So it is with a Christian. There is a mixture of flesh and spirit. And if it be so, it is spiritual sorrow, that thou canst shed some tears, vent some sighs and groans to God in spiritual respects, for spiritual losses, for spiritual evils. Here is matter of comfort, there is so much spiritual comfort, so much spiritual joy belongs to thee. But how shall I know that my mourning is spiritual mourning, when I cannot mourn for sin? I have abundance of tears for losses, and for crosses, and unkindnesses; but I am dry, and barren, and tearless, when it comes to matter of sin and offence, and trespass against God. Is this well, that a man should have tears at command for outward losses and crosses, and not shed a tear in prayer, and in repentance for sin? No, my brethren, it is not well; but how shall we do to amend this? Surely, even go to God and confess how it is; complain of thyself, and desire Him to amend it; and, if we condemn ourselves, God is ready to receive us. Ay, but the children of God are more plentiful in tears for sin than for outward things. Ay, in what sense? Not in regard of the bulk, but in regard of the worth, in regard of the value of their tears. One tear spent for sin is worth rivers of tears for outward matters. Further, it will be said, How shall I know my sorrow to be spiritual sorrow? I answer in a word—1. Look to the object, that it be universal. So in spiritual things: he that is spiritually sorry he mourns for the want of goodness wheresoever he seeth it, be it in himself or in other men, nay, be it in his enemies. 2. Our sorrow will be spiritual and holy if it be accompanied with prayer; for holy mourning makes way for prayer. 3. Again, it is spiritual sorrow, when it is accompanied with thankfulness. A carnal man, when he is pinched and twinged, and knows not which way to turn himself, he will be glad to cry, when he sees there is no other refuge in the world, but either he must cry or sink. But a man that is a spiritual mourner, he will be thankful as well as prayerful. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) *Godly mourners shall be comforted:*—1. There is a foolish mourning, in which men and women are not blessed—that is, they mourn they know not for what. 2. A natural mourning; when there is a mourning merely because nature is pinched, and some evil hath befallen it, and you go no further. This hath not a blessedness in it. 3. A worldly mourning; worldly sorrow causes death; to mourn for the loss of worldly things as the great and the chief loss of all. This is not blessed, it causeth death; and—4. An envious mourning; when men mourn and are grieved for the good of others. Surely this is not blessed, but cursed. 5. And there is,

further, a devilish mourning; when men and women mourn that they cannot have opportunity to satisfy their lusts. 6. And lastly, there is a hellish, desperate mourning; when men and women mourn in despair. This is hellish, and not blessed. These mourners are not blessed. And then all those that mourn in a gracious way. You will say, When doth one mourn in a gracious way and manner? Now, the ground of the blessedness ariseth, first, from the mourning itself; secondly, from the promise. Surely it is a blessed thing to be such a mourner. 1. Because that the lower our hearts are in our subjection to God in this mournful condition, the higher are our respects to God that brings us into this condition. 2. A mourning condition, when it is ordered by grace, it is a means of much good in the soul; it is that that takes away the rankness in the hearts of men. As weeds grow very rank in summer time, now in the winter the frost nips the weeds and keeps them under; but if it be a long frost it kills them. 3. It is that that delivers from many temptations. You think that jollity and bravery is the only happy life, but know there are a great many more temptations in that life than in a mournful condition. 4. They are blessed that are in a mournful condition, because God hath chosen for them that mourning condition in the most seasonable time. You know when a man is sick, then bitter things are more seasonable than sweet. Now we are all sickly poor creatures, and it is a great mercy of God in this time of our lives to choose for us a mournful condition—bitter things rather than sweet and luscious things. 5. And then especially here in this text, because they shall be comforted; it is but to make the comforts sweeter unto thee when they do come. You know that when a man would build a structure, a stately building, the stones that he intends principally to build withal are hacked and hewn, that so they may be comely and fit for his building; but as for other stones, they are not regarded as those that are thus polished which he intends to lay. So it is an argument that the Lord hath great things for thee, great comforts for thee; He is now preparing thee in this thy mournful condition for great comforts. 1. They shall be comforted. When? Why, they shall be comforted when the wicked shall be sorrowful (Isa. lxv. 13). 2. And then, you shall be comforted; there is a time when the Lord will communicate unto you the choicest of His mercies. Now the Lord communicates Himself, but in a very small and little way in comparison to what He doth intend. And this comfort that the mourners shall have, shall be, first, a pure comfort. We have somethiug that is sweet, but there is a great deal of mixture with our sweet. And then they are spiritual comforts. Their comforts shall come more firstly in their souls, and so they shall have comfort to their bodies by way of the eradiation, as I may so say, of the comfort that they shall have to their souls. 3. Divine comforts they are that they shall have—that is, all comfort is from God one way or other, but from God more immediately. Here we have our comforts at second or third or fourth hand, but now there shall be comfort that shall be from God more immediately. And such comforts as are from the very nature of God Himself—that is, such comfort as God is comforted in, such joy as God joys in, and God joys with them in it. 4. It is a full comfort, "Ask and you shall have, that your joy may be full." 5. And then it shall be a strong comfort (Heb. vi. 18). 6. An eternal consolation; so you have it in 2 Thess. ii. 16; in 2 Tim. ii. 11. As we read concerning Egypt, as there were more venomous creatures there than in other countries, so there was in no country more antidotes to cure them than in theirs. So, though religion may bring sorrow and trouble, yet there is nothing brings more cure and more help. (*J. Burroughs.*) *The folly of men rebuked who are all for mirth*:—1. If thy mourning be gracious, thy very tears and sorrows is a great deal better than the wine of the men of the world; thy tears are more sweet and pleasing to God than the mirth of wicked men can be to them. 2. Consider this for thy comfort, it may be, if thou hadst not been a-mourning thou wouldst have been a-sinning, thou wouldst have been a-doing that whereby thou wouldst have darkened the glory of God. 3. Consider that all thy sorrows are measured out by God, who is thy Father; thou dost not lie at the dispose of wicked men to mourn how much they will, or when they will, but thou art at the dispose of God, who is thy Father. 4. Consider for thy comfort that Christ was a man of sorrows, and in thy sorrowing thou art but conformable unto Him; and why shouldst thou think that to be a burden wherein thou art made like to Jesus Christ? 5. Let this be for thy comfort, to consider thou hast an interest in Him that is the God of all consolation; the darkness of thy condition cannot hinder thine interest in God. And then consider that God suffers more by thy sins than thou canst suffer from God's hand in

thy afflictions. The darkening of His glory in the least degree is a greater evil than any affliction that thou canst endure; and this should support thy spirit, to consider that God suffers more; and therefore thou shouldst not be unwilling to suffer something, seeing God suffers more than thou canst. 6. If thou wouldst be comforted, consider this: the way that God takes to comfort His saints, though thou hast it not in sense, thou mayest have it in faith; and therefore exercise faith, and fetch it in that way. Set faith on work in the promise, and let that bring out the comfort of the promise. Sense is not the way by which God comforts His people, and if we look for comfort in a sensual way we mistake ourselves; therefore let us labour to fetch in comfort from the exercise of faith. And indeed we should more prize those comforts that come from the exercise of our graces than from any sensible apprehensions. 7. Consider, though it be long before comfort come, yet this is no strange thing that thou art kept without comfort for a while. 8. Consider, that this is the time of mourning, and we know things are seasonable and best in their time. This is a Christian's seed-time. In the world we must have trouble, and through many tribulations we must enter into heaven. We know the husbandman; he is contented to endure storms and hardships in seed-time, with this consideration—the harvest is a-coming. So, though thou now sowest in tears, there is a time of reaping in joy. How we may so order our mourning that it may comfort us. Now for this I would entreat you to take notice of these rules. 1. In your mourning be sure that you keep good thoughts of God. Whatsoever your troubles be, let them not raise tumults and hard thoughts of God. 2. Be sure to take notice of all the mercy thou hast from God in the afflictions thou art in. Let not any affliction drown the mercy thou hast. It is very sad many times to see how one or two afflictions hinders the sight of many mercies that the saints do enjoy. A little thing will hinder the sight of the eye; a penny laid upon the eye will keep it from beholding the sun or the element above; so a little affliction, it darkens and hinders the soul from seeing a multitude of mercies; every little trouble darkens God's mercies. 3. Take heed of a sullen, dogged disposition, either towards God or man in thy sorrows. It is very usual for men in a troubled condition, when they are in sorrow, to add frowardness to mourning; but we should labour to take heed of this as a great evil. Labour for a quiet and meek spirit. 4. Take heed of determining against a comfortable condition in sorrow, that it will never come. Say not that comfort will never come, because thou hast it not for the present. (*Ibid.*) *How mourners should order their mourning:*— Now, then, such as mourn thus for sin are blessed; for—1. By this they do much honour God. The sovereignty of God is honoured, and the holiness of God is honoured, and the justice of God is honoured. 2. It is a blessed thing to mourn for sin, because it is an evangelical grace. 3. Surely they are in a blessed condition, for it appears that they come now to have a right judgment. Their judgment is enlightened to understand what is truly good and truly evil, and to have a right temper of spirit. 4. This mourning for sin, it helps against all other mourning, it helps against other sorrows. 5. It is a means to prevent eternal sorrows. Certainly God will have every soul to know what sin means at one time or other. 6. It is that that fits for the grace of God. There is none that taste the sweetness of the grace of God in Christ more than those that are mourners for sin. Now one drop of mercy, how sweet is it; now it is worth more than ten thousand thousand worlds! 7. There is one more, and that is, they are blessed; why? because there are many promises that are made to those that mourn. That is certain—either a man's sin will make an end of his mourning, or a man's mourning will make an end of his sin, one of the two. If so be a man goes on in sin, he will leave off mourning, but if he doth not leave off mourning, he will leave off sinning; for certainly mourning for sin hath a special efficacy in it, it helps against the sin that thou dost mourn for. This bitter aloes that now thou hast is a special means for the helping against those crawling worms that are in thy soul. Hence, in the first place, the use might be very large, what shall become of those that rejoice in sin? And then surely mourning for sin is not melancholy; for one to mourn and be troubled for their sin is not to grow heavy and melancholy. It is the work of the Spirit of God that lays that weight of sin now upon the soul, because the Lord intends that this soul shall be blessed to all eternity. And do not think it a foolish thing for people to be troubled for their sin. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 22, 23. **Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall**

separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil.—*The necessity of persecution*:—Persecution is no accident in Christian life. It is simply inevitable from the collision with evil of Christian righteousness when it becomes positive, especially when it becomes aggressive in the cause of peace-making. It is the activity of Christian life which lays its own faggots, prepares for itself its own martyrdom. It is when the disciple follows in the wake of the first great Peacemaker, and from the side of God approaches the world's evil with implied rebukes and an open summons to it to repent, submit, and be at peace, that it is most certain to encounter the world's missiles. A very holy or unworldly life may be itself so telling a rebuke, even though a silent one, as to draw on some meek, pure souls dislike, and calumny, and malice. But it is the active, witness-bearing, and missionary type of Christian character which provokes the chief resistance. The Christianity of the wholly unpersecuted must be a Christianity defectively aggressive, which has not advanced sufficiently to the last stage, the stage of peace-making. Nor is this all. Persecution is not simply inevitable as soon as the development of active Christian life leads it into collision with evil; it is an indispensable factor in the very development and perfecting of Christian life. Persecution is not indeed a grace; but persecution is the creator of a grace (James i. 3, 4). (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *Bitterness of social and domestic persecution*:—I cannot but think that this has been, on the whole, not less trying than outward and violent persecutions. For persons assailed by it have to bear their troubles mostly in secret. They have little sympathy from others; nor any of the rising of the spirit of passive (passing into active) heroism which, when men's eyes are on it, is naturally roused into energetic resistance. For, indeed, there are several things which tend to hold a man up in his visible endurance of visible persecution. He is as a champion of a cause; his personal bravery and earnestness, as well as his conscience, are on trial. He knows that even among those who hound on the cry of persecution against him, there are those who admire his firmness in bearing it. He believes that though overpowered himself, and put to death perhaps, yet suffering and death bravely borne leave a seed behind them which germinates and grows in spite of persecution, and is wont to outlive it. All these things and such as these mingle themselves up with the convictions of conscience, and strengthen it, when the persecution for righteousness' sake takes place in the sight of men. But it is otherwise with all the secret and, if I may so call it, unpicturesque suffering of social or domestic life—the chill, and the estrangement, and the unkindness, and the evil report, and the misrepresentation, the thwarting and jealousy, all the details of inward and unseen misery which goes to make up the real persecution which has visited, and no doubt visits still, thousands of people whose hearts' desire it is to serve God faithfully, and who are content to bear with evil for Christ's sake. And so I can hardly doubt that "when that last account 'twixt heaven and earth shall be made up," it will be found that the persecution of private and social life has been in total amount greater, and maybe its actual bitterness not less, and so its ultimate title of blessedness in Christ as great, as that of those who have been "persecuted unto blood" for Christ's sake. (*Bishop Moberly.*) *Why persecution is to be accounted a blessing*:—1. It tests and proves the worth of our religion. It tells us whether our Christianity is positive and aggressive, or whether it is only negative. 2. It forms character, it purifies the life, it develops graces—the great end of religion. 3. A necessary factor in the spiritual life. No cross, no crown. (*C. J. Ridgeway, M.A.*) *Principles for suffering*:—1. Wherefore the first principle to enable Christians to suffer for righteousness is, that we should look on ourselves as sent into the world for this end, especially to bear witness to the truth. 2. The second suffering principle is this—It is better to lose for God than to enjoy for ourselves. 3. Whosoever suffers anything for God, in the midst of all their sufferings they are in a better case than their persecutors. 4. That it is a great deal better to suffer for Christ than to suffer for sin. 5. That God may make me suffer in spite of my heart. If I find a reluctancy in me to come off to suffer for Christ, I may be forced in spite of my heart to do it; and what comfort shall I then have in it? How much better is it to suffer freely and willingly for Jesus Christ than to be forced to suffer? and then there will be no exercise of grace in it, but I shall be merely passive. Christ can lay afflictions upon you, and diseases upon you. 6. No creature hath any good in it any further than it is enjoyed in God, and improved for God. 7. The seventh suffering principle is this: There are no sufferings of any of the saints that they are called unto at any time, but they are ordered by God, for the time of the suffering, for the kind of the suffering, the continuance of the suffer-

ing, the instruments of the suffering. 8. That whenever we suffer for Christ, Christ suffers with us; we are partakers of His sufferings, and He is partaker of our sufferings (Isa. lxiii. 9). 9. There is more evil in sufferings before they come, in imagination, than when they are come. 10. That there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest afflictions. It is an ill choice to choose the least sin rather than the greatest affliction. Now for the blessedness that there is in suffering, many things might be said, but I shall but present before you some short view of what blessedness there is in suffering persecution. 1. If God gives thee a heart to suffer for Him, thou hast in this a full evidence of the truth of thy graces, yea, and of the strength and the eminency of thy graces. 2. There is a great deal of honour in suffering. It is a speech of Ignatius, "I had rather be a martyr than a monarch"; and so you know Moses chose "rather to suffer with the people of God, than to enjoy all the pleasures and riches of Egypt." 3. It is a blessed thing to suffer for righteousness' sake, for it is the highest and greatest improvement of men's abilities, graces, comforts, whatsoever they enjoy. It is the highest improvement that can be for them to suffer. Never are men's graces so improved as in times of suffering. As the spices have a more fragrant smell when they are beaten to powder that when they are whole; and so the saints' graces are more fragrant in the nostrils of God, and do grow up more in the time of suffering than ever. 4. It is blessed, for those that suffer are under many blessed promises. Why, "If you suffer with Him, you shall be glorified with Him." Read 2 Tim. ii. 12, and in Rom. viii., there you have divers excellent expressions wherein there are most excellent promises to such as suffer in the cause of Christ (Matt. xix. 29). (*J. Burroughs.*) *Some arguments for the helping of saints to suffer*:—First, to show the history how all the prophets, disciples, and the saints that have gone before have suffered great and hard things. Secondly, wherein the argument lies of rejoicing under persecution. Thirdly, what use we are to make of the persecution of the prophets. I could handle but the first. To proceed to the second: wherein lies the power of this argument? There is a fivefold strength in this argument, or rather five arguments in it. 1. The same spirit of wickedness that opposed them doth still prevail, and it is the same spirit of truth that is opposed. 2. Hence you may see that those that are dear and precious to God, that they may suffer hard things. 3. If so be God should deal with you otherwise than He did formerly with others, then it might discourage you; but they are no other things than His servants heretofore have suffered. 4. It is the way that God hath brought all His servants into heaven by. Why should you think that God will bring you in a better way than He did others? 5. That though the prophets have suffered such things, yet the truth of God prevails. (*Ibid.*) *Suffering for the truth's sake*:—I. WE CANNOT BE SERVANTS OF JESUS WITHOUT SUFFERING. The contrast between the natural heart and the ideal Christian is not less marked to-day than it was eighteen hundred years ago. Nothing kindles so much hatred as evangelical love. II. According to the Saviour's declaration, SUFFERING IS A SOURCE OF HAPPINESS. 1. It is a happiness to suffer for a noble cause. 2. The fact that suffering for truth brings with it its own reward is also a reason for joy, as it ensures the triumph of our cause. 3. "Your reward is great in heaven," said the Master, thus adding the consolation of a glorious hope to those which flow from duty performed. 4. This triumph of truth in heaven is not enough. It must have its glorious revenge on the very theatre of its humiliations and conflicts. The world must see how mistaken it was in rejecting it, and one day it will be forced to exclaim, "O Galilean, Thou hast overcome." (*E. de Pressensé, D.D.*) *The reward of the pious in heaven*:—I. THE FELICITY WHICH AWAITS THOSE WHO PERSEVERE, THROUGH GOOD REPORT AND EVIL REPORT, IN A STEDFAST ADHERENCE TO CHRIST, IS FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED IN THE SCRIPTURES BY THE NAME OF REWARD. 1. It is inseparably joined to obedience, and promised as a motive to encourage and sustain it. 2. It will be bestowed as a mark of approbation, and acceptance of the obedience to which it is annexed. 3. It will be proportionate to the degree of religious improvement, to the work of faith and labour of love. II. THE SUPERIORITY OF HEAVENLY TO EARTHLY REWARDS. 1. The rewards of heaven are certain. 2. They are satisfying. 3. They are eternal. (*R. Hall, A.M.*) *Joy in persecution*:—Somebody pushed good Mr. Kilpin into the gutter and slapped him on the face at the same time, and said, "Take that, John Bunyan"; whereupon the good man took off his hat and said, "I would take fifty times as much as that to have the honour to be called John Bunyan." Learn to look upon insults for Christ in the same light, and when they call you by an ill name do you reply, "I could bear a thousand times as much as that for the pleasure of being associated with Christ in the world's derision." (*C. H.*

Spurgeon.) *Doing right:*—When the storm [concerning the slave trade] was at its highest, one of Mr. Buxton's friends asked him, "What shall I say when I hear people abusing you?" "Say!" he replied, snapping his fingers, "say *that*. You good folk think too much of your good name. Do right, and right will be done." (*Life of Fowell Buxton.*) *The failure of persecution:*—And so when bad men are not hardened in wickedness they can be won over by the good, but when they are they hate and persecute the good, whose mere silent lives rebuke them. It was thus that Sodom hated Lot; it was thus that the Ephesians expelled Hermodorus because he was virtuous; it was thus that the Athenians ostracised Aristides because he was just. "The honourable and religious gentleman," said a slave-holding member of Parliament, speaking of William Wilberforce, in the House of Commons. He was properly scathed in reply with the lightnings of the great man's eloquence, but the epithet spoke volumes with the silent, unconscious, inevitable rebuke of vice and protest for holiness by every true and righteous man. And mark, that when the bad, hating the good, sneer them out of court, repress them by violence, madden the blind multitude by lies against them, poison them as Socrates was poisoned, banish them as Epictetus was banished, burn them as Savonarola was burnt, execrate them as Whitfield was execrated, do not think that then the good have failed. Even in their ashes live their wonted fires, their voices even from the grave sound in the thunder's mouth, their dead hands pull down the stronghold of their enemies, and tyrants tremble at their ghosts. What was the nature of Jesus? Between two murderers He hung in agony upon the cross, amid the howlings alike of secular and religious hatred. Before three centuries were over that gibbet of torture and infamy sat upon the sceptres and shone upon the crowns of kings. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Sustained in persecution:*—The annals of the Church furnish terrible illustrations of persecution, and how Christians have been sustained in trial. A youth who had manifested extraordinary patience under the greatest torture, said afterwards, that at the time of his agony an angel seemed to stand beside him, and pointing him to heaven, enabled him to rise in spirit superior to his pain. Pastor Homel, of the French Protestant Church, had his bones all so broken on the wheel that he survived but forty hours. But then, in his dying agony, he said, "Though my bones are broken to shivers, my soul is filled with inexpressible joy." (*H. Burton.*) *On persecution:*—I have a large field to go over, an Aceldama, "a field of blood," a Golgotha, "a place of dead men's skulls," where you shall see "some stoned, some sawn asunder, some slain with the sword, others having trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment" (Heb. xi. 36, 37); but withal (what the eye of flesh cannot discover) blessedness waiting upon them, and shadowing them in the midst of horror. Here is a fair inscription upon a bitter roll, a pleasing preface to a tragical theme, a promise of pleasure in misery, of honour in dishonour, of life in death, of heaven in hell. Here we may see persecution making us strong by making us weak, making us rich by making us poor, making us happy by making us miserable, and driving us through this field of blood into Paradise. The parts of the text are manifestly but two: a blessing pronounced—"Blessed are they that suffer persecution," and a reason given—"For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." But we may, by a plain and natural deduction, make them three—I. That they who begin in the other virtues and beatitudes must end in this; or, in the apostle's words, "They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12). II. That persecution bringeth no blessing but to those "who suffer for righteousness' sake." III. That to those it doth: which comprehendeth the inscription, "Blessedness"; and the reason of the inscription, "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven." I. We find here persecution and blessedness joined together, wrought by the same hand, a hand of mercy, and like sweet and bitter water flowing from the same fountain, a fountain of love. For it is God's love and mercy to give us a kingdom; and it is His love and mercy to bring us to it by sufferings, to bring us, as the apostle speaketh, "through much tribulation," through the noise and tumults of this world, to a place of rest (Acts xiv. 22). And the reason is as plain, even written with the sunbeams. 1. For, in this, God dealeth with them as a loving father; He doeth it "for the trial, or rather the demonstration, of their faith"; to make it appear that they do not "make a profession of their love, when they hate Him in their heart"; depend upon Him for their salvation and happiness, and, when persecution cometh, leave Him and exchange Him for the world· rather yield, and fall under the burden, than stand fast in the faith, and retain Him as their God. There must some occasion and opportunity be offered, some danger, some cross, that may fright me; and when I withstand all, and cleave fast unto

Christ, then it will appear that I am His friend and servant. "A mariner is best seen in a tempest, and a Christian is best known when persecution rageth." 2. Therefore, in the second place, this is the reason why God suffereth this mixture of good and evil, why He suffereth tyrants and blood-thirsty men to go on and prosper in their ways. 3. Therefore, in the third place, if we consider the Church, which is at her best nothing else but a collection and a body of righteous men, we shall find that, whilst she is on the earth, she is militant; and no other title doth so fully express her. 4. For, in the last place, it cometh not by chance that the righteous are persecuted. What hath chance to do in the school of Providence? No; persecution is brought towards the righteous by the providence and wisdom of a loving Father. I have now brought you into this Aceldama, this "field of blood," where you may behold the ungodly for their own lust "persecuting the poor" (Psa. x. 2), where you may behold hypocrites and deceitful men "bending their bow, and shooting at the righteous in secret" (Psa. lxiv. 4), and mighty men drawing their swords and drenching them in their blood. A sad sight, to see righteousness under the whip and harrow! But withal you may discover not only an angel going before them, as before the children of Israel in the wilderness, but Christ Himself leading them through these terrors and amazements to a place of refreshing, to "a city not made with hands," to "the kingdom of heaven." *Oportet*, "They must suffer"; but "there remaineth a sabbath for the children of God" (Heb. iv. 9). Persecution is the lot, the inheritance of the righteous: that was our first part. II. and III. We will now present you with the second: That every man that suffereth hath not title to this blessedness in the text, but only those "who are persecuted for righteousness' sake," which comprehendeth all those duties which the gospel requireth at their hands who have given up their names unto Christ. For it is possible that a man may suffer for one virtue, and neglect the rest; may suffer to preserve his chastity, and yet be covetous. He can suffer for the law, and yet break it. 1. And, first, the cause; it must be the love of righteousness. For we see, as I told you, men will suffer for their lusts, suffer for their profit, suffer for fear, suffer for disdain. Be sure your cause be good, or else to venture goods or life upon it is the worst kind of prodigality in the world. 2. In the next place, as a good cause, so a good life, doth fit and qualify us to suffer for righteousness' sake. Augustine—"He dieth not the death of a martyr who liveth not the life of a Christian." An unclean beast is not fit to make a sacrifice. The persecuted and persecutor imply and suppose one another, and are never asunder. 1. But let them that suffer have the first place. (1) And, first, "knowing these terrors," as the apostle speaketh (2 Cor. v. 11), seeing persecution is, as it were, entailed upon the righteous person, seeing there is a kind of providence and necessity it should be so, let us learn, first, as St. Peter speaketh, "not to think it strange concerning this fiery trial" (1 Pet. iv. 12); not to dote too much upon this outward gilded peace and perpetuity in public profession; or, when we see these things, think some strange thing is come unto us. For what strange thing is it that wicked men should persecute the righteous? that a serpent should bite, or a lion roar? that the world should be the world, and the Church the Church? (2) And, that we may not think it strange, let us not frame and fashion to ourselves a Church by the world. (3) And, therefore, in the third place, let us cast down these imaginations, these bubbles of wind blown and raised up by the flesh, the worse part, which doth soonest bring on a persecution, and soonest fear one; and let us, in the place of these, build up a royal fort, "build up ourselves in our most holy faith" (Jude 20), and so fit and prepare ourselves against this fiery trial. 2. And now, as we have brought the righteous person into this field of blood, and prepared and strengthened him against the horror of it; so must we bring the persecutor also, that he may behold what desolation he hath made. "Why boasteth thou thyself in thy mischief, O mighty man?" (Psa. lii. 1), that "thou hast sped, that thou hast divided the prey"? (Judg. v. 30). (*A. Farindon, D.D.*) *Protestants separated for Christ's name's sake*:—I. FROM WHOM CHRIST'S DISCIPLES SUFFER. II. WHAT IT IS WHICH THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST SUFFER. 1. Hatred. 2. Separation. 3. Reproach. 4. The casting out of their names. III. THE CAUSE OF THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES. And here we meet—1. The pretended cause. "They shall cast out your name as evil"; they shall fasten, as much as in them lies, all manner of calumnies upon you; and report of you, not as indeed you are, but as they who hate you would have you thought to be. But as to others, the supposed evil in the matter that Christ's followers are charged with, is but a pretended cause of their being so evilly dealt withal. 2. The real cause for which they suffer. This is that which is at the bottom of all—it is

for Christ's sake, for their respect unto Him and His institutions, His truths and ordinances, that His disciples suffer. And this we may deduce from the following scheme. I. It is for the truths of Christ, the doctrine owned, preached, and recommended by Him, that they thus deal with us. II. It is for the purity of His worship, because we would serve God according to His own will, and not according to their will-worship, that they thus abhor us. III. It is for His authority's sake, because we dare not take the government from off His shoulders (Isa. ix. 6), nor pay that respect to any frail man which is only due unto Him who is "God blessed for evermore" (Rom. ix. 5)—or, if you will, it is because we dare not worship the beast—that they serve us thus. To sum up all in one—it is for the vindication of Christ in all His offices that we endure these indignities at their hands. Three consolatory inferences. 1. In that it is but from men—"When men shall hate you" (Matt. x. 28). 2. It is "for the Son of Man's sake" that we thus suffer. And if He had required greater matters of us, would we not have done them? 3. Christ hath pronounced such sufferers blessed—"Blessed are ye." (1) It is Christ's judgment on our case and condition. And He, we may truly say then, sees not as man sees. (2) It is not a bare opinion (though His could not be erroneous) that we are blessed, but it is Christ's effective sentence. His *dicere* is *facere:* Christ doth "make" them blessed whom He "pronounces" to be so; and He can make a blessed persecution. If He bless, who can curse? (Numb. xxiii. 8). "Lord, let them curse, but bless Thou" (Psa. cix. 28). (*P. Vinke, D.D.*)

Ver. 24. **But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.**—*The danger of riches:*—Unless we were accustomed to read the New Testament from our childhood, I think we should be very much struck with the warnings it contains, not only against the love of riches, but the very possession of them. That our Lord meant to speak of riches as being in some sense a calamity to the Christian is plain from His praises and recommendations of poverty. 1. The most obvious danger which worldly possessions present to our spiritual welfare is that they become practically a substitute in our hearts for that one object to which our supreme devotion is due. They are present; God is unseen. They are means at hand of effecting what we want; whether God will hear our petitions for these wants is uncertain. Thus they minister to the corrupt inclinations of our nature. 2. This, then, was some part of our Saviour's meaning, when He connects together the having with the trusting in riches. 3. The danger of *possessing* riches is the carnal security to which they lead; that of *desiring* or *pursuing* them is that an object of this world is thus set before us as the end and aim of life. It is a part of Christian caution to see to it that our engagements do not become pursuits. Engagements are our portion, but pursuits are for the most part of our own choosing. 4. Money is a sort of creation, and gives the acquirer, even more than the possessor, an imagination of his own power; and tends to make him idolize self. And if such be the result of gain on an individual, doubtless it will be the same on a nation; and if the peril be so great in the one case, why should it be less in the other? (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *The perils of rich men:*—1. One of the principal perils of rich men arises from their very exemption from many temptations to gross sin. Hence they are apt to think too well of themselves. 2. The rich man finds it very easy to do many kindly acts. It is very natural, therefore, that he should regard his own character and life complacently, and that he should think severely of the selfishness of those less fortunate than himself. 3. The rich man's Bible, with its morocco binding and gilt edges, has very much less in it than the poor man's Bible, bound in sheep. Pages which are read and re-read, which are marked, and scored, and thumbed in the one, are virtually mere blank paper in the other. 4. As the rich man loses many of the revelations of God's sympathy, compassion, and care, which inspire the poor with intense and passionate gratitude, so he loses some of the most urgent motives to communion with God, which often make the poor man devout. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*) *Danger of rich men:*—A holy woman was wont to say of the rich: "They are hemmed round with no common misery; they go down to hell without thinking of it, because their staircase thither is of gold and porphyry." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Riches; or, a knife for the canker:*—To the love of money we trace the melancholy apostasy of Demas, the awful perfidity of Judas, the fatal lie of Ananias and Sapphira—all, and some of them distinguished, professors of religion. Be on your guard. Watch and pray. Their history is written for our instruction. Nor need any of His people who allow the love of money to entwine itself around their hearts, expect that in saving them God will do otherwise

than the woodman, who, seeking to save a tree, applies his knife to the canker that eats into its heart, or the ivy that has climbed its trunk and is choking it in its close embraces. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Smothered by wealth*:—Many of you are in imminent peril. God is multiplying the sources of your power. Your resources are becoming numerous as the sands of the sea. I am not sorry, I am glad; but I am anxious that you should rise up in the midst of these things, and show yourselves greater than prosperity, and stronger and better on account of it. I dread to see a man smothered under his wealth. When a man, driving from the meadow, sits and sings cheerily upon his vast load of fragrant hay, how every one, looking upon him, thinks of his happiness and content! But by and by, at an unlucky jog, down goes the wheel and over goes the load, and the man is at the bottom, with all the hay upon him. Just in that way rich men are in danger of being smothered. The whole wain of your prosperity may capsize, and the superincumbent mass may hide from you the air and the sun of a true life. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Ye have received your consolation*:—Let the full force of the word "consolation" be observed. It is used by way of contrast to the comfort which is promised to the Christian in the Beatitudes. Comfort, in the fulness of that word, as including help, guidance, encouragement, and support, is the peculiar promise of the gospel. There is then something very fearful in the intimation of the text, that those who have riches thereby receive their portion, such as it is, in full, instead of the heavenly gift of the gospel. The same doctrine is implied in our Lord's words in the parable of Dives and Lazarus: "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*) *Conjunction and separation of woe and riches*:—We will therefore show—I. In what conjunction these two, woe and riches, do stand. II. How they may be sundered: find out why riches are so dangerous to receive, and how we may receive them without any danger. And with these we shall exercise your devotion at this time. "Woe to rich men"; which cannot be literally and generally true: for all rich men are not accursed. But it is the safest way to remove men as far from danger as may be. It is safest for some men to conceive feasting unlawful, that they may avoid gluttony; or sports unlawful, that they may not be wantons; to be afraid of an oath, that they may not be perjured; not to flatter themselves too much in the lawfulness of war, that they delight not in blood, but rather remember the lesson of Moses, or indeed of God: "When thou goest out with the host against thine enemies, then keep thee from all wickedness" (Deut. xxiii. 9). 1. But so far is the world from having that opinion of riches, that they have goodly and glorious titles bestowed upon them. They commend themselves unto us under the honest names of "thrift," and "frugality," and "wisdom." What poor glass is a diamond, to him that is familiar with virtue! What trash is riches, to him who is filled with grace! What nicknames are the empty titles of secular honours, to him that knoweth the glory of a saint! What a nothing is the world, to him that hath studied heaven! 2. Further yet: Riches are accounted as necessaries, and as ornaments of virtue; and under that name we receive and entertain them. 3. Again: Riches are not only not necessary to religion and virtue, but rather a "hindrance." They take us down from our third heaven, and take us off from "the contemplation" of future happiness, and bind our thoughts to the vanities of the earth, which so press them down and weary them that they cannot aspire. They are *retinacula spei*, "fetters of our hope." For "now where is our hope?" (Job xvii. 15.) Even in the bowels of the earth. They are degraders of our faith. For whilst we walk in this vain shadow, how many degrees doth our faith fall back! The more we "trust in uncertain riches" the less we trust in God (1 Tim. vi. 17). They are coolers and abaters of our charity: for, they make us ungrateful to God, severe to ourselves, and cruel to our brethren. 4. Further yet: As riches are a hindrance and obstacle to good, so are they instrumental to evil. They facilitate and help it forward, and are as the midwife to bring it to its birth, which otherwise peradventure had died in the womb, in the thought, and never seen the sun. If sin make "our members the weapons of unrighteousness," riches are the handle without which they cannot well be managed. Every man cannot grind the face of the poor, every man cannot take his brother by the throat, every man cannot go into the foolish woman's house, every man cannot bribe a judge, every man cannot be as wicked as he would. And it may seem to be a part of God's restraining grace, to take riches from some men, as he took off the wheels of Pharaoh's chariots, that they may not pursue their brethren. But when the purse is full, the heart will

more easily vent all the poison it hath, in a reproach, in contempt, in a blow, in an injury, in oppression. II. You have seen the rich and woe in a sad conjunction, a most malignant one as any astrology hath discovered. I am unwilling to leave them so; and therefore, in the last place, I must find out some means to put them asunder, that we may receive riches without danger; which is indeed "to lead the camel through the needle's eye." 1. We must bring riches into a subordination, nay, into a subjection, to Christianity. We may be rich, if we can be poor. 2. That the mind may be rightly affected, we must root out of it all love of riches. For if we set our hearts upon them, the love of them will estrange us from Christ, and make us idolaters. 3. I must bring you yet further, from not loving, not desiring riches, to contemning of them. For though I have emptied my store, and cast it before the wind, yet till I have made riches the object of my fear, till I can say within myself, "This lordship may undo me," "These riches may beggar me," "This money may destroy me"—till in this respect I make it the object of my contempt, and look upon it as a bait of Satan, I am not so far removed but that still the woe hangeth over me. For as, when a man taketh a wedge of lead upon his shoulders, it presseth and boweth his body to the earth; but if he put it under his feet, it will lift and keep him from the ground: so, when we place riches above us, and look upon them as upon our heaven; when we prefer them before salvation, and make gain our godliness; it must needs be that they will press us down to hell: but if we keep them below as slaves, and tread them under our feet, and contemn them as dung in comparison of Christ, they will then lift us up as high as heaven. 4. Therefore, in the last place, let me commend unto you a godly jealousy of yourselves. Suspicion in such a case as this is very useful. 5. I am unwilling to leave the rich and the woe so near together, but would set them at that distance that they may never meet. To conclude then: Let us not be too familiar with riches, lest whilst we embrace them we take the plague, and the woe enter into our very bowels. The love of the world is a catching disease, and it is drawn on with dallying, with a very look. We do not traffic for gold where there are no mines: nor can we find God in the world. He that maketh Him his purchase, will find business enough to take up his thoughts, and little time left for conference and commerce in the world, scarce any time to look upon it, but by the by and in the passage, as we use to look upon a stranger. A look is dangerous; a look of liking is too much: but a look of love will bury us in the world, where we are sown in power, but are raised in weakness; sown in glory, but are raised in dishonour. We rest and sleep in this dust; and when we awake, the woe which hung over our heads falleth upon us. (*A. Farindon, D.D.*)

Ver. 26. **Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.**—*The dangers of praise:*—"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you." 1. First of all, it is more than probable that, if they do so, their judgment of you is fallacious; you do not deserve it. "In the like manner did their fathers unto the false prophets." Men are fallible judges of one another's real character. 2. And yet, secondly, you must remark that, however fallacious, however false, the popular estimate, it has a direct tendency to carry us along with it. One would have imagined that no man could be misled, in his own judgment of himself, by anything that another, or that all the world, could say of him. 3. And then follow, in the third place, certain practical consequences; all of them, in a Christian point of view, serious and even disastrous. The first of these is, the loss of humility. 4. With the decay of humility comes the loss of watchfulness. 5. And with the loss of humility and the loss of watchfulness comes as a natural consequence the loss of strength. Praise is an essentially enfeebling and enervating thing. It relaxes the sinews of the mind as sultry weather those of the body. 6. Again, it is an effect of being well spoken of, to make a man covet that approbation and at last live for it. The praise of men has a direct tendency to attach us to earth, and to make us forget heaven. "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." And this leads us, in the last place, to suggest one or two cautions with which our Lord's words in the text ought to be guarded, lest they should too much discourage one class of hearers. There are those whose characters possess a beauty and a charm which make it absolutely impossible that they should not be loved. And if there be amongst us to-day some of whom all men do not speak well; some who, whether through fault or no fault of theirs, are neither generally popular nor in danger of suffering from this kind of temptation; do not the words of the text, so wise in their counsel, and (like all our Lord's words) so

wide in their application, suggest to them a sure ground of comfort under what at times they feel to be a heavy trial? (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The woe of a favourable reputation:*—In the life of Alexander Raleigh, D.D., we are told that at one period of his life, accusations were laid before the public in pamphlets which were well adapted to cause him pain and annoyance. The experience was new to him, who all his life had made no enemies. "You have at last," said one of his people to him, meeting him on the street, "escaped one of the woes of Scripture; 'Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!'" It is reported of Titus Vespasian, that when any spake ill of him, he was wont to say that he was above false reports; and if they were true, he had more reason to be angry with himself than the relator. And the good Emperor Theodosius commanded no man should be punished that spake against him; "for what was spoken slightly," said he," was to be laughed at: what spitefully, to be pardoned; what angrily, to be pitied; and if truly, he would thank them for it."

Vers. 27–30. **But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies.**—*The ideal of Christianity:*—This passage is in earnest. You are to do this. Why? In order that you may come into the family of God. Here is not simply an additional moral maxim, but it is a critical turning thing. Whereas nature says, "Use all your powers of body and mind to repel injuries, and to punish those that are against you"; the spiritual kingdom says, "Use none of them; forgive, love, pray for, bless, help, carry a little heaven in your souls, and make it fair weather around about all those that are your enemies." Is it possible that any such thing as that can take place? I have known some men that came very near to it. One thing is certain—Jesus, whose life was a commentary on His own doctrine, did attain it; and we find Him acting easily, familiarly on that very ground, returning good for evil. Is it a thing, then, that comes with conversion? Men are turned from darkness to light, from selfishness to benevolence; they are said to be converted, but does that state of mind come with conversion? I *wish* it did, and I *know* it does not. It is a thing that must be the result of spiritual education in men. Men never come to their graces all at once. It is a law that prevails in the spiritual kingdom as well as in the exterior kingdom, that we come to lower and higher gradations by processes of unfolding, step by step, little by little, continuously through periods of time. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *On the love of enemies:*—1. By the love which is here enjoined we are not to understand the love of esteem or complacency, which in some respects is unreasonable and impossible; but that of benevolence or good-will. 2. The precept of the text evidently disallows and utterly excludes all kinds of revenge and retaliation. I. THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS DUTY. What can be more agreeable to reason and wisdom than to keep evil, so much as possible, out of the world; and when it is in to use all proper means to drive it out. Instead of this, as enmity lets it in, so revenge keeps it there and propagates it. II. THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS DUTY. General benevolence is general virtue; the true principle of a rational mind, and the great support and ornament of society. But in benevolence towards enemies there is additional worth, peculiar grace, for it raises men's minds, and exalts their affections to the sublimest pitch. III. THE ADVANTAGES AND BENEFITS WHICH REDOUND FROM THE PRACTICE OF THIS DUTY. Most evident they are, both in respect of society and every individual. 1. It would be of infinite service to the public if the precept in the text were generally observed and practised. Innumerable broils, feuds, and contentions, would be hereby prevented or soon stopped. Such a disposition, when rooted in the minds of men, would grow up in a firm bank against the overflowings of ill-will and the inundations of strife. The wrongs that were done would slide away gently, without spreading or giving much disturbance to the community; and in a little time be swallowed up and lost in the wide ocean of charity. 2. And as to the private advantages, they are manifestly great and unquestionable. The peace and tranquility of a man's own mind; the delight of exercising benevolence towards enemies, and of conquering a wild affection. (*J. Balguy, M.A.*) *Love to enemies the outcome of Christianity:*—The Roman Triumph, with its naked ostentation of revenge, fairly represents the common feeling of the ancients. Nevertheless, forgiveness even of an enemy was not unknown to them. They could conceive it, and they could feel that there was a Divine beauty in it, but it seemed to them not merely, like the other Christian virtues, more than could be expected of ordinary men, but almost more than could be expected of human nature itself, almost superhuman. A passage near the close of the Ajax of Sophocles will illustrate

this. As there was nothing of the antiquarian spirit about Greek tragedy, as it probably never occurred to Sophocles that the ancient heroes he depicts belonged to a less civilized age than his own, but on the contrary, as he conceived them to be better and nobler than his contemporaries, we may fairly suppose the feelings described in this passage to be of the highest standard of the poet's own ago, the age of Pericles. Ulysses, after the death of his enemy Ajax, is described as relenting towards him so far as to intercede with Agamemnon that his body may be decently buried, and not be exposed to the beasts and the birds. This may seem to be no great stretch of generosity. But the request is received by Agamemnon with the utmost bewilderment and annoyance. "What can you mean?" he says, "do you feel pity for a dead enemy?" On the other hand, the friends of Ajax are not less astonished, and break out into rapturous applause, "but," says Tencer, "I hesitate to allow you to touch the grave, lest it should be disagreeable to the dead man." The impression of strangeness which these words, "Do you feel pity for a dead enemy?" produce upon us is a proof of the change which Christianity has wrought in manners. A modern dramatist might have written the words, if he had been delineating an extremely savage character, but Sophocles is doing no such thing. He is expressing the natural sentiment of an average man. (*Ecce Homo.*) *An illustration of the influence of Christian teaching upon barbarous customs*:—Had the Son of Man been in body upon the earth during the Middle Ages, hardly one wrong and injustice would have wounded His pure soul like the system of *torture*. The main forces in mediæval society, even those which tended to its improvement, did not touch this abuse. Roman law supported it; Stoicism was indifferent to it; Greek literature did not affect it; feudalism and arbitrary power encouraged a practice which they could use for their own ends; and even the hierarchy and a State Church so far forgot the truths they professed as to employ torture to support the religion of love. But against all these powers were the words of Jesus, bidding men "Love your enemies!" "Do good to them that spitefully use you!" and the like commands, working everywhere on individual souls, heard from pulpits and in monasteries, read over by humble believers, and slowly making their way against barbaric passion and hierarchic cruelty. Gradually, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the books containing the message of Jesus circulated among all classes, and produced that state of mind and heart in which torture could not be used on a fellow-being, and in which such an abuse and enormity as the Inquisition was hurled to the earth. (*C. L. Brace.*) The master-word of Christianity is love. (*R. S. Storrs, D.D., LL.D.*) *Loving our enemies a Christian duty*:—From the words we may observe—I. That innocence is not always a protection from injuries. II. That Christians must not recompense evil for evil. I shall—I. Lay before you your PATTERN, and show you how Christ loved His enemies. And then—II. I shall press the IMITATION of Him in this respect. I. Our Saviour, the Son of God, when He was here on earth, had His enemies. Infinite purity, and the most extensive engaging goodness could not gain the love of all. II. Now I am next to show you how our blessed Saviour carried it toward His enemies; what spirit He was of under such indignities. Christ is spoken of in the Word of God as subduing His enemies in a twofold sense. 1. By His vengeance, when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities. 2. There is another sense in which Christ may be said to conquer and subdue His enemies; by His grace, by His Word and Spirit. Let us now inquire how Christ our great pattern manifested His love or good-will towards His enemies, and still shows Himself reconcilable to such as are so. 1. In His bearing their reproaches with meekness, and a tender concern for them, not using them with severity, any farther than He saw needful to convince them of their sin, and to awaken them to repentance. He did not render evil for evil, and railing for railing (1 Peter ii. 21, 23). 2. In His forbearing to take vengeance on His enemies, as one that came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 3. Christ showed His love to His enemies in forgiving them, on condition of their sincere repentance. 4. Our blessed Saviour manifested His good-will towards His enemies, His desire of their conversion and salvation, in His labours for their good, His preaching the Gospel to any that would attend upon Him, in His warning, instructing, and entreating them. 5. In His praying for them. 6. In that charge mentioned before, which He gave His apostles after His resurrection from the dead, to preach repentance and remission of sins first at Jerusalem. I shall now close with two or three reflections on what has been delivered. 1. Let not those who have hitherto shown themselves enemies to Christ, despising His love, dishonouring His name, rejecting

His gracious offers and abusing His gospel, despair of mercy, and think themselves utterly excluded from His favour. 2. Let the friends of Christ rejoice in their interest in His peculiar love. I am now to proceed to the consideration of the second thing proposed, to press the IMITATION of our Lord in this respect. 1. The first thing to be considered is, who are our enemies. Not ministers who are ordained of God to show men their sins. Nor are rulers, such as bear the sword of justice. Nor are we to be offended with any that tell us of our faults, as if they were our enemies. This is not always a sign of men's disaffection to us, but sometimes of their good-will. Nor, further, are we to reckon all our enemies that differ from us in their opinions about religion. But let us see who may justly be called our enemies. Now, they are such as have ill-will, bitterness and rancour in their hearts against us. Now, how are Christians to behave themselves towards those that hate them, and wrong them? Why, corrupt nature presently dictates an answer; hate them in like manner, recompense evil for evil, take revenge. 2. What is meant by loving our enemies? Not taking complacency and delight in them; not entering into familiarity with them, and making them our intimates, as we would our particular friends. In short, we should be well affected towards them. Thirdly then, how are we to express our love to our enemies? 1. We must suppress all immoderate anger and passion. 2. We must express our good-will to our enemies by just faithful reproof. 3. We must not envy our enemies their ease and prosperity, nor wish that their circumstances were altered into worse, that God would lift up His hand against them, afflict and blast them. In the fourth place, we should be so far from desiring the adversity of our enemies, that we should pity them in their distress. 5. We must pray for our enemies. I am now to offer to your consideration some motives to this duty. 1. Consider the excellency of this duty. It is difficult indeed, but then there is a peculiar beauty in it, which tends greatly to adorn Christianity. 2. This is a duty expressly commanded in the gospel of Christ. 3. By such a disposition of mind as is recommended in the text we should be conformed to God. 4. We have the example of Christ our Lord. 5. We have also the example of the apostles of Christ, who themselves practised this duty. 6. Hatred and malice, when they lie fretting in the heart, and break out in their unchristian inhuman effects, can do no good, but must needs be unprofitable and unpleasant. Lastly, you shall not lose your reward. "My prayer," says David, "returned into my own bosom" (Psa. xxxv. 13). "Love your enemies and do good; and your reward shall be great" (Luke vi. 35). (*Thomas Whitty.*) *The duty of loving our enemies stated and explained*:—I. Then, I am to STATE THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THIS PRECEPT. There are two kinds of love which we must distinguish here; the love of approbation or esteem, and the love of benevolence or good-will. The love of approbation and the love of benevolence are, then, very distinct in their own nature. Our Saviour, at the same time that He expressed His disapprobation and dislike of Jerusalem for stoning the prophets, yet exemplified a very benevolent and compassionate regard for it, for He wept over it. Even resentment does not exclude benevolence, and we are very often angry at a person for committing a fault, even because we love him. And as our Saviour loved and compassionated the Jews, though He abhorred their ungenerous treatment of Himself and the prophets; so we ought, with the same god-like generosity of soul, to love the man at the same time that we detest his vices; just as we may have an affectionate regard for a person that lies ill, but have an aversion to the disease he labours under. As to the extent and degrees of this duty, the Scripture nowhere enjoins an undistinguishing beneficence to men whether friendly or injurious. We ought to do the most good we can. Now, by singling out men of fortune, whatever relations may endear them to us, as the objects of our favour, we contribute little or nothing to their real enjoyments; but by being, what God is in a higher degree, the helper of the friendless and forlorn, we make the heart of one that was ready to perish sing for joy. In the former case our bounty is like a shower to the ocean; in the latter it is like a shower to dry and thirsty ground. This is a very important rule, viz., that the extreme necessity of even our enemies, much more of other persons, is to take place of the mere conveniency of friends and relations, and that we ought rather to relieve the distressed than to promote the happiness of the easy; however the practice of it be disregarded by the world. But to proceed; the Scripture does not require any acts of kindness to our enemy which are confessedly prejudicial to our own interests: for we are not to love our neighbour better than ourselves. Our mercy to our enemies must not be so far extended as to expose us to the mercy of

our enemies. II. Having thus stated the nature and extent of this duty, I proceed, secondly, TO SHOW THE REASONABLENESS OF IT. 1. The great law of nature is an universal, active benevolence to the whole body of rational beings, as far as the sphere of our power extends. We were all sent into the world to promote one another's happiness, as being all children of the same Father, our Father which is in heaven. What Moses said to the contending Israelites is applicable to all mankind: "Why do ye wrong one another, since ye are brethren?" And no injuries can take away or cancel that unchangeable relation. For, do we do good to our nearest and dearest relations only because they are deserving? Do we not think ourselves obliged to serve them merely because they are relations? This relation is always a strong reason for doing good, when there is no stronger reason to supersede or set it aside. And this may serve to show, that however forward persons of the first distinction in civil and military offices may be to engross to themselves the character of heroism or any uncommon degree of virtue; a man in a private capacity may be as truly a hero in virtue, as they can be in a larger and more public sphere of action. He is like one of the fixed stars, which though, through the disadvantage of its situation, it may be thought to be very little, inconsiderable, and obscure by unskilful beholders; yet is as truly great and glorious in itself as those heavenly lights, which, by being placed more commodiously for our view, shine with more distinguished lustre. For he shows, by his complacency, that he would have done the same if his abilities had been equal to his inclinations. 2. An argument may be drawn from the consideration of our own happiness. Now to cultivate the sweet and kindly passions, to cherish an affectionate and social temper, to beget in ourselves, by repeated acts of goodness, a settled complacency, good will and benevolence to all mankind in general, is a constant spring of satisfaction. To contract an unrelenting malice, sullenness, and discontent, to let a sudden discomposure of mind ripen into a fixed aversion and ill-will, to have a savageness of nature and an insensibility to pity; what is this but to make our breast, which should be the temple of God, as it were a den of savage passions? In acts of severity, even when necessary, there is always something that is irksome to a gentle and compassionate spirit, something of a harsh and ungrateful feeling within accompanies them; like armour, which, though we may be obliged to put it on for our necessary self-defence, yet always fits uneasy, cumbrous, and unwieldy. Some cool-thinking villains there may be, who can lay plots to injure others with a steadfast and sedate malice, and with an untoward complacency; their minds being like those nights, which are very calm, silent, and close, and yet very black and dark; nights in which there reigns a sullen stillness. But men of this stamp are very rare: the generality of mankind, when they strive to make others uneasy, certainly disquiet themselves, and work out the ruin of other men, as they should do their own salvation, with fear and trembling. 3. A third argument for the love of our enemies may be drawn from the forgiveness of them. Now, the forgiveness of our enemies is a duty incumbent on us: because, in the first place, malice is, as I showed before, destructive of our happiness: because, secondly, we cannot with any reason ask that of God which we are not willing to bestow: because, thirdly, all private revenge, and consequently the desire of it too, is in the nature of the thing unlawful; since if it were allowed, it would draw a fatal train of consequences after it, and make the world an Aceldama, or field of blood. We know that the malignity of the offence rises in proportion to the dignity of the person whom we offend: now, most people are inclined to think themselves much greater than they are; and consequently to think the offence committed against them to be so too; the consequence of which is obvious, if we were commissioned to revenge ourselves. The mists of passion would represent injuries bigger than they are, and it would be impossible to proportion the punishment to the indignity. In short, it can never be reasonable, that one man's reputation, fortune, or life should be sacrificed to another man's passion and malice. How are we to behave ourselves to those whom we forgive? Are we to behave ourselves to them as to enemies? Not as to enemies: for then we do not sincerely forgive them. Besides, it is unnatural to have a cold indifference to the happiness or misery of our fellow-creatures, when our minds are divested of all rancour towards them. Benevolence will naturally shed abroad in our heart its kindly and gentle beams, when the clouds, which the unfriendly passions cast over the soul, are removed and dispersed. 4. A fourth argument may be drawn from the nature of God. No creature ought to counteract his Creator. III. I proceed to show THE PRACTICABLENESS OF THIS DUTY. And here

two sorts of men fall under our consideration: 1. Men of cool and deliberate malice, who, like lions lurking in secret places, can wait a considerable time, till, a convenient season offering itself, they spring to vengeance, and crush their unwary foe. Their resentment is like a massive stone, slowly raised; but, when once it is raised, on whomsoever it falls, it will grind them to powder. 2. The men of fire and fury, who immediately discharge the malignity of their passion in words or actions. As to the first set of men: it is certain that the same power of mind, which enables them to suspend the prosecution of their revengeful designs till a commodious opportunity, enables them likewise to get the better of their revengeful desires; for a passion so importunate and clamorous in its demands as revenge, if it cannot be curbed and controlled, cannot be suspended, and put off; and if it can be controlled, it can likewise be quelled and overcome. As to the second set of men, viz., the men of passion and fury, they indeed will tell you, "God forgive them, it is their infirmity which they cannot help: they are apt to be transported into unseemly words and actions; but the storm is soon over." These are the excuses of those, who, when their anger has spent itself, are very good-natured; and continue so, till fresh recruits of spirits enable their passions to take the field again. But the misfortune is, these notable excuses are quite spoiled, if we consider that these men can be, and are very often, upon their guard. They will not fall into an unseemly rage before a great person, whom they dread and revere. After all, it must be owned, that a provocation may be so shocking and flagrant, that nature may rebel against principle, and a desire of revenge may as naturally hurry away the soul as a whirlwind does the body. This is an extraordinary case, and no doubt a gracious God will make allowances for it. It is a common saying, that few people know their own weakness; but it is as true a one, that few people know their own strength till they are put to it, and resolved in the prosecution of any design. It has been often observed that our hatred is most implacable when it is most unjust. IV. And lastly, TO CONCLUDE WITH SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE. Let us reflect, that we cannot expect to be benefited by our Saviour, as a full sacrifice for sin, unless we imitate Him, as a complete model of virtue; and this we cannot do without forgiving and loving our enemies. Can a mind think anything here worth an implacable animosity, whose comprehensive views are raised as high as heaven, and extended as far as eternity? Let us think what would become of us at the last decisive day, a day decisive of our eternal happiness or misery, if God should deal with us with the same unforgiving disposition as we would deal with others. (*J. Seed.*) *Of loving our enemies:*—I. WHAT IS NOT THAT LOVE WHICH WE MUST SHOW OUR ENEMIES: this we shall find to exclude several things which would fain wear this name. 1. As first, to treat an enemy with a fair deportment and amicable language, is not the love here enjoined by Christ. Love is a thing that scorns to dwell anywhere but in the heart. The kindness of the heart never kills, but that of the tongue often does. Was ever the hungry fed, or the naked clothed, with good looks or fair speeches? These are but thin garments to keep out the cold, and but a slender repast to conjure down the rage of a craving appetite. But we are not to rest here; fair speeches and looks are not only very insignificant as to the real effects of love, but are for the most part the instruments of hatred in the execution of the greatest mischiefs. For it is oil that whets the razor, and the smoothest edge is still the sharpest: they are the complacencies of an enemy that kill, the closest hugs that stifle, and love must be pretended before malice can be effectually practised. In a word, he must get into his heart with fair speeches and promises, before he can come at it with his dagger. 2. Fair promises are not the love that our Saviour here commands us to show our enemies. For what trouble is it to promise, what charge is it to spend a little breath, for a man to give one his word, who never intends to give him anything else? And yet, according to the measures of the world, this must sometimes pass for a high piece of love. In a word, I may say of human promises, what expositors say of Divine prophecies, "that they are never understood till they come to be fulfilled." 3. But thirdly and lastly, to advance a degree yet higher, to do one or two kind offices for an enemy is not to fulfil the precept of loving him. It is like pardoning a man the debt of a penny, and in the meantime suing him fiercely for a talent. Love is then only of reality and value when it deals forth benefits in a full proportion to one's need: and when it shows itself both in universality and constancy. Otherwise it is only a trick to serve a turn, and carry on a design. The skilful rider strokes and pleases the unruly horse, only that he may come so near him, as to get the bit into his mouth, and then he rides, and rules, and domineers over him at his

pleasure. So he who hates his enemy with a cunning equal to his malice, will not strain to do this or that good turn for him, so long as it does not thwart, but rather promote the main design of his utter subversion. For all this is but like the helping a man over the stile, who is going to be hanged, which surely is no very great or difficult piece of civility. II. And thus having done with the negative, I come now to the second general thing proposed, namely, to show POSITIVELY WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE DUTY OF LOVING OUR ENEMIES. It includes these three things. 1. A discharging the mind of all rancour and virulence towards an adversary. 2. To love an enemy is to do him all the real offices of kindness that opportunity shall lay in our way. Love is of too substantial a nature to be made up of mere negatives, and withal too operative to terminate in bare desires. 3. The last and crowning instance of our love to our enemies, is to pray for them. For by this a man, as it were, acknowledges himself unable to do enough for his enemy; and therefore he calls in the assistance of heaven, and engages omnipotence to complete the kindness. He would fain outdo himself, and therefore finding his own stores short and dry, he repairs to infinity. Prayer for a man's self is indeed a choice duty, yet it is but a kind of lawful and pious selfishness. But when I pray as heartily for my enemy as I do for my daily bread; when I strive with prayers and tears to make God his friend, who himself will not be mine; when I reckon his felicity among my own necessities; surely this is such a love as, in a literal sense, may be said to reach up to heaven. For nobody judges that a small and trivial thing for which he dares to pray: no man comes into the presence of a king to beg pins. III. I come now to the third and last thing, viz., TO ASSIGN MOTIVES AND ARGUMENTS TO ENFORCE THIS LOVE TO OUR ENEMY; and they shall be taken—1. From the condition of our enemy's person. For the first of these, if we consider our enemy, we shall find that he sustains several capacities, which may give him a just claim to our charitable affection. (1) As first, he is joined with us in the society and community of the same nature. (2) An enemy, notwithstanding his enmity, may be yet the proper object of our love, because it sometimes so falls out, that he is of the same religion with us; and the very business and design of religion is to unite, and to put, as it were, a spiritual cognation and kindred between souls. (3) An enemy may be the proper object of our love, because, though perhaps he is not capable of being changed and made a friend by it (which, for any thing I know, is next to impossible), yet he is capable of being shamed and rendered inexcusable. 2. A second motive or argument to the same shall be taken from the excellency of the duty itself. It is the highest perfection that human nature can reach unto. The excellency of the duty is sufficiently proclaimed by the difficulty of its practice. Nothing certainly but an excellent disposition improved by a mighty grace, can bear a man up to this perfection. 3. The third motive or argument shall be drawn from the great examples which recommend this duty to us. (*R. South, D.D.*) *Example of the early Christians*:—Justin Martyr, one of the earliest writers, in his "Apology" to the heathen in behalf of the Christians, says, "We who once hated and murdered one another, we who would not enjoy the hearth in common with strangers, on account of the difference of our customs, now live in common with them, since the appearance of Christ; we pray for our enemies; we seek to persuade those who hate us unjustly, that they may direct their lives according to the glorious doctrines of Christ, and may share with us the joyful hope of enjoying the same privileges from God the Lord of all things." *Example of Origen*:—Origen, one of the greatest scholars and theologians of the Christian Church in the third century, when he was cruelly persecuted by Demetrius, and through his efforts excommunicated by the synod, beautifully exhibited the same mild and forgiving spirit. Speaking in his defence against the synod, he mentions wicked priests and rulers thus: "We must pity them rather than hate them, pray for them rather than curse them, for we are created for blessing rather than cursing." *The Carthaginian Christians*:—In the time of a great pestilence, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, in the third century, exhorts his flock to take care of the sick and dying, not only among their friends, but their foes. "If," says he, "we only do good to our own people, we do no more than publicans and heathens. But if we are the children of God, who makes His sun to shine and His rain to descend upon the just and upon the unjust, who sheds abroad His blessings, not upon His friends alone, but upon those whose thoughts are far from Him, we must show this by our actions, blessing those who curse us, and doing good to those who persecute us." Stimulated by their bishop's admonition, the members of the Church addressed themselves to the work, the rich

contributing their money and the poor their labour. Thus the sick were attended to, the streets soon cleared of the corpses that filled them, and the city saved from the dangers of a universal pestilence. *Mr. Burkitt and his injurers*:—Mr. Burkitt observes in his journal, that some persons would never have had a particular share in his prayers but for the injuries they had done him! *Mr. Lawrence's charge to his sons*:—Mr. Lawrence once going, with some of his sons, by the house of a gentleman who had been injurious to him, charged them that they should never think or speak amiss of that gentleman on account of anything he had done against him, but, whenever they passed his house, they should lift up their hearts in prayer to God for him and his family. This good man had read our text to some purpose. *A persuasive to love our enemies*:—Negative holiness is short of Christianity more than the one half. It is not enough that we do others no ill, but we must do them good as we have access. Nor is it enough that we fly not out in passion and revenge on those who have wronged us, but we must love them. I. We shall consider THE DUTY OF LOVING OUR ENEMIES. And here I shall show who are to be understood by our enemies. In general, it aims at those about whom there is least to engage our love to them. 1. Does not the psalmist say, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies"? (Psa. cxxxix. 21, 22.) And does not Jehu the son of Hanani the seer say to King Jehoshaphat, "Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?" (2 Chron. xix. 2.) (1) There is a hating of one's way and course, and a hating of one's person. It is not the latter that is meant in these passages, but the former. (2) There is a hatred opposite to a love of complacency, and a hatred opposite to a love of good will: the former is what we should bear to the enemies of God, and is there meant; the latter is not. Are not the prayers of the Church bent against the enemies of Christ? 1. Yea they are, and for them too, in different respects; the former in respect of their wicked works, the latter in respect of their persons. 2. It is to be understood of those who are adversaries to us, or are against us any manner of way, whether they in that matter be against God or not. And so it takes in—(1) Those who are not truly and properly our enemies, but in our account and reckoning only are enemies to us. (*a*) Those whom we take for our enemies, but are really only smiting friends. (*b*) Those whom we take for our enemies, but are only competitors with us in a lawful way. There is so much selfishness in the world, and so little regard to the interest of our neighbour, that a great many imaginary enemies are made this way. (2) Those who are indeed our enemies, whom we reckon so, and who are truly what we reckon them. 1. Stated public enemies, who, in their principles and by open profession, are opposite to us, and practise accordingly. Such were the unbelieving Jews, particularly the Scribes and Pharisees, to the followers of Christ, inwardly hating them, openly cursing them. This party-enmity is frequent in the world, and it is the bane of the Church. 2. Stated private enemies, who set themselves in a course of enmity against such and such persons. Such enemies were Herod and Pilate to one another (Luke xxiii. 12). Such had Joseph's brethren against him, Ahab against Micaiah, and Absalom against his brother Amnon. This is frequent everywhere, spreading itself like venom among neighbours, yea, among relations, and among neighbours of all sorts. (1) Occasional enemies, who, upon particular emergent occasions, do wrong to us; but not from a stated enmity against us. If we are to love our stated enemies, much more these (Col. ii. 13). Both these kinds of enemies are of three sorts. 1. Heart-enemies, who in their hearts are set against us, burning with grudge, malice, and rancour at us. The text is plain as to our duty in that case, "Do good to them that hate you." 2. Tongue-enemies, who employ their tongues against us like swords, arrows, fire, and scourges. "Bless them that curse you." These are very dangerous enemies, and sometimes give very deep and galling wounds (Psa. lvii. 4). And tongue-love will not pay that debt, it must be heart-love (Prov. x. 18). Wit may furnish the former, but true wisdom must furnish the latter in that case. 3. Hand-enemies, who in their actions and deeds are enemies to us; not only in their hearts wishing us ill, and with their tongues speaking ill of us, but to their power, and as they have occasion, doing ill to us—"Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." Our Lord binds us even to love these, and that while they are doing against us. The corrupt heart's motion is to do ill for ill, but by grace we must do good for ill: that is heaven's exchange. II. I come to show WHAT THAT LOVE IS WHICH WE OWE TO OUR ENEMIES:

We must love them. It is necessary to explain this, both negatively and positively. First, Negatively. We are not bound to love them—I. So as for their sakes to be reconciled to and at peace with their sin. We must love and strive to please one another, but to edification, not to destruction. 2. Neither does this love bar seeking redress of wrongs in an orderly way. If God had meant that men should be in the earth, like the fishes in the sea, where the greater swallow up the lesser, without possibility of redress, nothing being left to the weaker but to yield themselves, He had never appointed the magistrate, "a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. xiii. 4). 3. Neither doth it bind us to a love of complacency in them. That is, we are not obliged to take delight in them, make them our intimate and familiar companions, associate with them as our friends, being in a course of enmity against God. Jehoshaphat was reproved for that (2 Chron. xix. 2). David makes it a mark of his sincerity, that he abstained from it (Psa. cxxxix. 21). Solomon tells us, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Prov. xiii. 20). Secondly, Positively. There is a threefold love that uses to be distinguished. First, We owe to our enemies, our real enemies, a love of good-will (Rom. xiii. 9). 1. We must not wish them ill as ill to them (Psa. xl. 14). We must pluck up the roots from which ill wishes to them do spring up. Envy, which looks with an ill eye on their welfare, and would eat it up (Jas. iii. 16); hatred, which blocks up all good from us to them (Lev. xix. 17); grudge, which is a train lying within the heart, ready to be blown up on occasion for mischief to them (Lev. xix. 18); and malice, which like a burning fire pursues them with ill-will (Eph. iv. 31). Our ill wishes can do them no ill, but they do ourselves much. Every ill wish is an item in our accounts before God, and the reigning root of ill-will to our neighbour proves one to be naught (1 John ii. 11). But this extends not to these two cases. (1) The wishing one an ill for good to him, *e.g.*, the losing of such an one's favour, the having of which is a snare to his soul. (2) The wishing evil to a person for the good of many, as that one who is a corrupter of others, and incorrigible in it, may be taken out of the way. 2. We must not take pleasure in any ill that befalls them, as ill to them (Prov. xxiv. 17). 3. We must heartily wish them well (1 Tim. i. 5). "Pray for them," says the text. We must wish them the best things, that they may be for ever happy; may have favour and peace with God (Luke xxxiii. 34); and that for that cause God may grant them faith, repentance, and all other saving graces. For it is a vain wish, and worse than vain, to wish people happy, living and going on in their sins. 4. We must wish them well, as well to them (Psa. cxxii. 8). Men may wish well to their enemies, from a mere carnal principle, not as being well for them, but for themselves. That is, they may wish them repentance, &c., for their own ease, not from any love to their souls. Secondly, We owe to our enemies, our real enemies, a love of beneficence, whereby we will be ready to do them good as we have access; and therefore says the apostle (1 John iii. 18). 1. We must not practise revenge upon them, by doing one ill turn for another they have done us (Rom. xii. 19). 2. We must not withhold from them the good that is due to them from us by any particular tie; but must be sure to be in our duty to them, though they be out of their duty to us, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it" (Prov. iii. 27). 3. We must be ready to do them good as Providence puts an opportunity in our hand. "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men" (Gal. vi. 10). Now we must be ready to do them good—(1) In their temporal interest. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Rom. xii. 20). (2) In their spiritual interest, contributing our utmost endeavours as we have access for their eternal happiness (Prov. xi. 30). (*a*) To speak for their good: for a good word is often of such usefulness to men, that it may be reckoned among good deeds. (*b*) To act for their good (Rom. xii. 20). III. The next general head is to show, THAT THIS LOVING OF OUR ENEMIES IS A NECESSARY MARK AND EVIDENCE OF A CHILD OF GOD. 1. The living in malice and envy against any, is an evidence of one in the black state of nature, a child of hell. Hence says the apostle (Tit. iii. 3). 2. To love our friends and hate our enemies, is nothing above the reach of nature, corrupt as it is. 3. The want of it will evince the person to want the true love of God; and he who wants that, surely is not a child of God, but a child of the devil. 4. It is a necessary consequent of regeneration, and without that no man shall see heaven (1 John iii. 9, 10). 5. If we love not our enemies, we are not like God; and if we be not like Him, we are not His children: for all His children have His

Spirit in them (Gal. iv. 6). And they all bear His image (Col. iii. 10). 6. If we love not our enemies, we have not the Spirit of Christ, and so are none of His (Rom. viii. 9). 7. Without this we are murderers in the sight of God, and so have no share in eternal life. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John iii. 15). This shows us that—1. It is not easy to be a Christian indeed, however easy it is to take on the name and profession of it. 2. Christianity lies in a Christian or Christ-like disposition of heart, and a conduct of life agreeable thereto (Jas. i. 22). 3. Those who pick and chose in religion, taking the easier, and not meddling with the difficult duties thereof laid before them, do but deceive themselves. 4. Christianity is the best friend of human society. O how happy might the world be if it should obtain! What peace, safety, and ease would there be among nations, in neighbourhoods, and in families? It would be an effectual quench-coal to all the fightings, quarrellings, jarrings, strifes, and wrongs, that take away the comfort of society. 5. There are few Christians in the world: the children of God's family are very rare; even as rare as they are who love their enemies. Hereby ye may discern, whether ye are the children of God or not. This is an evidence proposed by Christ Himself, the elder brother of the family. But ye may safely take the comfort of love to your enemies—(1) If it be a loving of them in deed and in truth, and not in word and tongue only (1 John iii. 18). Men for their own sake may give their enemies their best words and wishes, while these are but a white cover of black hatred. (2) If it be evangelical in its spring and rise. A good humour, some particular interest of men's own, may go far in the counterfeit of this. But the true love to our enemies rises from gospel principles. (3) If it be universal, not extending to some only for whom we retain a particular regard, but to all whom we take for our enemies. For if the spring of it be evangelical, it will be universal: since in that case the reason for bearing that love to one, is a reason for bearing it to all; for being in charity with all the world. To press this, let me suggest the following motives. 1. It is the command of God and His Son Jesus Christ. 2. Ye were baptized in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all of you, and many of you have communicated in the Lord's Supper. Since ye have taken on the external badge of the family, walk as becomes members of that holy society. 3. The more ye have of this, ye are the more like God; the less ye have of it, ye are the more unlike Him. Here is your true glory. 4. This is the way to be useful in the world. 5. It will be much to your own advantage. 6. Your claim to the family of God depends on it. I shall conclude with a few directions. 1. Come to Christ, and unite with Him by faith (Heb. xi. 6). 2. Bear up in your hearts a deep sense of your sinfulness, with the faith of pardon thereof. 3. Ply your hearts with the believing thoughts of the beneficence of God to His enemies, and the love of Christ dying for His enemies to redeem them from wrath. 4. Consider that even your enemies were made originally after God's image (Gen. ix. 6), and they may be for all you know the objects of everlasting love; for whom special favour is secured by the eternal transaction. 5. As there are readily none, but they have something desirable about them; so fix ye upon that, and love them for it, as ye will love gold, though ye should find it in a mire. Beware lest the faults of others and their blemishes blind your eyes to their beauties and excellencies. 6. Consider them rather as objects of pity and compassion, than of hatred. 7. Consider the shortness of time, their and your own (Eccles. ix. 6). We have no time to spend in these petty quarrels of this world. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *Returning good for evil, the wisest course*:—Thus, with intimate knowledge of our common life, does Jesus trace the workings of revengeful irritation down from the buffet which burns upon the cheek, to the neighbour who only pesters us with his borrowing. Everywhere he bids us substitute for the passion which calls for retaliation that nobler charity which repays evil with good. Shallow or selfish hearts are apt to say this is to put a premium on aggression, and meekly invite a repetition of it. No doubt there are foolish ways of yielding a literal obedience to this law, which would have no better effect than to provoke a second blow on the other cheek. Yet love is wise, not foolish; and often wiser in its generous confidence than selfishness in its calculating suspiciousness, which it terms prudence. God has made human souls more susceptible, on the whole, to kindness than to any other moral force; and such kindness as this, which can not only forgive, but suffer, offence, is fit to melt the rock and to tame the brute. Good, by the simple and lovely strength of its own goodness, does in the end overcome evil; or if it does not, it is because evil cannot be overcome. At all events, when a patient lover of men is trying, by unaffected meekness and unrequited generosity, to wear

out the evil-doing of the bad and shame them into penitence, he is only taking the course which both God's wisdom has prescribed and God's own love has followed. It is not by His words only, but much more by His acts, that Jesus has fulfilled this law which substitutes generosity for revenge. In His person we see the supreme example of His own rule. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *The good use of an enemy*:—It was the opinion of Diogenes, that our life had need either of faithful friends, or sharp and severe enemies. And indeed our enemies oftentimes do us more good than those we esteem our friends; for a friend will often pass over ordinary failings, and out of respect, connivance, or self-interest, speak only what shall be grateful, or, at least, not displeasing; while an enemy will catch at every error, and sets himself as a spy upon all our actions, whereby, as by a tyrant-governor, we are kept impaled within the bounds of virtue and prudence, beyond whose limits if we dare to wander, we are presently whipped by him into the circle of discretion. Like the sergeant of a regiment, if we be out of rank, he checks us again into the place and file appointed us. To a fool, he is the bellows of passion; but to a wise man, he may be made a schoolmaster of virtue. An enemy also, not only hinders the growth and progress of our vices, but enkindles, exercises, and exalts our virtues. Our patience is improved, by bearing calmly the indignities he strives to load us with; our charity is enflamed by returning good for ill, and by pardoning and forgiving the injuries he does us; our prudence is increased by wisely managing ourselves in our demeanour, so as not to give him opportunity to wound us; our fortitude is strengthened by a manful repelling of scorns, and by giving occasions for the display of an undaunted courage in all our actions; our industry is strengthened and confirmed by watching all his attacks and stratagems; and by our contriving how we may best acquit ourselves in all our contests. And doubtless we ought, in another respect, to be thankful for an enemy. He causes us to show the world our parts and piety, which else perhaps might go with us to our dark graves, and moulder and die with us, quite unknown; or, could not otherwise well be seen, without the vanity of a light and ostentatious mind. Miltiades had missed his trophy, if he had missed an enemy in the Marathonian fields. Our enemies, then, are to be reckoned in the number of those by whom we may be rendered better if we will. As the hardest stone is the most proper for a basis, so there is not a better pedestal to raise a trophy of our virtues upon, than an outward enemy, if we can but keep ourselves from inward enemies, our vices and our weaknesses. (*Owen Felltham.*) *Returning good for evil*:—Difference between man's way of doing it and God's way. When we do it we fail in various ways. 1. Sometimes it is done through sycophancy or cowardice. 2. Through weakness or easy indulgence; we "return good" to a spoilt child (or dependant) for evil which requires checking, by selfishly or idly ignoring it. 3. Through indifference or apathy, want of sensitiveness and real abhorrence of evil; we "take no notice," we condone and are tolerant of it, thinking *thus* to "return good." 4. We calculate that our good-returning will *pay* us; in praise and influence or reputation for instance. 5. We do it at the wrong time (*i.e.*, what is good for the evil-doer at one time is bad for him at another); or we return a wrong (*i.e.*, unsuitable) kind or form of good and in the wrong way; so that it is perverted and misunderstood, and becomes evil. 6. We do it so as to encourage the evil-doer to repeat his injury on another, perhaps more helpless; we harden him by impunity, we refuse to help him against himself. There is thus nothing more vitally important in returning good for evil than to be sure that it is good in the highest sense of the word; God's own good, not our selfish or shallow or one-sided notions of it. *The difficult commandment*:—I. ILLUSTRATE THIS DUTY. 1. The objects—"Enemies." 2. The feelings we must exercise towards them—"Love." (1) So as deeply to compassionate them—feel for them—and sincerely pity them. (2) That we forgive them. (3) That we pray for them. (4) That we are ready to relieve them, and do them good. (5) That we are willing to receive them to favour and friendship on signs of repentance. II. ENFORCE THIS DUTY. 1. On the ground of Christ's indisputable authority. 2. On the ground of Christ's blessed example. 3. Our acceptance with God is suspended upon it. 4. It is essential to true religion here, and to happiness hereafter. III. ANSWER OBJECTIONS. It is objected—1. "That it is incompatible with self-love." We reply, that we are not to love the injury, but the injurer; and the soul's sweetest felicity will thus be produced. 2. "Revenge is sweet." It is so to demons, and wicked men who possess the spirit of the wicked one. But mercy and pity only are really sweet to those who are renewed in their hearts by the saving grace of God. 3. "Revenge is honourable." It

is false honour—the honour of a bad world, and of depraved hearts. It is the glory of the blessed God to forgive us, who have been enemies to Him; and it is our highest dignity to be conformed to His holy image. 4. "It is impossible." So it is to the carnal mind, without Divine aid, without crucifying our own carnal self. Stephen prayed for his murderers. And the blessed Jesus, who knows what is in man, and what he is capable of doing, and whose yoke is easy, has enjoined it; and therefore, however difficult, it is evidently possible. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Love to an enemy*:—During the American Revolutionary War there was living, in Pennsylvania, Peter Miller, pastor of a little Baptist Church. Near the church dived a man who secured an unenviable notoriety by his abuse of Miller and the Baptists. He was also guilty of treason, and was for this sentenced to death. No sooner was the sentence pronounced than Peter Miller set out on foot to visit General Washington, at Philadelphia, to intercede for the man's life. He was told that his prayer could not be granted. "My friend!" exclaimed Miller, "I have not a worse enemy living than that man." "What," rejoined Washington, "you have walked sixty miles to save the life of your enemy? That in my judgment puts the matter in a different light. I will grant you his pardon." The pardon was made out, and Miller at once proceeded on foot to a place fifteen miles distant, where the execution was to take place on the afternoon of the same day. He arrived just as the man was being carried to the scaffold, who, seeing Miller in the crowd, remarked: "There is old Peter Miller. He has walked all the way from Ephrata to have his revenge gratified to-day by seeing me hung." These words were scarcely spoken before Miller gave him his pardon, and his life was spared. *A proof of the gospel being from God*:—Henry Clay once replied to some sneering allusion to the character of American Evangelical Christianity: "I do not know practically what the Churches call religion. I wish I did. But I do know what it effects." And then reciting the case of a bitter feud between two neighbouring families in Kentucky which had kept the community in a ferment for years, but at last had been settled by the conversion of both parties, he said: "I tell you that whatever will change a Kentucky feud into a fellowship so soon and effectively is of God. No power short of His could do it." *Doing good to an enemy*:—In the old persecuting times there lived in Cheapside one who feared God and attended the secret meetings of the saints; and near him there dwelt a poor cobbler, whose wants were often relieved by the merchant; but the poor man was a cross-grained being, and most ungratefully, from hope of reward, laid an information against his kind friend on the score of religion. This accusation would have brought the merchant to death by burning if he had not found a means of escape. Returning to his house, the injured man did not change his generous behaviour to the malignant cobbler, but, on the contrary, was more liberal than ever. The cobbler was, however, in an ill mood, and avoided the good man with all his might, running away at his approach. One day he was obliged to meet him face to face, and the Christian man asked him gently, "Why do you shun me? I am not your enemy. I know all that you did to injure me, but I never had an angry thought against you. I have helped you, and I am willing to do so as long as I live, only let us be friends." Do you marvel that they clasped hands? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Returning good for evil*:—Arcadius, an Argive, was incessantly railing at Philip of Macedon. Venturing once into the dominions of Philip, the courtiers reminded their prince that he had now an opportunity to punish Arcadius for his past insolences, and to put it out of his power to repeat them. The king, however, instead of seizing the hostile stranger and putting him to death, dismissed him loaded with courtesies and kindnesses. Some time after Arcadius's departure from Macedon, word was brought that the king's old enemy was become one of his warmest friends, and did nothing but diffuse his praises wherever he went. On hearing this, Philip turned to his courtiers, and asked, with a smile, "Am not I a better physician than you?" *Good for evil*:—A man was seen one day going in a boat on a river with a large dog, which he wished to get rid of by drowning. He succeeded in throwing the animal into the water; but the creature sought to re-enter the boat. As the man was attempting to beat off the dog from the boat, he fell overboard, and would have been drowned, had not the dog seized him by his coat, and brought him to the shore. *Love to enemies*:—A few poor Cherokee women, who had been converted to Christianity, formed themselves into a society for the propagation of the gospel, which was now become so dear to them. The produce of the first year was about ten dollars, and the question was, To what immediate object this should be applied? At length a poor woman proposed that it should be given to promote

the circulation of the gospel in the Osage nation; "For," said she, "the Master has told us to love and do good to our enemies, and I believe the Osages are the greatest enemies the Cherokees have." *Dr. Mather's ambition*:—It was the laudable ambition of Cotton Mather to be able to say, that "he did not know of any person in the world who had done him an ill office, but he had done him a good one for it." *The Chinese monarch and the rebels*:—A Chinese emperor being told that his enemies had raised an insurrection in one of the distant provinces, "Come, then, my friends," said he, "follow me, and I promise you that we shall quickly destroy them." He marched forward, and the rebels submitted upon his approach. All now thought that he would take the most signal revenge; but were surprised to see the captives treated with mildness and humanity. "How," cried the first minister; "is this the manner in which you fulfil your promise? Your royal word was given that your enemies should be destroyed; and behold you have pardoned them all, and even caressed some of them!" "I promised," replied the emperor, with a gracious air, "to destroy my enemies. I have fulfilled my word; for, see, they are enemies no longer; I have made friends of them!" Let every Christian imitate so noble an example, and learn to overcome evil with good. *Literal obedience; or, rules* versus *principles*:—It is said that many years ago an eminent minister of the gospel, who had been a great athlete in his youth, on returning to his native town soon after he had been ordained, encountered in the High Street an old companion whom he had often fought and thrashed in his godless days. "So, you've turned Christian, they tell me, Charley?" said the man. "Yes," replied the minister. "Well, then, you know the Book says, If you're struck on one cheek, you're to turn the other. Take that"; and with that he hit him a stinging blow. "There then," replied the minister, quietly, turning the other side of his face toward him. The man was brute enough to strike him heavily again. Whereupon the minister said, "And there my commission ends," pulled off his coat, and gave his antagonist a severe thrashing, which no doubt he richly deserved. But did the minister keep the command of Christ? He obeyed the letter of the rule: but did he not violate the principle, the spirit, of it? Hear the other story, and judge. It is told of a celebrated officer in the army that, as he stood leaning over a wall in the barrack-yard, one of his military servants, mistaking him for a comrade, came softly up behind him, and suddenly struck him a hard blow. When the officer looked round, his servant, covered with confusion, stammered out, "I beg your pardon, sir; I thought it was George." His master gently replied: "And if it were George, why strike so hard?" Now which of these two, think you, really obeyed the command of Christ? the minister who made a rule of it and kept to the letter of the rule, or the officer who made a principle of it, and acting on the spirit of it, neglected the letter? Obviously, the minister disobeyed the command in obeying it, while the officer obeyed the command in disobeying it. And here we may see the immense superiority of a principle over a rule. Take a rule, any rule, and there is only one way of keeping it, the way of literal obedience, and this may often prove a foolish and even a disobedient way. But get a principle, and there are a thousand ways in which you may apply it, all of which may be wise, beneficial to you, and no less beneficial to your neighbour. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Turning the other cheek*:—A Swiss colporteur entered a three-story house, in which, according to the custom of the country, three different families lived. He began with the highest story, and sold copies of the Scriptures in this and in the next. On inquiring about the family on the ground-floor, he was warned not to enter, but he did enter. He found both the man and his wife at home. He offered his Bibles; his offer was replied to with abuse, and a positive order to leave the house instantaneously; he, however, stayed, urging them to buy and read God's holy Word. The man then rose in a violent rage, and struck him a severe blow on the cheek. Up to this moment the colporteur stood quietly with his knapsack on his back. He now deliberately unstrapped it, laid it on the table, and turned up the sleeve of his right arm, all the while steadily looking his opponent in the face. The colporteur was a very strong man. Addressing his opponent he said, "Look at my hand—its furrows show that I have worked; feel my muscles—they show that I am fit for work. Look me straight in the face; do I quail before you? Judge, then, for yourself if it is fear that moves me to do what I am about to do. In this Book my Master says, 'When they smite you on one cheek, turn to them the other also.' You have smitten me on one cheek; here is the other! Smite! I will not return the blow." The man was thunderstruck. He did not smite, but bought the Book,

which, under the influence of God's Spirit, works marvels in the human heart. (*W. Baxendale.*) *Bible precepts to be spiritually interpreted:*—You cannot make language more explicit, yet I say that to carry it out literally would be to pervert human society so that there could be no such thing as Christianity in this world. I affirm this, not theoretically, but as the result of the revelation of God's providence among men, and as a fulfilment of God's teaching in revelation—that great unending perpetual revelation that is going on in the human race. It would destroy the whole framework and order of society. That in a far-off state, that in the ripeness of human development, the law of non-resistance will have a universal application, I think to be more than likely; but that it should have a universal application now is not possible. Take another point, that of almsgiving. Do our friends, the Quakers, who insist upon the literal translation of the passage on the subject of non-resistance, take a literal view of this passage also? Do they put their hands in their pockets for all that ask of them, and draw them out full? No. "This," they say, "you are to take in its spirit." Yes, I say that you are to take it in its spirit, and not in its letter. A literal interpretation of it would slay mankind, almost. It would well-nigh destroy the business-life of organized society. It would break up fellowship between man and man. It would promote the very opposite of that which it is the object of the New Testament to inculcate. Take the spirit of the command. Interpret it as enjoining the practice of generosity, of helpfulness, of kindness one toward another. Accept it as inculcating a disposition in every man to look, not on his own things, but on the things of others. That is to say, make it a principle adaptable according to your feeling and judgment. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Cloak and coat:*—The Jews of the first century always wore the tunic and mantle or robe. These were the two indispensable garments. The tunic was of linen. It fitted the figure, had sleeves and came down to the feet. It was worn next to the skin, or over an under-garment of linen very full and long. That of the rabbi, scribe, or doctor, was specially large, and yet was not to be visible more than a handbreadth under the mantle. The mantle or robe was worn over all. A man must be very poor to have only one cloak, and yet this is what Christ enjoined on His disciples. According to Luke's Gospel He said one day, "If any man will take away thy cloak, forbid him not take thy coat also." This precept can be understood; a robber would naturally lay hold first of the outer garment. But Matthew puts it the other way. Under this form it is harder to understand, and we may well suppose that in transcribing [Matthew's version] the copyist may have misplaced the two words coat and cloak. (*E. Stapfer, D.D.*) *Almsgiving:*—Many of you know the name of William Law, the author of the "Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life." He was one of the best of clergymen, and was bent on leading a life of Christian obedience in the most thorough and unshrinking manner. He and two rich friends agreed to live together, and to spend as little as possible on themselves, and to give away almost their joint income. They did so by relieving all who applied to them and who represented themselves as in want. The result was that they attracted crowds of idle and lying mendicants. For a long time Law shut his eyes to the evil of which he and his friends were thus the occasion; until at last his fellow-parishioners were driven to present a memorial to the magistrates, entreating them in some way to prevent Mr. Law from thus demoralizing their parish. A sad and pathetic incident illustrating the perplexities and contradictions of human life! The best men are not above the need of learning wisdom from experience. The real Christian duty of these good people was not to be less self-denying and liberal, but to consider anxiously how they might lay out their means so as to do the most good and the least evil. If you give sixpence to a poor creature, when you know, or may know, if you think or inquire, that the sixpence will be turned at once into intoxicating drink, you are putting a stumbling-block or occasion of falling in the way of a brother or sister for whom Christ died. What is it that forbids you to do this? Is it political economy? Perhaps, but it is certainly also Christian duty, Christian love. I once heard an excellent clergyman say, "Warn as you will, if I were to refuse help to the apparently hungry woman who begs me to give her food, I could not eat my own dinner in comfort." My answer to such a remark would be, "What does it matter whether you eat your own dinner in comfort or not? This is a very secondary consideration, compared with the question of doing good or harm to the brother or sister for whom Christ died." People are imposed upon, as we say, not unfrequently: when they find it out they are vexed; but too often their regret is limited to their own humiliation, to their own insignificant loss; and they fail to reproach themselves for having in their care-

lessness put an occasion of falling in the way of the weak brother for whom Christ died. (*J. H. Davies, M.A.*)

Ver. 31. **And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.**—*What would we that men should do unto us?*—1. That they should deal with us honestly. 2. That they should treat us generously. 3. That they should deal with us faithfully; warning us of any danger into which we are liable to fall. 4. That they should be patient with us. (*H. S. Brown.*) *The royal law*:—I. THE LAW ITSELF—1. Teaches us to take the initiative; to begin to do for others what we conceive they ought to do for us. 2. Teaches us that the standard we set up for others must be the measure of our own conduct. 3. Teaches us that the end of our duty is the good of humanity. II. THE WORKING OF THE LAW. 1. In the home-life. 2. In our social relationships. 3. In relation to business in all shapes and forms. 4. In relation to party politics. 5. In relation to church-life. (*J. B. Walton, B.A.*) "*Do as you would be done by*":—Men who neglect Christianity nevertheless do acknowledge this precept; men of experience, practical, intelligent, when talked to upon the subject of religion will not scruple to say: "My religion is this—'Do as you would be done by.'" And yet they fail to apply this to the claim of Jesus Christ upon them. All who have lived and died, all who are now living—all combined, have not the claim on my life that Jesus Christ has. I ask you how you dare to say that all your religion is "Do as you would be done by," if you fail to apply it to Him who has done so much for you. Do it, and you must dedicate all you have and all you are to His glory. (*Dr. Deems.*) *Was the golden rule original?*—The gold in the Golden Rule is not its newness but its goodness. (*A. Macleod, D.D.*) *The rule and the test of morality*:—The light and warmth of the sun no more clearly bespeak the hand that formed it, than the excellence of this rule of conduct declares it to be from God. Although no rule is perhaps so universally admired, yet none is more universally broken. I. To EXPLAIN THE RULE. In explaining the rule, let us examine the different parts of it. "All things whatsoever." This clause declares its universal extent. We may do some things, perhaps many things, to others which we would wish them to do to us, and yet in many other things be wholly and habitually selfish. A man, for example, may give food to the hungry, but habitually overreach and defraud. No matter who he is, whether friend or enemy, if he is a fellow-creature, one of your own species, a man, you must be governed by this rule in all that you do toward him. "Do ye even so." In this clause we are directed not only to do the things themselves which we would that others should do to us, but also to the utmost exactness in doing so. What, then, are we to understand by the clause, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you"? It has commonly been supposed, by commentators, that a literal interpretation of this text is inconsistent with other plain scriptural duties, and that therefore the rule is to be explained by certain qualifications or restrictions not expressed in it; for our desires of good from others may be selfish and extravagant, and to make such desires the measure of what we are to do to others, would in many cases be doing what is not required, as well as what is forbidden. For example, a rich man may feel and say, "If I were in that poor man's place and he in mine, I should wish him to give me his estate; and now, if I am to do as I would be done by, I am to show him the same kindness, and give him my estate." This difficulty evidently arises from inadequate views of the text. The rule contains its own explanation and limitation. If I am to do to others as I would that they should do to me, then I am to love them as I love myself; not them more than myself, nor myself more than them. If, therefore, I were to give my estate, if I were rich, to a poor man, I should do that which in this respect would imply that I loved him *more* than myself, which would be a palpable violation of the rule. Besides, how can I, putting myself in the poor man's place, wish another to give me his estate—wish that he should impoverish himself to enrich me, without violating the rule. In this very wish I am desiring my own happiness more than my neighbour's, and thus I counteract the very spirit and letter of the rule itself. In deciding what we would that others should do to us—*i.e.*, in forming our desires of good from others—we are to remember that we are to cherish the same desires to impart good to them. Thus one desire is to check and regulate and define the other. Thus the rule aims directly at the utter extinction of all selfish inordinate desires of good, and requires simply that what we would on disinterested principles desire from others, were we in their circumstances and they

in ours, we are to do to them. Let us examine this a little further. We are to do to others what we would on truly benevolent principles desire from them. The existence of the happiness of one man, other things being equal, is of equal value with that of another. The simple fact that the happiness of one of the two is mine, gives it no additional value. It has precisely the same value as when it is the happiness of another. All the value which I can reasonably attach to my happiness, because it is mine, he can as reasonably attach to his, because it is his. All that I am to myself he is to himself, and all that I am as it respects him he is as it respects me. The reason why I should regard his happiness as much as my own, circumstances being the same, is as plain and conclusive as that things of equal value ought to be equally loved or desired. If my right lays him under obligation to me, his right lays me under the same obligation to him. There is a great diversity in the character and stations of men. It is very desirable there should be, and as it is not in our power so it is not our duty, on principles of true benevolence, to wish to alter them. There is, therefore, a consequent variety of duties owed to men. But we can easily determine, by the rule before us, what these duties are. Thus a ruler is to treat his subjects as he would wish to be treated were he a subject. But he is not bound to yield that submission to his subjects which, as a ruler, he justly demands of them. This he could not do without sacrificing the public good to private interest—*i.e.*, he could not do it on disinterested principles. For, if he were a subject, he could not on such principles wish for the submission and obedience of a ruler to himself. A judge is not required to acquit, though he might on selfish principles wish, were he the criminal, to be acquitted, because he could not on benevolent principles wish the laws of justice to be abandoned, and the guilty to go unpunished. Thus, too, a parent or head of a family is not required to neglect to promote the welfare of his own household, to promote the welfare of his neighbours, because on truly disinterested principles he could not wish his neighbour to do so by him. So, also, an individual is not required to sacrifice his own happiness to promote an equal degree of happiness in another individual, because it is as right that the former should enjoy it, if but one can enjoy it, as that the latter should; and therefore the former could not, on truly disinterested principles, desire that the latter should do so by him. On the same principle we are not required to put our property into common stock for the equal benefit of all. This would tend, as a general rule, to promote so many evils, that if we were poor we could not, on benevolent principles, desire it. The amount of this rule of our Lord is, that in determining what our duty is to others, and in performing it, our selfishness is to have no voice and no influence. It is as if our Lord had said: Regard your neighbour in his wants, his rights, his happiness, as another self. Ask, then, how, as a reasonable, disinterested man, you would be treated by him: and treat him exactly in that manner. II. To ENFORCE THE DUTY. 1. God has commanded it. 2. The duty is obviously reasonable and right. 3. This rule has a most direct and effectual tendency to promote the happiness of men. 4. Obedience to this rule is the most ennobling character of man. The spirit inculcated is the very opposite of selfishness; and selfishness is the very substance of moral degradation. But behold the man who loves his neighbour as himself! Behold him raised, as it were to heaven, by the principles just described; behold his heart fixed on the good of his fellow-men, his friends, his enemies, his neighbour, and the stranger, as on his own happiness! What is there lovely, what of good report, what of moral beauty, that does not shine in such a character? Is it not real greatness to be like him? 5. We can neither be fit for, nor admitted into heaven without this character. It is impossible not to see in every page of the Scriptures the necessity of a fitness for heaven which consists in the subjugation of selfish to benevolent principles, and which are all summed up in one expressive term, "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Remarks: 1. We see that many things which are deemed consistent with this rule of Christ's are direct violations of it. Why does the duelist consent that his antagonist should take his life if he can do it? That he may have an opportunity to take that of a fellow-creature. Is this being willing to give up his life to another from motives of disinterested love? Must one or the other die; and rather than that his neighbour should die, does he consent to die himself? Why, too, is the gambler, or the man who takes undue advantage of his neighbour in trade, willing that others should do to him as he does to them? For the same reason substantially, as it respects the morality of the act that governs the duelist. They are willing that others should treat them thus, that they may obtain, or at least have the

opportunity of obtaining, their neighbours' property without an equivalent. For, if they are really willing their neighbours should have their property without an equivalent, why not give it to them directly? My hearers, such is the deception which men practise on themselves, in these and a thousand other cases. They are not willing to do as they pretend; the proof is, that they do not do it. They are at most willing to run the hazard of being injured themselves, for the privilege of injuring their neighbour. 2. We remark that there is very little genuine morality in the world. 3. How it would commend the religion of the gospel to all, if there were more of the spirit of the text manifested by its professors. 4. I cannot close without remarking, how much we all need a Saviour! I say all; for, let it be noticed, that to condemn what is wrong in the professors of religion, does not justify what is wrong in those who are not. (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*) *On the great Christian law of reciprocity between man and man*:—Let a man, in fact, give himself up to a strict and literal observation of the precept in this verse, and it will impress a twofold direction upon him. It will not only guide him to certain performances of good in behalf of others, but it will guide him to the regulation of his own desires of good from them. For his desires of good from others are here set up as the measure of his performances of good to others. The more selfish and unbounded his desires are, the larger are those performances with the obligation of which he is burdened. Whatsoever he would that others should do unto him, he is bound to do unto them; and therefore, the more he gives way to ungenerous and extravagant wishes of service from those who are around him, the heavier and more insupportable is the load of duty which he brings upon himself. The commandment is quite imperative, and there is no escaping from it; and if he, by the excess of his selfishness, should render it impracticable, then the whole punishment due to the guilt of casting aside the authority of this commandment, follows in that train of punishment which is annexed to selfishness. There is one way of being relieved from such a burden. There is one way of reducing this verse to a moderate and practicable requirement; and that is, just to give up selfishness — just to stifle all ungenerous desires — just to moderate every wish of service or liberality from others, down to the standard of what is right and equitable; and then there may be other verses in the Bible, by which we are called to be kind even to the evil and to the unthankful. But most assuredly this verse lays upon us none other thing than that we should do such services for others as are right and equitable. The operation is somewhat like that of a governor or fly in mechanism. This is a very happy contrivance, by which all that is defective or excessive in the motion, is confined within the limits of equability; and every tendency, in particular, to any mischievous acceleration is restrained. The impulse given by this verse to the conduct of man among his fellows, would seem, to a superficial observer, to carry him to all the excesses of a most ruinous and quixotic benevolence. But let him only look to the skilful adaptation of the fly. Just suppose the control of moderation and equity to be laid upon his own wishes, and there is not a single impulse given to his conduct beyond the rate of moderation and equity. You are not required here to do all things whatsoever in behalf of others, but to do all things whatsoever for them, that you would should be done unto yourself. This is the check by which the whole of the bidden movement is governed, and kept from running out into any hurtful excess. And such is the beautiful operation of that piece of moral mechanism that we are now employed in contemplating, that while it keeps down all the aspirations of selfishness, it does, in fact, restrain every extravagancy, and impresses on its obedient subjects no other movement than that of an even and inflexible justice. This rule of our Saviour's, then, prescribes moderation to our desires of good from others, as well as generosity to our doings in behalf of others; and makes the first the measure of obligation to the second. There is nothing in the humble condition of life they occupy which precludes them from all that is great or graceful in human charity. There is a way in which they may equal, and even outpeer, the wealthiest of the land, in that very virtue of which wealth alone has been conceived to have the exclusive inheritance. There is a pervading character in humanity which the varieties of rank do not obliterate; and as, in virtue of the common corruption, the poor man may be as effectually the rapacious despoiler of his brethren, as the man of opulence above him—so, there is a common excellence attainable by both; and through which the poor man may, to the full, be as splendid in generosity as the rich, and yield a far more important contribution to the peace and comfort of society. To make this plain—it is in virtue of a generous doing on the part of a

rich man, when a sum of money is offered for the relief of want; and it is in virtue of a generous desire on the part of a poor man, when this money is refused; when, with the feeling that his necessities do not just warrant him to be yet a burden upon others, he declines to touch the offered liberality; when, with a delicate recoil from the unlooked-for proposal, he still resolves to put it for the present away, and to find, if possible, for himself a little longer; when, standing on the very margin of dependence, he would yet like to struggle with the difficulties of his situation, and to maintain this severe but honourable conflict, till hard necessity should force him to surrender. Let the money which he has thus so nobly shifted from himself take some new direction to another; and who, we ask, is the giver of it? The first and most obvious reply is, that it is he who owned it; but, it is still more emphatically true, that it is he who has declined it. It came originally out of the rich man's abundance; but it was the noble-hearted generosity of the poor man that handed it onwards to its final destination. Thus it is, that when Christianity becomes universal, the doings of the one party, and the desires of the other, will meet and overpass. The poor will wish for no more than the rich will be delighted to bestow; and the rule of our text, which every real Christian at present finds so practicable, will, when carried over the face of society, bind all the members of it into one consenting brotherhood. The duty of doing good to others will then coalesce with that counterpart duty which regulates our desires of good from them; and the work of benevolence will, at length, be prosecuted without that alloy of rapacity on the one hand, and distrust on the other, which serve so much to fester and disturb the whole of this ministration. To complete this adjustment, it is in every way as necessary to lay all the incumbent moralities on those who ask, as on those who confer; and never till the whole text, which comprehends the wishes of man as well as his actions, wield its entire authority over the species, will the disgusts and the prejudices, which form such a barrier between the ranks of human life, be effectually done away. It is not by the abolition of rank, but by assigning to each rank its duties, that peace and friendship and order will at length be firmly established in our world. We should not have dwelt so long upon this lesson, were it not for the essential Christian principle that is involved in it. The morality of the gospel is not more strenuous on the side of the duty of giving of this world's goods when it is needed, than it is against the desire of receiving when it is not needed. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *The golden rule taught by an Indian*:—Some time before the war between the English and the Indians in Pennsylvania broke out, an English gentleman, who lived on the borders of the province, was standing one evening at his door, when an Indian came and desired a little food. He answered, he had none for him. He then asked for a little beer, and received the same answer. Not yet discouraged, he begged for a little water; but the gentleman only answered, "Get you gone for an Indian dog." The Indian fixed his eye for a little time on the Englishman, and then went away. Some time after, this gentleman, who was fond of shooting, pursued his game till he was lost in the woods. After wandering a while, he saw an Indian hut, and went to it to inquire his way to some plantation. The Indian said, "It is a great way off, and the sun is near going down; you cannot reach it to-night, and if you stay in the woods the wolves will eat you up; but if you have a mind to lodge with me, you may." The gentleman gladly accepted the invitation, and went in. The Indian boiled a little venison for him, gave him some rum and water, and then spread some deer skins for him to lie upon; having done this, himself and another Indian went and lay at the other side of the hut. He called the gentleman in the morning, telling him that the sun was up, and that he had a great way to go to the plantation, but that he would show him the way. Taking their guns, the two Indians went forward, and he followed. When they had gone several miles, the Indian told him he was within two miles of the plantation he wanted; then, stepping before him, he said, "Do you know me?" In great confusion, the gentleman replied, "I have seen you." "Yes," said the Indian, you have seen me at your own door; and I will give you a piece of advice: when a poor Indian, who is hungry, and dry, and faint, again asks you for a little meat or drink, do not bid him 'get him gone for an Indian dog.'" So he turned and went away. Which of these two was to be commended, or which acted most agreeably to the Saviour's golden rule in the text?

Vers. 32–34. **For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye?**—*The heroic in Christianity*:—Our Master, evidently, from the verses before us, did not

come into the world to teach us to conform to the ways of our fellow-men; but He would have us go far beyond the ordinary conduct of our fellows. If I were called to address an ordinary company of men and women upon feats of valour, I might speak with bated breath if I exhorted them to heroism in war; but if I had lived some thousands of years ago, and had been called upon to talk to Spartan warriors, all equipped for battle, men graved and scored with the scars of conflict, I should set no bounds to my exhortations; I would bestir them as a lion arouses the young lions and urges them to the prey. I should tell them that their name and parentage should not be disgraced by the idea of defeat, but that they must expect victory, and seize it as their right. No orator would have spoken to Spartans as to Bœotians: it was their very life and business to fight, and deeds of prowess were therefore to be looked for from them. Is it not so with you, ye followers of the Crucified? I. MUCH THAT IS NATURALLY GOOD MAY FALL FAR SHORT OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. Do not make the mistake of saying that moral excellence is not good. Some have broadly declared that there is no good thing in an unconverted man; but this is scarcely true. Many who are total strangers to the grace of God yet exhibit sparkling forms of the human virtues in integrity, generosity, kindness, courage, self-sacrifice, and patience. If the question be whether our character is the offspring of nature or of grace, it will be a sad thing if the verdict should turn out to be that it is the dead child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child of grace Divine. We may be decorated with gems which glitter and glow, and yet they may be mere paste, and none of them the work of God's Spirit. Observe the three things mentioned in the text against which there is no law, but of which much is to be spoken in commendation. These acts are good, but they do not come up to Christ's standard. 1. It is very proper and seemly that kindly feeling should awaken kindly feeling in return; that to those who are friendly to us we should be friendly also. We say "Love begets love," and it is natural that it should do so. Our duty is not merely to love those who love us, but to love them that hate and despitefully entreat us. 2. The next thing, in the verses before us, is grateful return. "If ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye?" It is a very right thing that if persons have served us we should endeavour to repay the benefit. Followers of Jesus are called upon to do good to those who have done them harm. You know the old saying, Evil for good is devil-like, evil for evil is beast-like, good for good is man-like, good for evil is God-like. Rise you to that God-like point. If a man has taken the bread out of your mouth, seize the first opportunity to help him to a livelihood. 3. Again, mention is made of helping others in a neighbourly way with the expectation of their returning the friendly deed. "If ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye?" Temporary help is often rendered in the expectation that, if ever we are in the same need, we shall only need to ask, and receive like aid. I lend you an axe, and you will one day lend me a saw. I help you and you help me—a very proper thing to do, and the more of such brotherly and neighbourly co-operation the better, but still there is nothing so very virtuous in it. You as a Christian are to rise to something higher than this: to be ready to help without the expectation of being helped again. II. CHRISTIAN VIRTUE IS IN MANY RESPECTS EXTRAORDINARY, AND MIGHT BE CALLED HEROIC. In the point of love, kindness, consideration for men's needs, and desire to do good, the Christian life is to rise above every other, till it becomes sublime. Heathen moralists recommended kindness, but they did not suggest its being lavished upon enemies. I have been somewhat amused by the caution of Cicero. He says, "Kindness must not be shown to a youth nor to an old man; not to the aged, because he is likely to die before he can have an occasion to repay you the benefit; and not to the young man, for he is sure to forget it." Our Lord bids us seek no reward from men, and he assures us that then a greater reward will come. We shall by shunning it secure it. We shall find a reward in being unrewarded. Next, read Luke ix. 54, 55, and you will see that the Christian is to rise above human passion in the matter of gentleness. In the elevation of his joy the Christian is also to rise above all other men. He may rejoice as they do in the common bounties of providence, but that joy is to hold very secondary rank. Even in his own success as a Christian worker he takes but measured satisfaction. Read Luke x. 20. The Christian is heroic, next, in his fearlessness (Luke xii. 4). The true believer is to be willing to bear reproach; ay, and to bear much more than reproach, as saints of God have done times out of mind. See how far the true believer is lifted up above the world, as you turn to Luke xii. 22, where the Lord bids us cultivate a holy ease of heart as to all temporal things. The rich

man finds his wealth in his bursting barns, but the believer finds his treasure in the all-sufficiency of his God. Another point in which Christian heroism is seen is in humility and in delight in service. Turn to the fourteenth chapter and see our Lord's directions to His disciples not to seek out the highest, but rather the lowest room, for, saith He, "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Habitually a Christian man is to have a modest esteem of himself. III. THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION SUPPLIES DUE NOURISHMENT FOR THE MOST HEROIC LIFE. 1. The economy of grace requires it. 2. Think again, brethren, we are helped to holy heroism by the reward which it brings; for our blessed Master, though He bids us spurn the thought of reward on earth, yet tells us that there is a reward in the thing itself. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The moral demands of the Lord Jesus Christ*:—Here, for instance, is one of the maxims of Epictetus, "It is possible that you observe some other person more honoured than yourself, invited to entertainments when you are left out, saluted before you are taken any notice of, thought more proper to advise with, and his counsel followed rather than yours. But are these forms of respect which are paid to him good or evil? If they deserve to be esteemed good, this ought to be matter of joy to you that that person is happy in them; but if they be evil, how unreasonable is it to be troubled that they have not fallen to your own share." That was how a heathen moralist thought we ought to regard the honours paid to other men. I want to know whether many of us have passed far beyond him? If we consider our social life and our political and philanthropic movements, is it quite clear that we Christian Englishmen are in advance of this ancient Roman slave? Take another of the maxims of Epictetus, "My duty to my father is to assist and take care of him, to support his age and his infirmities, to yield to him and pay him service and respect upon all occasions. . . . But you will say he is a rigorous and unnatural father. What is that to the purpose? You are to remember, this obligation to duty does not arise from the consideration of his goodness, but from the relation he bears to you. No failings of his can make him cease to be a father, and consequently none can absolve you from the obedience of a son. Your brother has done you an injury, but do not suppose that this dispenses with the kindness you owe him. You are still to observe what becomes *you;* not to imitate what misbecame *him.*" I think that I have known Christian men and women who have supposed that the harshness of a parent relieved them from their obligations as children, and that the injury they had received from a brother justified them in showing an unbrotherly and unsisterly spirit. Christ assumes that our standard of moral duty ought always to be loftier than that which exists among those who have never heard of His teaching. If, without self-reproach, we permit ourselves to indulge in a spirit which even heathen moralists condemned, how can we answer his question, What do ye more than others? Epictetus was originally a Greek slave. Let us turn to a man of another sort—Marcus Antoninus the Roman emperor. "A branch," he says, "cut off from the adjacent branch must of necessity be cut off from the whole tree also. So, too, a man, when he is separated from another man, has fallen off from the whole social community." How many of us have a profounder conception than the heathen emperor of the duty of avoiding personal quarrels, of suppressing the vanity, the resentment, the wilfulness and selfishness by which we might be separated from our neighbour and so cut off from the life of the race? Take his caution against forming hard judgments of others. He says, what is true in innumerable cases, "Thou dost not even understand whether men are doing wrong or not, for many things are done with a certain reference to circumstances. And, in short, a man must learn a great deal to enable him to pass a correct judgment on another man's acts." I wonder whether most of us, before passing hard judgments on others, remember how much we must know, before we can judge them fairly? Here is another maxim, "Whatever any one else does or says, *I* must be good—just as if the gold, or the emerald, or the purple were always saying this—'Whatever any one does or says, I must keep my colour.' It is royal to do good and to be abused." Some of you are masters. Do you see clearly that whatever your servants "do or say" you must be always just and kind and considerate to them? Some of you are workmen. Have you made up your minds that you must always be good workmen, no matter whether you have a good master or a bad master; that you must serve a bad master as faithfully and as zealously as you serve a good one? And whatever our position may be, is it the constant temper of our mind to "do good," whether we are praised for it or not—to "do good" even when we are "abused" for doing it? Again, "If

any man is able to convince me and show me that I do not think or act right, I will gladly change, for I seek the truth, by which no man was ever injured. But he is injured who abides in his error and ignorance." It is not my experience that many Christian people cultivate this noble spirit. But what I am especially anxious to insist upon just now is that in the writings of heathen moralists there are maxims inculcating virtues which some Christian people have never thought of trying to attain. Their moral standard is so defective that in many points they are inferior to heathen men in their conceptions of duty. Christ assumes that His servants will be at least as clear-sighted as the heathen, and that the virtues which the heathen honoured we shall honour, and He goes on to require more. What this higher law is, in all its applications, we have to learn, and we learn it very gradually; it is one of the great subjects about which Christian men should be always learning. Christ has not given us a complete code, but He has given us specimens of the contrast between this higher law and the common laws recognized by ordinary men. We have to work out the whole code of Christian morals in the light of this teaching. This is the method of the new science. We have to take the virtues which are recognized as virtues by all the world—honesty, industry, kindness, temperance, the spirit of cheerful contentment with our condition—and we have to learn for ourselves the larger requirements of Christ in relation to every one of them. The Spirit of Christ, if we seek His guidance, will lead us into all the truth. Every Christian man must be left very much to the guidance of the Spirit in these high matters. We can do something to help each other, but not very much. I should have to be a draper to learn what a Christian draper should do "more" than other honest drapers; and a carpenter to learn what a Christian carpenter should do "more" than other good carpenters; and a banker to learn what a Christian banker should do "more" than other upright bankers. The root of the whole matter lies in the fact that we are the servants of Christ, and that very much of the service we render to Christ consists in the service we render to our fellow-men, whether we are ministers, lawyers, mechanics, clerks, housemaids, milliners, merchants, or tradesmen. If we are zealous to please Christ we shall find many ways of doing it of which some of us, perhaps, have no conception; and this will result in nobler ideas of moral duty in all the common affairs of life. While many other men, in their business transactions, keep only just within the limits of the law which is administered by human tribunals, let Christian men be governed by the rules of a diviner equity. While many other men do public work as long as they are honoured for doing it, let Christian men go on doing it whether they are honoured or not, accepting it as the service to which God has appointed them. Let the Christian manufacturer recognize the Higher Law, in the quality of his goods, in his treatment of his partners and his men, and in his careful avoidance of whatever personal extravagances and whatever commercial risks and speculations might prevent him from paying his debts. Let the Christian builder be so exact in doing his work according to the specifications that his employers shall feel that a clerk of the works is a useless expense. Let the Christian carpenter and engine-fitter make the eye of the foreman unnecessary. But perhaps some of you will say that conduct of this kind will prevent you from getting on in the world; that if you act in the way I have described you will make money slowly; that if you do not push to the front and keep yourself there, you will never get your value recognized. The real reply—the Christian reply—to your objection is, that it is not your business to get on in the world, to make money, to have your worth recognized, but to serve God. You cannot serve both God and mammon. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*) *Selfishness the essence of moral depravity*:—I. Let us consider WHY SINNERS LOVE THEMSELVES. It is plainly supposed in the text that sinners love themselves, for they are said to love those that love them, which could not be accounted for if they were wholly destitute of love to themselves. In other passages of Scripture, they are said to be lovers of their ownselves, and to seek their own things and not the things of others. But this is too evident from experience and observation to need any proof. Sinners certainly love themselves. But why? Every creature, perhaps, whether rational or irrational, takes pleasure in receiving its proper food; but this love to its food is not love to itself, or selfishness. The saint and the sinner may equally love honey, because it is agreeable to the taste; but this love to honey is neither interested nor disinterested love, and of course is neither virtuous nor vicious. Men never love any particular food from a moral motive, but from the constitution of their nature, in which they are passive, and have no active concern. The case is different in loving themselves. In this

they properly act, and act from a moral motive. Sinners love themselves not because they are a part of the intellectual system, nor because the general good requires them to regard their personal happiness, but because they are themselves. They love their own interest because it is their own, in distinction from the interest of all other created or uncreated beings. This is a free, voluntary exercise, which is contrary to their reason and conscience, and which they know to be in its own nature wrong. Their interest is really no more valuable for being theirs, than if it belonged to others; and they themselves are no more valuable than other creatures of the same character and capacity. To love themselves, therefore, because they are themselves, is to love themselves from a motive peculiar to selfish creatures. II. We are to consider WHY SINNERS LOVE OTHERS. Our Saviour said to His disciples, that if they were of the world, the world would love them. And He said in the text that sinners love those that love them. For the same reason that sinners love themselves, they naturally love those that love them and are disposed to do them good. As they love their own interest because it is their own, so they love every person or object which serves to increase or preserve their own interest. They do not value and love others because they are valuable and worthy to be loved, but merely because they view them as means or instruments of securing or advancing their own personal happiness. They value their fellow-men for the same reason that they value their own houses and lands, flocks and herds. III. It remains to inquire WHY THERE IS NO MORAL GOODNESS IN THE LOVE WHICH SINNERS EXERCISE TOWARDS THEMSELVES AND OTHERS? Christ supposes that they all know the nature of their love, and that there is nothing virtuous or praiseworthy in it. "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye?" We never thank men for loving themselves, nor for loving us merely for their own sake. It is the unanimous sentiment of mankind that there is no virtue in that love which flows entirely from mercenary motives. But why? Here then I would observe—1. That there is no moral goodness in the love which sinners feel and express, because it is not a conformity to that love which God feels and expresses. He is good unto all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. He seeks not only His own glory, but the real good of others. It bears no conformity to the love of God, which is the standard of all moral perfection. 2. The selfish love of sinners has no moral goodness in it, because it is no obedience to the Divine law. This law requires them to love God with all the heart, and to love their fellow-men as themselves. But when they love themselves because they are themselves, and love others only because they have received or expect to receive benefit from them, do they obey the Divine law? 3. There is no moral goodness in the selfishness of sinners, because it is the very essence of all moral evil. All the wickedness of Satan consists in his selfishness. He loves himself because he is himself, and loves only those who love him, because their love serves to promote what he considers as his cause and interest. IMPROVEMENT: 1. If sinners may love themselves and others from mere selfish motives, then it is easy to account for all their kind and friendly conduct towards their fellow creatures, consistently with their total depravity. 2. If the moral depravity of sinners consists in selfishness, then the moral depravity of Adam consisted in selfishness, and not in the mere want of holiness. 4. If sinners are constantly under the governing influences of selfishness, then they must experience an essential change in their affections, in order to be saved. 5. If sinners love themselves because they are themselves, which is selfish and sinful, then after they experience a saving change from selfishness to benevolence, they love themselves in a manner totally different from what they did before. They love themselves in the same manner that God loves them. 6. Finally, it appears from this discourse that it is highly necessary to explain and inculcate the total selfishness of sinners. They never will believe that they are totally depraved, until they see wherein total depravity consists. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

Ver. 35. **And ye shall be the children of the Highest.**—*The Christian aim and motive*:—1st. The Christian aim—perfection. 2nd. The Christian motive—because it is right and Godlike to be perfect. I. THE CHRISTIAN AIM is this—to be perfect. "Be ye therefore perfect." Now distinguish this, I pray you, from mere worldly morality. It is not conformity to a creed that is here required, but aspiration after a state. It is not demanded of us to perform a number of duties, but to yield obedience to a certain spiritual law. Will not that inflame our pride, and increase our natural vainglory? Now the nature and possibility of human perfection, what it is and how it is possible, are both contained in one single expression in the text.

"Even as your father which is in Heaven is perfect." The relationship between father and son implies consanguinity, likeness, similarity of character and nature. God *made* the insect, the stone, the lily; but God is not the Father of the caterpillar, the lily, or the stone. When, therefore, God is said to be our Father, something more is implied in this than that God created man. And so when the Son of Man came proclaiming the fact that we are the children of God, it was in the truest sense a revelation. He told us that the nature of God resembles the nature of man, that love in God is not a mere figure of speech, but means the same thing as love in us, and that Divine anger is the same thing as human anger divested of its emotions and imperfections. When we are commanded to be like God, it implies that God has that nature of which we have already the germs. And this has been taught by the incarnation of the Redeemer. Things absolutely dissimilar in their nature cannot mingle. Water cannot coalesce with fire—water cannot mix with oil. If, then, Humanity and Divinity were united in the person of the Redeemer, it follows that there must be something kindred between the two, or else the incarnation had been impossible. So that the incarnation is the realization of man's perfection. Here, however, you will observe another difficulty. It will be said at once—there is something in this comparison of man with God which looks like blasphemy, because one is finite and the other infinite. Let us, then, endeavour to find out the evidences of this infinitude in the nature of man. First of all we find it in this—that the desires of man are for something boundless and unattainable. The boundless, endless, infinite void in the soul of man can be satisfied with nothing but God. Satisfaction lies not in *having*, but in *being*. There is no satisfaction even in *doing*. Man cannot be satisfied with his own performances. A second trace of this infinitude in man's nature we find in the infinite capacities of the soul. This is true intellectually and morally. For there is no man, however low his intellectual powers may be, who has not at one time or another felt a rush of thought, a glow of inspiration, which seemed to make all things possible, as if it were merely the effect of some imperfect organization which stood in the way of his doing whatever he desired to do. With respect to our moral and spiritual capacities, we remark that they are not only indefinite, but absolutely infinite. Let that man answer who has ever truly and heartily loved another. Again, we perceive a third trace of this infinitude in man, in the power which he possesses of giving up self. In this, perhaps more than in anything else, man may claim kindred with God. Before passing on let us observe that were it not for this conviction of the Divine origin, and consequent perfectibility of our nature, the very thought of God would be painful to us. II. We pass on, in the second place, to consider the CHRISTIAN MOTIVE—"Even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." Brethren, worldly prudence, miscalled morality, say—"Be honest; you will find your gain in being so. Do right; you will be the better for it—even in this world you will not lose by it." The mistaken religionist only magnifies this on a large scale. "Your duty," he says, "is to save your soul. Give up this world to have the next. Lose *here*, that you may gain *hereafter*." In opposition to all such sentiments as these, thus speaks the gospel—"Be ye perfect." Why? "Because your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." Do right, because it is Godlike and right so to do. In conclusion, we observe, there are two things which are to be learned from this passage. The first is this, that happiness is not our end and aim. The Christian's aim is perfection, not happiness. The second thing we have to learn is this, that on this earth there can be no rest for man. The last thing we learn from this is the impossibility of obtaining that of which some men speak—the satisfaction of a good conscience. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Concerning the perfection of God:*—I. THE ABSOLUTE PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE NATURE SUPPOSED—"As your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." 1. I shall consider how we are to conceive of the Divine perfection, these two ways. (1) By ascribing all imaginable and possible perfection to God; absolute and universal perfection, not limited to a certain kind, or to certain particulars. Some things may seem to be perfection, which in truth are not, because they are plainly impossible, and involve a contradiction. And then there are some things which do argue and suppose imperfections in them; as motion, the quickness and swiftness whereof in creatures is a perfection, but then it supposeth a finite and limited nature. And there are also some imaginable degrees of perfection, which, because they are inconsistent with other perfections, are not to be admitted in the Divine nature. And in the Scripture we do everywhere find perfection ascribed to the nature, and works, and laws of God, to everything that belongs to Him, or

proceeds from Him (Job xxxvii. 16). (2) As we are to ascribe all imaginable and possible perfections to God, so we are to separate and remove all manner of imperfection from Him. We must not obscure or blemish the Divine nature with the least shadow or blot of imperfection. 2. To lay down some rules by which we may rectify and govern our opinions concerning the attributes and perfections of God: the best I can think of are these following: (1) Let us begin with the most natural, and plain, and easy perfections of God, and lay them for a foundation, and rectify all our other apprehensions of God, and reasonings about Him, by these; and these are His power, wisdom, and goodness, to which most of the rest may be reduced. Right apprehensions, and a firm belief of these, will make it easily credible to us, that all things were made, and are governed by Him; for His goodness will dispose and incline Him to communicate being to other things, and to take care of them when they are made. (2) Let us always consider the perfections of God in conjunction, and so as to reconcile them with one another. Do not consider God as mere power and sovereignty, as mere mercy and goodness, as mere justice and severity; but as all these together, and in such a measure and degree, as may make them consistent with one another. Among men, indeed, an eminent degree of any one excellency does usually shut out some other; and, therefore, it is observed that power and moderation, love and discretion, do not often meet together; that a great memory and a small judgment, a good wit and an ill-nature, are many times found in conjunction. But in infinite perfection all perfections do eminently meet and consist together; and it is not necessary that one excellency should be raised upon the ruins of another. (3) Among different opinions concerning God (as there always have been and will be in the world) choose those which are farthest from extremity; because truth as well as virtue usually lies between the extremes. And here I will instance in that controversy, which has much disquieted the Church almost in all ages, concerning the decrees of God; about which there are two extremes; the one, that God peremptorily decrees the final condition of every particular person, that is, their everlasting happiness or misery, without any regard or consideration of the good or bad actions of men: the other, that God decrees nothing concerning any particular person, but only in general, that men found under such and such qualifications shall be happy or miserable, and puts it into their own power to qualify themselves. (4) Entertain no opinion concerning God that doth evidently contradict the practice of religion, and a good life, though never so specious and subtle arguments may be used to persuade it. Let us then look upon all knowledge that contradicts practice as vain and false, because it destroys its end. There are many things that seem probable enough in speculation, which yet we most pertinaciously deny, because they are not practicable; and there are many things which seem doubtful in speculation, and would admit of great dispute, which yet, because they are found true in practice and experience, are to be taken for certain and unquestionable. Zeno pretends to demonstrate there is no motion; and what is the consequence of this speculation, but that men must stand still? but so long as a man finds he can walk, all the sophistry in the world will not persuade him that motion is impossible. II. THE PERFECTION OF GOD IS PROPOUNDED AS A PATTERN FOR OUR IMITATION. To show how far we are to imitate the perfections of God, and particularly what those Divine qualities are which our Saviour doth here more especially propound to our imitation. 1. That our imitation of God is certainly restrained to the communicable perfections of God, and such as creatures are capable of; as I have shown before. For it is so far from being a duty to affect or attempt to be like God in His peculiar perfections, that it was probably the sin of the apostate angels. 2. Our imitation of the Divine perfections, which are communicable to creatures, is likewise to be restrained to such degrees of these perfections, as creatures are capable of. For no creature can ever be so perfectly good as God is; nor partake of any other excellency, in that transcendant degree, in which the Divine nature is possessed of it. 3. But there is no manner of inconvenience in having a pattern propounded to us of so great perfection, as is above our reach to attain to; and there may be great advantages in it. The way to excel in any kind is to propose the highest and most perfect examples to our imitation. He that aims at the heavens, which yet he is sure to come short of, is like to shoot higher than he that aims at a mark within his reach. Besides that, the excellency of the pattern, as it leaves room for continual improvement, so it kindles ambition, and makes men strain and contend to the utmost to do better. And we may reasonably presume that to do all we can towards the fulfilling of this precept will

be as acceptable to God, and as beneficial to ourselves, as if our power had been greater, and we had perfectly fulfilled it. 4. And lastly, Which will fully clear this matter; this precept doth not oblige us to come up to a perfect equality with the pattern propounded to us, but only imports a vigorous imitation of it; that we be perpetually ascending and climbing up higher, still advancing from one degree of goodness to another, and continually aspiring after a near resemblance to God. And this seems to be no inconsiderable ingredient and enhancement of the happiness of heaven, that the holiness of good men (which is the similitude of God) is never at a stand, nor at its full growth and period; but that the glorified saints (yea, and blessed angels too) may be continually growing and improving, and they themselves still become better and happier to all eternity. III. All that now remains is to draw some useful INFERENCES from this discourse which I have made; and they shall be these two: 1. That the strongest and surest reasonings in religion are grounded upon the essential perfections of God. 2. That the truest and most substantial practice of religion consists in the imitation of God. (*J. Tillotson, D.D.*)

Ver. 36. **Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.**—*The blessing of mercy:*—"Mercy" is the one great cry of human nature. We dare not ask for justice, we can only plead for mercy. We, who want so much mercy from God, must learn to show mercy to our fellow-men. How can we look to Him for mercy if we never show mercy, how can we ask forgiveness unless we forgive? Think of some of the ways in which we can show mercy. 1. We must show mercy and loving-kindness, practically, by deeds, not words. 2. We can show mercy by forgiving those who injure us. Few things are more talked of, and less practised, than the duty of forgiveness. 3. Mercy ever brings its sweet reward. Every act of loving-kindness comes back to us with abundant interest. Once a farmer, out on the western prairies of America, started for a distant town, to receive some money due to him. As he left his house, his only child, a little girl, clung lovingly to him, and reminded him of his promise to bring her home a present. Late on the same night the farmer left the town on his way home. The night was very dark and stormy, and he was yet far from his home, and in the wildest part of the road, when he heard the cry of a child. The farmer thought that it might be the device of some robber, as he was known to carry money with him. He was weary and wet with his journey, and inclined to hasten on, but again the cry reached him. The farmer determined that whatever happened he must search for the child, if child there were. Groping in the darkness, at last he found a little figure, drenched with rain, and shivering with cold. Wrapping his cloak about the child, he rode homewards as fast as possible, but when he reached his house, he found it full of neighbours, standing round his weeping wife. One said to another, "Do not tell him, it will drive him mad." Then the farmer set down his bundle, and his wife with a cry of joy saw that it was their own lost child. The little one had set forth to meet her father, and had missed her way. The man had, without knowing it, saved his own daughter. (*H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, M.A.*) *Imitation of the mercy of God:*—What can be a more endearing motive to the mind of man, than to propose to him a resemblance to the most high God; to urge the conduct of the Father of the universe, as an example for his imitation. 1. The first excellence in the mercy of God which will naturally occur to our thoughts, as deserving our imitation, is its entire disinterestedness and perfect liberality. Our goodness, therefore, must be void of selfish and earthly motives. 2. Its universality. We must endeavour to do all the good we can to all around us, neither slighting the ignorant, nor despising the mean and indigent, nor abandoning the vicious and unworthy in their distress. (1) Although our mercy may and ought to be universal in will and intention, yet, in consequence of our little power, it must be very limited in reality and in effect (2 Cor. viii. 12). (2) This example of the unconfined extent of the Divine mercy does not hinder us from having a more particular regard to certain persons, and peculiar situations of distress (Gal. vi. 10). 3. Its unwearied perseverance. Let us, like God, be "not weary in well-doing." 4. Its long-suffering patience. 5. Its readiness and willingness to forgive. (*James Riddoch, M.A.*) *Practical manifestations of mercy:*—In how many thousand instances does a man hold in his own hands the power of manifesting this blessed quality of mercy! You are an employer; there is some boy in your employment who commits his first transgression, perhaps not really conscious of the evil that he does. Perhaps in an unguarded moment he takes from you something that belongs to you. You do not injure society by exercising mercy towards that boy. How often is it the case that

your judicious act of mercy, tempered by justice, has been the means of saving that boy from open exposure, from public punishment; how often it is the salvation of that boy! Do you suppose that it is justice in that case that the penalty of the law shall brand him—that he shall be marked as a criminal, that he shall be self-degraded? This is an instance which men of business will tell me often occurs, and can there be any doubt as to what justice is in that case? So I say, when a man's reputation lies at our mercy, we are bound to make all the allowance we can for his action. If he does a foolish thing, let us be disposed, as far as possible, to make allowance, to think what may have been the peculiar circumstances under which he did it. We are all called upon to exercise this prerogative of mercy, and that in innumerable forms. (*E. H. Chapin, D.D.*) *Gospel for the fourth Sunday after Trinity*:—I. WE ARE INCITED TO IMITATION OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER. We are His children, and children ought to resemble their parents (Eph. v. 1, R.V.) II. AN APPEAL IS MADE TO OUR SELF-INTEREST. It is a principle of the Divine administration that the standard you apply to others shall be applied to you. III. OUR LORD SUGGESTS THE WAY IN WHICH WE MAY HOPE TO PASS RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS UPON OTHERS. By being first jealous and severe judges of ourselves. (*Homiletic Quarterly.*) *Man a child of mercy*:—When God, in His eternal counsel, conceived the thought of man's creation, He called to Him the three ministers who wait constantly upon His throne—Justice, Truth, and Mercy—and thus addressed them: "Shall we make man?" Then said Justice, "O God! make him not: for he will trample upon Thy laws." Truth made answer also, "O God! make him not, for he will pollute Thy sanctuaries." But Mercy, dropping upon her knees, and looking up through her tears, exclaimed, "O God! make him. I will watch over him with my care through all the dark paths which he may have to tread." Then God made man, and said to him, "O man! thou art the child of Mercy: go and deal with thy brother." (*Crittenden.*) *A condition of receiving mercy*:—Being sent for by a slave-holder who was seriously unwell, to pray with him, Father Craven approached his bedside and inquired if he had in his will bequeathed liberty to his slaves? "No," said the slave-holder, "I have bequeathed them to my children." "Then," said Father Craven, "prayer will be of no avail—God will not show mercy to those who show none to their fellow-men." So he bade him farewell. Soon after a second message was sent for Father Craven to visit the slave-holder and pray with him. He went and asked the slave-holder if he had emancipated his slaves? "Yes," said the slave-holder, "I have now emancipated them by my will. Will you pray for me?" "Certainly," said the good man, and he knelt down and commended to God the soul of the sufferer, who seemed near his end. Father Craven agreed with John Jay, a leader in the American revolution, who said, "Till America comes into the measure (of abolition) her prayers to heaven will be impious." (*Handbook to Scripture Doctrines.*) *An all-availing plea*:—A minister belonging to the Calvinistic Methodists, in a country town, had taught his little boy, who is in his second year, each night before going to sleep, to repeat the prayer: "God be merciful to me a sinner." The other Sabbath, while the minister had gone to preach to a village congregation, the child upset the inkstand, and was told his father would whip him for the accident. The minister had no sooner returned, than the child climbed his knee, and putting his mouth close to the father's ear, softly whispered: "Be merciful to me, a sinner, papa." Moved by the ingenuity of the plea, the father kissed his boy, and could not find it in his heart to chide or correct the bright little fellow. *Importance of mercy*:—Mercy is in the air which we breathe, the daily light which shines upon us, the gracious rain of God's inheritance. It is the public spring for all the thirsty, the common hospital for all the needy. All the streets of the church are paved with these stones. What would become of the children, if there were not these breasts of consolation? It is mercy that takes us out of the womb, feeds us in the days of our pilgrimage, furnishes us with spiritual provision, closes our eyes in peace, and translates us to a secure resting-place. It is the first petitioner's suit, and the first believer's article, the contemplation of Enoch, the confidence of Abraham, the burden of the prophetic songs, and the glory of all the apostles, the plea of the penitent, the ecstasies of the reconciled, the believer's hosannah, the angel's hallelujah. Ordinances, oracles, altars, pulpits, the gates of the grave, and the gates of heaven, do all depend upon mercy. It is the loadstar of the wandering, the ransom of the captive, the antidote of the tempted, the prophet of the living, and the effectual comfort of the dying: there would not be one regenerate saint upon earth, nor one glorified saint in heaven, if it were not for mercy. (*The*

Dictionary of Illustrations.) *Mercy reciprocated:*—The Marshall D'Armont, having taken Crodon, ordered every Spaniard found in the garrison to be put to death. Though it was death to disobey orders, an English soldier ventured to save a Spaniard. He was arraigned for the offence, confessed the fact, and declared himself ready to suffer death if they would save the life of the Spaniard. Surprised at the request, they inquired why he was so much interested. "Because," replied he, "in a similar situation, he once saved my life." The marshall was so greatly pleased, that he granted him pardon, and saved the Spaniard's life as well. *Provision for mercy:*—Abraham Lincoln's doorkeeper had standing orders from him, that no matter how great might be the throng, if either senators or representatives had to wait, or to be turned away without an audience, he must see, before the day closed, every messenger who came to him with a petition for the saving of life. *The law of love:*—All that is really good is the outcome of the law of love, and its first result and inseparable companion is mercy. I. FORBEAR. 1. A passion for judging others seems to exist in men. Every one, however backward to amend himself, is ready to correct others. The origin of this spirit is too clear. Deep in man's native selfishness. Exalts self, depresses others. 2. Are we never, then, to judge? (1) One cannot help forming opinions. It would be indicative of a perverted conscience to regard all with equal complacency. Yes, but this is different from the glad readiness to judge. (2) Sometimes needful to speak as well as to judge. But not in a censorious spirit, or overbearing tone. (3) The example of Jesus is the solution of the difficulty. Reprove only when needful. Then in righteous indignation, or in sorrowful rebuke. II. FORGIVE. 1. Revenge is as natural to man as passing judgment. 2. Often as false and hypocritical, hiding itself under similar disguises. 3. Its root is ultimately the same. Selfishness—contradiction of the law of love. 4. Consequently condemned by example and spirit of Christ. His forgiving mercy was habitual, ready, cordial. III. GIVE. The more active side of mercy. Opposed to bargaining or exchange—no thought of return An evidence of sonship of God. When we are merciful, we come nearest to the Divine perfection. (*W. R. Clark, M.A.*) *Mercy:*—I. ITS ACTS. 1. Consideration. 2. Compassion. 3. Prayer. 4. Helpfulness, according to the need of the object. II. ITS OBJECTS. Our neighbour. 1. Erring (James v. 19, 20). 2. Offending. 3. Under persecution. 4. In want. 5. In sickness. 6. In misfortune by the loss of good friends, or the unkindness of bad relations. III. THE MANNER OF ITS EXERCISE. Acts of mercy are to be performed—1. With readiness and forwardness of mind (2 Cor. ix. 7). 2. With modesty and humility (Matt. vi. 1). 3. From a kind and merciful, not from a selfish and mercenary temper (Luke vi. 32). 4. Without delay (Prov. iv. 28). 5. Bountifully (1 Tim. vi. 18). 6. With minds full of gratitude to God (1 Chron. xxix. 13, 17). 7. As to Christ Himself (Matt. x. 42). IV. THE BLESSING PROMISED TO THE MERCIFUL. As for external mercies, the Bible promises them very fully to the merciful. 1. Deliverance out of trouble (Isaiah lviii. 10; Psalm xli. 1). 2. God's blessing on his labours and undertakings (Deut. xv. 7–10). 3. The staving off of his trouble, and the lengthening of his tranquility (Dan. iv. 27). 4. Plenty (Prov. xix. 17; iii. 9). 5. Honour (Psalm cxii. 9). 6. Deliverance from enemies (Psalm xli. 2). 7. God's comforts in his sickness (Psalm li. 3). 8. A blessing on his posterity (Psalm xxxvii. 26). 9. More particularly, man's help in distress and God's providence. (*J. Blair, D.D.*) *Are we merciful in our speech to men?*—Do we not sometimes take pleasure in making a criticism as sharp and pungent as we can make it? Do we in our literature, in our judgments of the political work or social life of others, strive to speak charitably; or rather, is it not a keen gratification to think that the world enjoys the criticism when the writer is sharp and piquant, and seasons his criticism with that unkindness which sends it home as the feather sends the arrow? (*Bishop W. C. Magee.*) *Are we merciful as employers of others?*—Do we feel that those around us in domestic service, in business, should have their feelings carefully considered? Surely there is a sad want of thoughtful mercy amongst us all! There is no lack of that mercy which comes of being strongly appealed to, and which moves a man to give largely of his money, time, and energy, for the removal of suffering. But the thoughtful, considerate mercy which seeks to prevent suffering and to hinder crime is what we desire to see. (*Ibid.*) *The merciful:*—The world of the natural man is by no means predominantly a merciful world. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." A thoroughly bad man is seldom a kind man. The kindliness of a bad man is generally both capricious and selfish. At its best it lacks the essential condition of a Christian charity. Not everything which passes

for kindness, not everything which is kindness, is "mercy" in the sense here intended. There is another word in Scripture, which stands for pity, and the two ideas differ. 1. The objects of pity are the unhappy: the objects of mercy are the undeserving. (1) Mercy is seen towards those who have no claim upon us. The good Samaritan was merciful as well as pitiful; because the robbed and wounded man whom he succoured was wholly unconnected with him; was not only no relation, but even an alien and of a hostile race. (2) Mercy is shown, yet more strongly, towards those who have forfeited their claim upon us; those who had a claim, and have lost it. The prodigal son. 2. The nature of mercy. (1) Sympathy. A fellow-feeling with the undeserving. A deep consciousness of personal demerit, making me at once the equal and the brother of the undeserving. (2) This sense of fellowship with the sinner is accompanied with a sense of the evil of sin. By this it is prompted. (3) A desire for the good—the highest good—of the sinful. Mercy rests not in the fall. Mercy is not satisfied with bewailing the misery. Mercy expends not itself in sighs and tears, sits not down with the sorrow and the sinfulness which she both beholds and feels: she looks upward, and she looks onward—upward for help, onward to salvation; and is as ready to succour as she is prompt to sympathise. 3. The working of mercy. (1) Compassionate thoughts. Mercy, like every grace, has its seat within. We must begin with the heart. The thoughts of mercy will be disciplined into charitableness before she begins to speak or to do. She will recount inwardly the revelation of God concerning sin itself; how it first entered into the world; how it spread its reign hither and thither, till a flood of evil had hidden earth itself from heaven; how it works in the child, struggles for mastery in the man, and leads captive in unsuspected bonds souls born for immortality and for God. She knows how subtle are its workings, how fatal its delusions, how strong its chains. She pities even where she must condemn, and, where she cannot trust, she can at least hope still. (2) Compassionate thoughts come forth naturally into kindly words. The merciful man speaks mercifully. (3) Compassionate thoughts and kindly words will run on, lastly, into practical efforts. A man who has a feeling of compassion should always act upon it. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Mercifulness*:—What is it to be "merciful"? Like other virtues, this, too, has its imitations, worthless and spurious. There is a mercy current among men which is merely an outlet for energy, or the fashion of the day. There is a mercy, so called, which is in reality a luxury, a refined sort of self-indulgence. There is a sort of mercy which people call charity, which gives, but without discrimination or thought. But these, none of these, are mercifulness. No, nor, on the other hand, is it to be confused with pity, a feeling of compassion for the unfortunate; nor has it to do with merely deeds of mercy, acts of kindness. For mercifulness and mercy do not mean the same thing. Mercifulness is what we are and what we do. Mercy, as men count it, may be all outside, no heart in it, or may take its rise from wrong or unworthy motives; while mercifulness must go down to the inner springs of actions, not stop short of guiding principles, have its roots in sound and holy motives. It deals with the quality of the deed rather than the quantity; it examines the texture of which it is made, not the smoothness or bright shimmer; it asks not whether it glitters, but whether it is gold with the true ring. 1. True mercifulness is a characteristic of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and they alone will be merciful in God's way, seeking not to please themselves, but to do His will "who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy." 2. True mercifulness is always guided by meekness. It is exercised towards those who have ill requited our kindness, and are undeserving of our mercy. 3. True mercifulness can only be felt by those who have learned to mourn their sin, and in repentance turned unto God, and so have a fellow feeling with those who sin, and long to rescue them. 4. True mercifulness has, as its earliest beginning, poverty of spirit, for only those who in humility know themselves aright will never despair of others, or tire of showing mercy to the undeserving. (*C. J. Ridgeway, M.A.*) *The mercifulness of God as seen in Christ*:—1. He was merciful to all, not to some. 2. His mercifulness was provident, thoughtful, wise, seeking the real good of men, marked by the discrimination of prudence, withholding to-day what will do harm instead of good, giving to one what He refuses to another, always keeping before Him as the only true object of mercifulness the well-being of those He came to succour. 3. His mercifulness is unchanging. Time does not wear it out, nor years weaken it. He was merciful even as He loved, unto the end. Many waters could not quench it, neither the floods drown it. The waters came in even unto His soul, suffering and anguish

overwhelmed Him; but His mercifulness lived on; it burned like the beacon light of the lighthouse, undimmed by the great storm of affliction that raged around. Nor is He changed now. His mercifulness is as true in His exaltation as in His Passion (Heb. ii. 17, 18; vii. 24, 25). (*Ibid.*) *Christ's mercifulness and ours*:—Compare what we call mercifulness with His. His a mercifulness which always kept God's glory in view, and ours so often centring about self. His a mercifulness shown towards those who were ever seeking His heart, and ours so easily quenched by the first appearance of ingratitude. His a mercifulness that recognized sin as the source of every man's misery, and ours so indifferent to the deepest needs of the men and women around us. His a mercifulness that stooped to help, that touched as well as pitied, and ours always bestowed with a gloved hand, and at a safe distance. His a mercifulness so catholic and wide in its embrace, and ours so narrow and limited by national or religious, or, worse still, party prejudice. His a mercifulness that was provident and wise, and ours capricious and thoughtless, giving to the professional beggar because she importunes us at the very door of the church, or to the man who in veriest cruelty drags little children, often hired for the purpose, through the wet and muddy streets, in the cold and wet, for they are never to be seen on fine days; while to calls that come from those that can guarantee their worth, or to the really poor who will not beg, or to the appeals which are made in God's house for definite objects, our mercifulness turns a deaf ear. Believe me, it is time for us to learn that true mercifulness is discriminating, thoughtful, wise. His a mercifulness that is always the same, ours so fitful, uncertain, unreliable. His a mercifulness that cost Him self-sacrifice, ours a doing or giving what will not even cost us a thought. His a mercifulness that permeated the whole man in every thought, and word, and deed, ours so superficial, so unreal, our thoughts often breathing harsh judgment upon others, our actions marked by so little consideration of those about us or below us to whom we might be merciful. (*Ibid.*) *Christian mercy*:—I. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN MERCY. 1. It has its seat in the heart. 2. It is a supernatural quality. 3. It is an active principle. (1) It will be manifested toward the inferior animals. (2) To those of our fellow-creatures who are under bodily affliction and misery. (3) It will extend to the spiritual miseries of our fellow-men. Mercy to the soul, is the soul of mercy. (4) Towards our greatest enemies. II. THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN MERCY. 1. Because it is strictly enjoined by God. 2. Because we stand in constant need of Divine mercy. Were it withdrawn, there would be nothing before us but a fearful looking for of judgment. 3. Because our profession binds us to imitate Christ, who is the perfect pattern of mercy. In Him mercy was embodied. If we are His disciples, we will walk even as He walked. 4. We should be merciful because of the true pleasure which is associated with acts of mercy. 5. Because it is an express condition of our obtaining mercy. III. THE REWARDS OF CHRISTIAN MERCY. 1. A good name. 2. A peculiar interest in the kind and merciful arrangements of Divine providence. 3. The merciful are blessed with the prayers and blessings of the miserable whom they have relieved. 4. They shall be blessed with the public approval of Christ at the last day. Application: 1. Let the exercise of mercy be pressed on all Christ's disciples. Cultivate it. Rejoice in all opportunities of doing good. 2. Let the mercy of God to us be highly valued. We need it daily. Only one channel for its communication—through Christ. Only one way to obtain it—through faith in His word. 3. The unmerciful shall have judgment without mercy. What a dreadful portion to the guilty sinner! (*J. Burns, D.D.*)

Ver. 37. **Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.**—*Judge not*:—No man, avers Sir Thomas Browne, can justly censure or condemn another, because, in fact, no man truly knows another. "This I perceive in myself; for I am in the dark to all the world, and my nearest friends behold me but in a cloud." . . . Further, no man can judge another, because no man knows himself. The Vicar of Gravenhurst, in his position of parish priest, owns himself compelled to confess that the best people are not the best in every relation of life, and the worst people not bad in every relation of life; so that with experience, he finds himself growing lenient in his blame, if also reticent in his praise. "Again and again I say to myself that only the Omniscient can be the equitable judge of human beings, so complicated are our virtue with our failings, and so many are the hidden virtues, as well as hidden vices, of our fellow-men." If judge at all we dare and do, be it in the spirit and to the letter of Wordsworth's counsel:—

> "From all rash censure be the mind kept free;
> He only judges right who weighs, compares,

and, in the sternest sentence which his voice pronounces, "ne'er abandons charity." Never let it be forgotten, insists a Quarterly Reviewer, that there is scarcely a single moral action of a single human being of which other men have such a knowledge —its ultimate grounds, its surrounding incidents, and the real determining causes of its merits—as to warrant their pronouncing a conclusive judgment.

"Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord—its various tone,
Each spring its various bias;
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it." (*F. Jacox.*)

Falsely judged:—It is related of a broker in one of the Italian cities, that his strict economy brought on him the reputation of miserliness. He lived plainly and poorly, and at his death a hundred thousand men in the city were ready to curse him until his will was opened, in which he declared that early his heart was touched with the sufferings of the poor in the city for the lack of water. Springs there were none, and the public wells were bad; and he had spent his life in accumulating a fortune that should be devoted to bringing, by an aqueduct, from the neighbouring mountains, streams that should pour abundantly into the baths and dwellings of the poor of the city; and he not only denied himself many of the comforts of life, but toiled by day and by night, yea, and bore obloquy, that he might bless his fellow-citizens. He is dead; but those streams pour their health yet into that city. *A self-denying brother misjudged:*—The majority of people are ever ready to judge the conduct of their neighbours—in other words, to "cast the first stone." But we have no right to judge others until we know all the circumstances that influence their conduct. In many cases we might imitate those we condemn, under like circumstances. A young man employed in a printing office in one of our large towns, incurred the ridicule of the other compositors, on account of his poor clothes and unsocial behaviour. On several occasions subscription papers were presented to him for various objects, but he refused to give his money. One day a compositor asked him to contribute for a picnic party, but was politely refused. Thereupon, the other accused him of niggardliness—an accusation which he resented. "You little know," he said, "how unjustly you have been treating me. For more than a year, I have been starving myself to save money enough to send my poor blind sister to Paris, to be treated by a physician who has treated many cases of blindness similar to hers. I have always done my duty here in this office, and have minded my own business. I am sacrificing everything in life for another. Would either of you do as much? Could any one do more?" He had been judged without a knowledge of circumstances. We cannot read the heart of others, and in many cases to know all is to judge all. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." (*Dr. Cuyler.*) *Difficulty of judging aright:*—While we are coldly discussing a man's career, sneering at his mistakes, blaming his rashness, and labelling his opinions—"Evangelical and narrow," or "Latitudinarian and Pantheistic," or "Anglican and supercilious"—that man in his solitude is, perhaps, shedding hot tears because his sacrifice is a hard one, because strength and patience are failing him to speak the difficult word, and do the difficult deed. (*George Eliot.*) *The censorious spirit:*—1. Springs not from the Divine but from the malign elements of our nature. 2. Some men exercise it under the form of a blunt, plain-speaking honesty. There is nothing so blunt as a bull; but a bull is not usually considered to be a good thing to have in orphan asylums or in society. Men, however, who have come up along that line of development, go bellowing and horning their way through life, and justify their action because they are blunt, honest, plain-spoken men. 3. Then there are men who "hate hypocrisy," and who are always and everywhere looking around and suspecting people. 4. There is another form of uncharitableness which in some respects is harder to bear than any other. That is where criticism is put in the form of wit. Gold and silver are gold and silver, whether they be in the shape of coin or not; but when they are in the shape of coin and are in circulation, they have a power which otherwise they would not have. 5. The spirit of uncharitableness adds to the irritations, and quarrellings, and sufferings of life. 6. To form judgments of men, so far as their superficial qualities are concerned, requires but little; but to form judgments of their character and disposition is one of the most elaborate and difficult things possible. (*H. W.*

Beecher.) *Concerning fault-finders*:—"Judge not and ye shall not be judged"; by whom? By your fellow-men? It is to be feared that whether a man judge them or not, they will judge him. The most uncensorious man in the world will not escape the censure of the uncharitable; they will censure even his uncensoriousness, and pronounce him hypocrite or fool, because he speaks well of all. When your uncharitably-disposed man cannot find a vice in his neighbour, he is so disappointed and out of temper, that he begins to pull his neighbour's virtues to pieces. No, this is a warning of Divine judgments; judge not your neighbour lest God judge you. God will bring us into judgment for all our unkind and unfair judgments of our fellow-men. (*H. S. Brown.*) *The judging spirit*:—I. We do not hesitate to judge those whom God has placed in a condition, the effects of which, in character and habit, we have no means of correctly estimating. II. And even supposing actual sin in the case of the exposed man, still judgment on its proceeding from us may be a condemnation of ourselves. What should we have been in his place? III. In our common life the judging spirit places us in a hard, unfriendly attitude towards both God and man. IV. The judging spirit, with the injustice it leads to, often displays a remarkable ignorance of human nature which would certainly be corrected by something more of self-inspection, and by that generosity towards others which a thorough knowledge of one's self always excites in a just mind. V. There is one large part of our subject which I can only name: the habit of judging of the whole spirit and inward life of a man from the religion he has embraced. Creeds separate, as if the souls of men were of different natures, and one God were not the Father of all. (*J. H. Thom.*) *Against censoriousness*:—"Judge not." I. WE HAVE NOT SUFFICIENT DATA. We see a few of the actions which a man performs, we hear a few of the words he utters; and that is all we know of him. Yet some of us imagine that, on the strength of this knowledge, we can form a complete and infallible judgment in regard to his moral worth. We could not make a greater or more foolish mistake. In order to arrive at a correct decision, we must know the history of the man's ancestors for hundreds of years past, and the different tendencies towards right and towards wrong which they have transmitted to him. "Many of us are born," says the author of "John Inglesant," "with seeds within us which make moral victory hopeless from the first." II. WE CAN NEVER SEE WHAT GOES ON IN ANOTHER'S HEART. III. EVEN IF WE WERE ACQUAINTED WITH THE FACTS, WE SHOULD BE INCAPABLE OF ESTIMATING CORRECTLY THEIR MORAL SIGNIFICANCE. This is owing partly to the misleading influence of self-esteem. According to an old Indian legend, there once appeared among a nation of hunchbacks, a young and beautiful god. The people gathered round him; and when they saw that his back was destitute of a hump, they began to hoot and jeer and taunt him. One of them, however, more philosophical than the rest, said: "My friends, what are we doing? let us not insult this miserable creature. If heaven has made us beautiful, if it has adorned our backs with a mount of flesh, let us with pious gratitude repair to the temple and render our acknowledgments to the immortal gods." This quaint legend illustrates very forcibly some of the curious delusions resulting from self-esteem. We are apt to plume ourselves even on our defects, and condemn those who differ from us merely because they differ. (*A. W. Momerie, M.A., D.Sc.*) *On censoriousness*:—Whatever censuring is contrary to truth and justice, humanity and charity, civility and good manners, is here expressly forbidden. I. THIS DISPOSITION IS TRACEABLE—(1) to pride and vanity; (2) to ill-will and envy; (3) to indolence and idleness. II. THE GREAT EVIL AND MALIGNITY OF IT CONSIST IN THE FACT THAT—(1) it implies great presumption and impiety towards God, inasmuch as it is an invasion of His prerogative; (2) it implies great injustice towards men; (3) it is great folly in respect of ourselves—"With what measure we mete," &c. (*J. Balguy, M.A.*) *Christ warns us against judging*:—I. WHAT IS HERE FORBIDDEN. It is plain that the thing forbidden is not the office, or the upright discharge of the office, of a magistrate or a judge. When provision is made, in a Christian town or state, for the due punishment of offenders against the tranquility of our streets or the security of our homes, there is nothing in this contrary to the will or precept of Christ. He was Himself a respecter of civil order, and of the authority by which it is maintained. Only let the heart of the judge, in the exercise of his office, be full of humility and of compassion; only let him remember that common infirmity, that universal sinfulness, in which he himself is the fellow and the brother of him who stands at his bar for judgment; only let him acknowledge with becoming thankfulness that Divine goodness, of grace and of providence, which alone has made him to differ; and his administration of justice may be the

offspring of a Christian devotion, the exercise of a calling in which he was called, of a ministry acceptable and well-pleasing to God. 2. Nor do we understand Him to blame the expression in common society of a righteous displeasure against deeds and against doers of iniquity. It is no charity to call evil good, or to refrain, out of a misplaced tenderness, from calling evil evil. Only let us remember what we ourselves are, and where—sinners living amid temptations; and let us, therefore, speak in humility, in sincerity, and in truth. 3. Yet the world is full of such judgments as are here forbidden. (1) How little of our conversation upon the faults of others is in any sense necessary! Our judgments are most often gratuitous, willing, wanton judgments; passed in idleness and unconcern; prompted by no feeling of duty; far, far worse, therefore, than any dulness, than any silence. (2) And, if needless, then uncharitable too. How full of suspicion! How unwilling to allow a merit not patent! How ready to imagine a bad motive, where, by the nature of the case (man being the judge), we cannot see nor know it! (3) And how many of them are false judgments! (4) Inconsistent and hypocritical. It is always the sinner who suspects sin. It is the practised deceiver who imagines and imputes deceit. There is no real abhorrence of evil where there is a readiness to declaim against it. II. WHY IT IS FORBIDDEN. 1. There is a retaliation in such things. A law of retribution. The censorious man will have his censor, whereas the merciful man will be mercifully judged—both here and hereafter. Not that a mere abstinence from censorious judgment will purchase for a sinner exemption from the sentence due to his own sins; but this we may say, that a merciful spirit in judging others will both be regarded as an indication of good in the man otherwise not blameless, and will save him from that aggravation of guilt which belongs to him who has both sinned and judged. 2. Such judgment as is here forbidden is an invasion of God's peculiar office (Rom. xii. 19). 3. To judge is to betray in ourselves a root of self-ignorance, self-complacency, and self-righteousness. No man could thus judge, who really felt himself to be a sinner. 4. As the root of this unchristian judgment is in self-ignorance, so the fruit of it is definite injury to the cause of the gospel, to the soul of our neighbour, and, most of all, to our own. Who can love so unlovely a Christianity? Who is not disgusted and alienated by that religion which clothes itself in a garb so odious. 5. The whole spirit of the self-constituted judge is, in reality, a spirit of hypocrisy. When he professes to be distressed by the fault of his brother, he has, in truth, within him a tenfold greater fault of his own. He knows not his own weakness; he offers a strength which he has not. He cares not for the cure; he cares only for the distinction, for the superiority, of the healer. Conclusion: No man is fit, in his own strength, to be the counsellor or the guide of man. Every man has his own faults and his own sins; and it is only self-ignorance which makes him overlook them. If any man undertakes to judge another, he thereby judges himself. Let a man first look into himself, try and examine himself as in the sight of God, drag his own transgressions to the light of God's judgment, and pass sentence with an unsparing strictness upon his own omissions of duty and commissions of sin. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *The danger of usurping God's prerogatives*:—God has reserved three prerogatives royal to Himself—vengeance, glory, and judgment. As it is not safe for us, then, to encroach upon God's royalties in either of the other two—glory or vengeance—so neither in this, of judgment. We have no right to judge; and so our judging is usurpation. We may err in our judgment; and so our judgment is rashness. We take things the worse way when we judge: and so our judging is uncharitable. We offer occasion of offence by our judging; and so our judging is scandalous (Deut. xxxii. 35; Isa. xli. 8; Rom. xii. 10, xiv. 4). (*Bishop Sanderson.*) *Of judging charitably*:—I never yet knew any man so bad, but some have thought him honest, and afforded him love; nor any one so good, but some have thought him vile, and hated him. Few are so thoroughly wicked as not to be estimable to some; and few are so just, as not to seem to some unequal: ignorance, envy, and partiality, enter much into the opinions that we form of others. Nor can a man in himself, always appear alike to all. In some, nature has made a disparity; in some, report has blinded judgment; and in others, accident is the cause of disposing us to love, or hate; or, if not these, the variation of the body's humours; or, perhaps, not any of these. The soul is often led by secret motions and attachments, she knows not why. There are impulsive instincts, which urge us to a liking; as if there were some hidden beauty of a more magnetic force than what the eye can see; and this, too, is more powerful at one time than at another. The same man that has now welcomed me with a free ex-

pression of love and courtesy, at another time has left me unsaluted at all. Yet, knowing him well, I have been certain of his sound affection, and have found it to proceed not from an intended neglect, but from an indisposedness, or a mind seriously busied within. Occasion rules the motions of the stirring mind: like men who walk in their sleep, we are led about, we neither know whither nor how. I know there are some who vary their behaviour out of pride, and in strangers I confess I know not how to distinguish; for there is no disposition but has a varnished visor, as well as an unpencilled face. Some people deceive the world; are bad, but are not thought so; in some, the world is deceived, believing them ill, when they are not. I have known the world at large to fall into an error. Though report once vented, like a stone cast into a pond, begets circle upon circle, till it meets with the bank that bounds it: yet fame often plays the cur, and opens when she springs no game. Why should I positively condemn any man, whom I know but superficially? as if I were a God, to see the inward soul. (*Owen Felltham.*) *The absurdity of judging others:*—One would have thought that experience must have convinced us, if not of the sin, yet of the absurdity of judging others. The ignorance, the blunders, of other people with regard to ourselves, strike home with startling force to our minds. We know the shame which we have felt, when they have praised us for actions whose motives deserved blame; we know how their disapproval has disheartened us, when we were making the bravest struggle to do right. We feel how little they can know of our deepest feelings—of our moments of fierce conflict, of passionate affection, of sharpest suffering. There is nothing strange in this ignorance. But what is strange, is, that in the very teeth of this experience, we should calmly sit in judgment on others, and self-complacently try to determine the degree of their feelings, the depth or shallowness of their characters, the quality of their motives, and the precise measure of praise or blame which they deserve. (*E. C. R.*) *The way to righteousness:*—The way to righteousness lies in finding not other people's sins, but our own. (*Olshausen.*) *The danger of judging others:*—Of all the faults into which people are liable to fall, that of judging others is one of the most common. Pride, or envy, or a tinge of ill-nature, or an amalgamation of all three, causes them to arraign before the bar of their private judgment the actions, even the motives and thoughts of others. Many evils result from this. Even if we do not consider the habit as rather an ugly deformation of an otherwise lovable disposition, we may still see that it heralds into the soul some undesirable companions. 1. It engenders self-esteem and self-satisfaction in some. If a man always looks outside of himself, at the blots which mar the characters which he contemplates, he will forget what virtues he lacks himself. He will not be conscious of the beam that is in his own eye, yet he will imagine that he is quite capable of pulling out the mote in his brother's eye. He will, so to speak, put the large end of the contemplative telescope to his mental eye when he looks at his own heart; the small end when investigating his neighbour's. Consequently, there will be an inverse ratio in the investigation. His neighbour's motes will appear standing out in unjust relief; his own beams—the withered, shrivelled, sapless stanchion of self-love—the yawning chasm of avarice—the covert jungle of hypocrisy—the ungenial rock of pride—will become apparently very small, and in the distant prospect will have almost a charm about them. 2. Further, this spirit of judging others has the evil effect of providing untenable excuses for faults committed. People who are guilty of little sins, little failings, little excesses, are in danger of falling into this kind of error. They are, perhaps, aware of their shortcomings. They may even go so far as to acknowledge that they have them. But, in place of grappling with them and seeking to subdue them, they make excuses for them. And this is because they judge others. They compare themselves with others, and the comparison is prejudicial in their own favour. 3. And this judging of others prevents a healthy spirit of self-examination, and consequently of self-improvement. The man who continually pries into other people's affairs must neglect his own. So the man who looks out constantly with a critical eye on the motives of others, must be unaware of those which actuate himself. There is a means, indeed, by which we may benefit ourselves by a contemplation of others. We have it summed up in the saying of an old Roman writer—"Look into men's lives, as into looking-glasses." That is, judge them not, but seek to see yourself reflected in them. See them in their trials and temptations, see them in crises of thought and action, and consider how you would have fared in similar circumstances. This will help you to solve the problem of life, "Know thyself." It will also teach you to appreciate the Christian attributes of charity and forbearance. Conclusion: Man's heart, as it

weighs and measures its judgment, is sometimes harsh and hard, and the picture of others which it conjures up is often a dark one. But behold arising in the soul the dayspring of the knowledge of the Most High; behold, awakening to a knowledge of self, the soul to which Christ shall give His light, and you will see that light reflected on to the contemplated scene. There may be shades, but there are bright, sunny spots, too, and even the shades take a fairer colour from their proximity. Seen with the eye, which faith, and hope, and love in Christ inspire, all hardness and harshness, all unkindly cynicism, all uncongenial sneers, all puerile ill-nature, all sordid envy, will gradually disappear. And as the beams in the one eye are thus plucked out, the motes in the other eye will be plucked out too. The one character will have its effect on the other. Christ's love is too great, too powerful, too immense, too vigorous, to loiter. It will push all before it. It will reflect itself on and on, like the dancing of sunbeams from wave to wave; and the motes and the mists and the fogs and the clouds—whatever they be—will disperse, even at His reflected light, making an entrance to prepare the soul for the full glory of His own presence. So may man's soul be a meet temple for the mighty Spirit. So may something of heaven's warmth be felt on earth. (*C. E. Drought, M.A.*) *On rash and censorious judgment:*—There is nothing more difficult in itself than to judge justly of the dispositions and conduct of other men; nothing more dangerous, or generally more hurtful, to the person who undertakes it; hardly anything more destructive of the peace and happiness of society; and but very few sins to which we have fewer temptations, and from which we can reap less pleasure or profit. And yet there is hardly anything that all of us undertake, with less diffidence of our abilities for the work—with less sense of our danger, or apprehension of the consequences; hardly any sin more universal, or in which inhumane and unthinking persons more persevere to the end of their lives. How few can lay their hands to their hearts, and say, "I am entirely free from this guilt!" 1. Rash censorious judgment of the dispositions or conduct of others, must always arise from great disorder in the heart, and proves that it is powerfully influenced, either by pride, or envy, or malice; and therefore must be very hateful to Him who knows all the secret and original springs of every part of our conduct. 2. It is a very presumptuous disobedience of the will and laws of God. 3. It is an arrogant usurpation of the great prerogative of the Almighty Creator, and of the office of our Blessed Saviour; and an uncharitable invasion of the rights and privileges of our fellowmen. (*James Riddoch, M.A.*) *The folly of judging others:*—1. We have no capacity to do so with truth and justice. To know, without judging, might be modesty and charity; but to judge without knowing, must be always indiscretion and cruelty; and we must always be without proper knowledge, when we presume censoriously and rashly to judge our neighbour's conduct. Upon what insufficient evidence do men venture to censure and slander others. (1) They judge by appearances. How often has an open and unsuspecting temper, and a consciousness of innocence and right intentions betrayed men into the appearance of faults which their hearts detested, and exposed them to the censure and condemnation of the world; while, on the other hand, a grave, cautious, and designing conduct has covered a multitude of sins, and procured esteem and applause to men who needed only to be known to be despised and detested. (2) They condemn upon hearsay. That coming fame is frequently a liar, we admit as a maxim established by long experience, and yet we make it the foundation of our rash and censorious judgments, and seem to think that it gives us a right to condemn others with the greatest freedom, vainly perhaps imagining that the guilt remains with him from whom we received the report, while at the same time we are repeating the crime. Rumour, however ill-founded, is favourably received; an unhappy curiosity makes us hearken with attention; a pernicious credulity makes us find it probable; and a desire of telling something new makes us propagate it. Thus, what at first was only the conjecture, suspicion, or invention of one person, grows up to be the belief of the multitude, and is raised, in their opinion, into certainty and fact. (3) There is a too common disposition to judge of the intention by the event, and to estimate the general character by some particular errors. Nothing can be more unjust or uncharitable than this. Moses once "spake unadvisedly with his lips," though meekness and patience were the prevailing features of his character. St. Peter once denied his Master, though he sincerely loved Him. 2. By judging others we expose ourselves to very great danger. It is impossible for any one habitually to censure others, and to judge of their conduct with severity, without passing sentence against some of his own sins; and nothing can be more just, than that our Judge

should ratify these judgments as far as they respect ourselves, and condemn us out of our own mouths. 3. We are rarely so much divested of passions and prejudices, as to be in a capacity to judge righteous judgment. Dislike, affection, interest, envy, connection, and a thousand other things to which we do not even ourselves advert, insensibly mislead the understanding, and bias the judgment. Men judge according to the passions and prejudices that prevail in themselves, rather than according to the virtues or vices that appears in their neighbour's conduct. (*Ibid.*) *Judging others forbidden* :—I. THE FACULTY OF JUDGMENT MAY BE MISAPPLIED TO IMPROPER SUBJECTS. This happens when it is applied to the character of our neighbours for the mere purpose of detecting faults. Now, the province assigned to us is the detection and correction of our own faults, which is a prior and more important duty ; and which we have it in our power to perform more correctly and more usefully than we can do respecting the faults of others. Besides, till we discover and amend our own faults, we shall be very ill-qualified to reform the faults of our neighbour. II. THIS FACULTY MAY BE EXERCISED IN A CRIMINAL AND PERNICIOUS MANNER. In forming our opinions respecting our neighbours, we are apt to judge without evidence, or from evidence very defective. Our knowledge of our neighbour's faults is obtained either by our own observation, or from the testimony of others. Our own observation is often partial and defective; and from ambiguous appearances we often draw hasty and harsh conclusions. In admitting the testimony of others we are often incautious. For we are apt to forget that many judge from their passions ; that some who see only a part, fill up what is wanting by the exercise of imagination ; that some, anxious only to amuse or surprise, delight in telling wonderful stories of their own creation ; that many cannot see things as they are ; and that others can repeat nothing correctly. It is a matter, then, of great importance to the justness of our opinions concerning our neighbour, as well as to our own respectability, to be able to distinguish among our acquaintances the persons in whose testimony we can confide. Now, we shall easily discover that the man on whose accuracy we can rely is not the man who employs himself in retailing the faults of his neighbours. (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *Judging others* :—I. Consider ONE OR TWO THINGS WHICH OUGHT TO CHECK AND RESTRAIN US IN OUR JUDGMENTS AND CRITICISMS UPON OTHERS. 1. Let us think how little we really know. What we see is but a small part of what is unseen and what can never be seen. 2. Again, in judging of others, we are apt to overlook their difficulties and temptations. II. Consider THAT YOUR JUDGMENT OF OTHERS IS THE MEASURE OF THAT JUDGMENT WHICH MUST OVERTAKE YOURSELF. If a man, then, is rigorous and severe—if he applies to the conduct of others a high standard, and if he expects that standard to be reached—finding fault and passing condemnation where it is not reached—he is virtually laying claim to a high knowledge of what right and wrong really are; and it is only just and reasonable that this knowledge should be the criterion to which his own conduct and life should be brought: he cannot complain if he is judged by what he actually knows. So far, we see how there is no vindictiveness in judging men as they have judged others. We cannot say that this result is attained all at once. Our Lord Himself was an instance to the contrary: He did not receive into His bosom what He had given out; He did great good, and sought the good of others, but He was requited with evil and with ingratitude. III. IT IS CARRYING OUT THE SAME TRUTH IN FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE WHEN CHRIST says, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" To a man with the spirit of penitence in him, his own faults are never made less than they are; and indeed the more he condemns himself, the more will he be ready to justify others. He feels the mote in his own eye to be as a beam, and he reserves his highest condemnation for his own faults and sins. IV. ARE WE, THEN, TO BE BLIND TO THE SINS OF THE WORLD AROUND US? Our Lord's teaching is calculated to enforce righteous judgment, not partial or false judgment. There is nothing in Christian teaching to sanction tolerance towards sin. It is not every kind of judgment which Christ condemns. Let the spirit of love be in the heart, and the spirit of true judgment will follow. 1. Before judging of the individual, then, in any case, pause to think how much you really know, and let not your judgment of a man be formed on hearsay and imagination. 2. Remember that your judgment of others is the measure of that judgment which must overtake you. 3. Let your judgment of others take the tone of your judgment passed first on yourself. 4. Let all things be done under the remembrance of how much we ourselves owe to a love which is boundless, a forgiveness which has raised us from doubt and fear. (*A. Watson, D.D.*)

Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.—*Forgiveness, human and Divine* :—There is no point on which Christianity is more vital, searching, and severe than on this—the requisition of a forgiving spirit, as the highest form of benevolence or well-wishing towards our fellow-men. That we have an average good-nature towards good folks is all very well; that we forgive things done against us which we do not feel is all very well; but when an assault of any kind has been made in some tender and sensitive point, and we feel ourselves to be greatly wronged, then to have such a Divine sense of the great law of benevolence as that, under the stinging sensibility of the wrong, we can rise out of the selfness and think well of the offender—that is an example of Godlike love which evidences the Divine presence in the soul. A Christian man who hates, and will not forgive, is as much worse than an ordinary man, as salt that has lost all saltness is worse than common dirt; it is not good for manure; it is only good to make paths with. The only thing that it will not hurt is the bottom of one's foot. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Forgiving others* :—In the Middle Ages, when the lords and knights were always at war with each other, one of them resolved to revenge himself on a neighbour who had offended him. It chanced that on the very evening when he had made this resolution, he heard that his enemy was to pass near his castle with only a few men with him. He determined not to let the opportunity pass. He spoke of his plan in the presence of his chaplain, who tried in vain to persuade him to give it up. The good man said a great deal to the duke about the sin of what he was going to do, but in vain. At length, seeing that all his words had no effect, he said, "My lord, since I cannot persuade you to give up this plan of yours, will you at least come with me to the chapel, that we may pray together before you go?" The duke consented, and the chaplain and he kneeled together in prayer. Then the mercy-loving Christian said to the revengeful warrior, "Will you repeat after me, sentence by sentence, the prayer which our Lord taught to His disciples?" "I will do it," replied the duke. He did it accordingly. The chaplain said a sentence, and the duke repeated it, till he came to the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive." There the duke was silent. "My lord duke, you are silent," said the chaplain. "Will you be so good as to continue to repeat the words after me, if you dare to do so?" "I cannot," replied the duke. "Well, God cannot forgive you, for He has said so. He Himself has given us this prayer. Therefore you must either give up your revenge, or give up saying this prayer; for to ask God to pardon you, as you pardon others, is to ask Him to take vengeance on you for all your sins. Go now, my lord, and meet your victim. God will meet you at the great day of judgment." The iron will of the duke was broken. "No," said he, "I will finish my prayer. My God, my Father, pardon me; forgive me, as I desire to forgive him who has offended me; lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil." "Amen," said the chaplain. "Amen," repeated the duke, who now understood the Lord's Prayer better than he had ever done before, since he had learned to apply it to himself. (*Preacher's Lantern.*) *Christian forgiveness* :—I. THE PRETENCE OF GOOD-WILL TOWARDS OUR ENEMIES. "I wish nothing so much," a man will say, "as to be reconciled; I am perfectly disposed to it; and, whenever my adversary pleases, I will receive him in such a manner, as to show that no resentment remains with me." Now, this is plausible language; it seems to show generosity, and greatness of mind. But, would you know whence these fine words proceed? From great self-love and little Christianity. You wish to have the credit of a reconciliation without the fancied mortification of it. II. THE PRETENCE OF SENSIBILITY. "If the affront were not so very galling," you may say, "if the injury were not so personal, I could make this sacrifice to God and religion; but I cannot forget what is due to myself, and be void of all feeling." I understand you well; this is the language commonly spoken in the world. And I reply, "If you were insensible, or if the injury done to you were not deeply felt, I should not labour to persuade you to forgive; I should consider this precept of the gospel as scarcely directed to you. You renounce both the spirit and the example of the cross. III. THE PRETENCE OF PRUDENCE IS URGED for omitting this great Christian duty of forgiveness. "I cannot be heartily reconciled to my adversary; he is a bad man, and has been treacherous and base to me; prudence requires me to avoid such a one; and, as to religion, it cannot enjoin dissimulation, nor oblige me to do anything imprudent and dangerous!" IV. LET ME CARRY FORWARD YOUR THOUGHTS BEYOND DEATH AND THE GRAVE. (*S. Partridge, M.A.*) *Forgiveness* :—I. FORGIVENESS IS POSSIBLE. To deem it impossible to forgive your offender is—1. A fatal self-delusion. There have always been men who considered revenge a base passion, and have readily forgiven the greatest offences. Such men have been (1) amongst

the Gentiles. Phocion, a prominent citizen in Greece, had been sentenced by his fellow-citizens to drink the cup of poison. Before tasting it, he said to his son, "This is my last will, O son, that thou mayest soon forget this cup of poison, and never take revenge for it." (2) Amongst the Jews: Joseph, David. (3) Amongst the Christians: Stephen. "Verily, I forgive thee, and thou shalt be my brother in place of him whom thou hast killed," said the Christian knight, John Gualbert, to the murderer of his brother, who, unarmed as he was, begged for his life in the name of the Crucified. If to them it was possible to forgive, why should it not be possible to you? 2. A blasphemy. God requires you to forgive your offender, and has a right to do so. (1) As our Lord. (2) As our Father and Benefactor. The best proof of our gratitude. (3) As our Model. (4) As our Judge. II. FORGIVENESS IS NECESSARY. 1. Reason teaches it. (1) Noble and generous is the conduct of him who is ready for reconciliation. He manifests strength of mind and magnanimity of soul by forgiving the offence inflicted. He overcomes evil by good. (2) Dreadful are the consequences of implacability. Man is easily offended. If men were not ready to forgive, where would you find peace and happiness? Would not our life upon earth and the society of our fellow-men be a continual source of unhappiness and misery? 2. Revelation requires it (Lev. xix. 18; Matt. v. 38–48, vi. 12; Rom. xii. 19–21; Eph. iv. 26; Col. iii. 13). III. FORGIVENESS IS LAUDABLE AND MERITORIOUS. 1. By forgiving the offences committed against you, you gain (1) the favour of men (Rom. xii. 20). (2) The complacency of God (Matt. vi. 14). 2. He who is not willing to forgive those who have offended him, sins (1) against God the Father by trespassing one of His commandments (James ii. 13). (2) Against God the Son. He denies Him because he denies the characteristic feature and virtue of Christianity (John xiii. 35). (3) Against God the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of love. (4) Against his fellow-man. (5) Against himself. He pronounces the sentence of condemnation upon his own head whenever he uses the Lord's Prayer (Luke xix. 22). Grant us then, O Lord, a heart always ready for reconciliation, that in us Thy Word may be fulfilled (Matt. v. 9). (*Bourdaloue.*) *The evil of an unforgiving spirit*:—Go home to your own breast, and ask your heart these questions: "Hast thou, my heart, no other passions but pride and anger? What is become of the humanity and benevolence whereof, on some occasions, thou hast given such pleasing proofs? Wilt thou suffer thy pride to tyrannise over thy love? What an heart art thou, if rage, revenge, and mischief, can afford thee more pleasure than forgiveness and acts of kindness and generosity!" If an enemy is thus able to transform and degrade a man to the most odious class of beings, that man not only is now, but was before the injury done him, a very despicable being, and liable, it seems, to an infinitely worse sort of injury, than can possibly be done in regard to fortune, liberty, character, or even life itself; an injury, I mean, in regard to virtue. The enemy who can turn a good man into a bad one is the worst of all enemies. No man, however, can do this to us without our own concurrence. (*Philip Skelton, M.A.*) *God will measure to you in your own bushel*:—Forgive, saith a master to one of his servants, in your hearing, forgive your fellow-servant the guinea he owes you, and you shall be forgiven the hundred you owe me. Forgive that other fellow-servant the reproaches he hath flung at you, and you shall be forgiven the theft you lately committed, when you were discovered stealing my goods. Forgive that third fellow-servant the blow you just now received from him, and you shall be forgiven the assault you committed on me, your master, for which you are now under prosecution. If you do not comply with me in this, you shall be paid your guinea; but then I will exact my hundred guineas of you to the very last farthing. You shall have satisfaction, too, for the affront offered you; but shall be publicly exposed to the infamy your theft has deserved. I will punish the man who struck you, as justice requires; but will also execute on you the rigour of that justice for your act of rebellion and violence against myself. As you measure from you, I will measure to you; mercy for mercy, justice for justice, vengeance for vengeance. You demand an exact account, and shall have it; but you shall also give it. You think this servant a perfect madman when you hear him crying out, "I insist on an account; I will be paid; I will have satisfaction." Do you indeed? Well, then, Christ is the Master, and thou art the man. What! will you not forgive a trifle, to be forgiven that which is infinite? Will you plunge to the bottom of the lake for the pleasure of seeing your enemy swim on the surface? How is it that you judge so clearly in things of little moment, which relate to others, while in a case of the same nature, but of the last consequence to yourself, you are wholly stupid? Is it self that shuts your eyes?

Self! which of all things ought to open them, when your salvation is brought in question? Amazing! Whom will you see for, if you cannot see for yourself? Whom will be wise for, if you will not be wise for yourself? (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 38. **Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down.**—*On Christian giving*:—I. GET, GATHER. Are there not many persons of a very careless and prodigal disposition? II. GIVE. Begin to give as soon as you begin to get. That will prevent the danger of a growing covetousness. III. THE GIVING SHOULD BE IN SOME PROPORTION TO THE INCOME. I do not presume to fix the proportion. But I the more insist on the principle of a fair and just proportion, and on the duty of the individual to turn the principle into practice. This proportion, however, will never be reached, or at any rate, will hardly for any long time be continued, except in connection with another principle of far deeper hold and wider sway, the principle that—IV. WHAT IS LEFT IS GIVEN TOO. It is also true that we shall never understand really what Christian giving is until—V. WE GET BEYOND WHAT IS CALLED THE DUTY OF IT TO THE HIGHER GROUND OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF IT. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," is a universal truth applicable not to money alone, but to the whole of life's experiences. 1. Thought. 2. Sympathy. 3. Life itself. The possibility of giving life, self, to God for ever. The certainty of having at length to yield the gift of life into the hand of God. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The duty of giving*:—I. WHY SHOULD WE GIVE? It is our duty. It is for God's glory. It is more blessed to give than to receive. II. WHAT SHOULD WE GIVE? 1. Ourselves. St. Paul says of the Macedonians that they "first gave their own selves unto the Lord." This will make all else well-pleasing unto the Lord. 2. Our time. 3. Our influence. 4. Our money. We are but stewards of all that we possess. III. HOW ARE WE TO GIVE? 1. Willingly. 2. Unostentatiously. "Let not thy right hand," &c. 3. Lovingly—from a principle of love to God and man in the heart. IV. HOW MUCH ARE WE TO GIVE? The Bible does not give us exact and particular rules, but lays down general principles by which we are to govern our conduct. We must not offer to the Lord that which doth cost us nothing. V. WHEN ARE WE TO GIVE? When cases of need, objects of compassion, or means of advancing the honour of God or the good of our fellow-men come before us. The injunction of the apostle was, "On the first day of the week," &c. (1 Cor. xvi. 2). VI. WHERE ARE WE TO GIVE? That question may be best answered by asking another, Where are we *not* to give? VII. WHO IS TO GIVE? The answer is "every man"—the rich of their abundance, the poor something even of their poverty. Widow and two mites. "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." (*F. O. Morris, B.A.*) *The reward of the giver*:—There are, doubtless, those who think that this statement is not borne out by the facts of their own experience. Too often they have obtained not even gratitude. And others there are who listen doubtfully to such words, not on account of any personal disappointments of their own, for they have not put themselves in the way of suffering such disappointments, but rather from observation of other people's experience, as well as from their own theory of life. What, then, are we to make of our Lord's statement that men shall give this good measure? 1. Our Lord did not say that men would do anything of the kind. We are to hope for nothing again (ver. 35). 2. Yet our Lord proposes a reward. Yes. "Ye shall be the children of the Highest." The reward, then, consists in being like God. Whatever else is mentioned in the nature of reward is not an object to be sought after, but a consequence which must needs ensue. 3. Among these consequences will be found a measure even of human gratitude. For if our Lord did not say that men shall give the good measure, it may also be observed that He did not say they will not. The good measure will be given, and even men will have their share in giving it. (*H. Whitehead, M.A.*) *Penalty of not giving to God*:—There are hundreds of business men, Christian men, in New York city, who have gone down, for the simple reason, as I believe, that they did not give to God that which belonged to Him. They did not give Him any per centage at all, or such a very small per centage that the Lord God collected His own bills, by fire, by storm, or by death. Two men I knew very well, some years ago, on the streets of New York. They were talking about the matter of benevolence. One said to the other, "You give too much. I will wait until I get a large pile of money, and then I will give." "No," said the other, "I will give as God prospers me." Hear the sequel. The former lives in New York city to-day, dollarless. The latter gathered two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. I believe that the reason why many people are kept poor is because they do not give enough. If a man gives in the right

spirit to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the Church, he is insured for time and for eternity. The Bank of England is a weak institution compared with the bank that any Christian man can draw upon. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Righteous retribution*:—One remembers, of course, the Regent Morton hugged to death by the "maiden" he had been the means of introducing into Scotland. The French doctor, Guillotin, is even now not uncommonly believed to have perished in the Reign of Terror by the instrument invented by and named after him; whereas he quietly died in his bed, many many years later than that. But the Revolution history is well stored with instances like that of Châlier, condemned to death by the criminal tribunal at Lyons—the guillotine which he had sent for from Paris to destroy his enemies being first destined to sever his own head from his body. A bungling executioner prolonged the last agonies of this man, who, in fact, was hacked to death, not decapitated. He tasted slowly, as Lamartine says, of the death, a thirst for which he had so often sought to excite in the people; "he was glutted with blood, but it was his own." Alison recognizes in the death of Murat a memorable instance of the moral retribution which often attends on "great deeds of iniquity, and by the instrumentality of the very acts which appeared to place them beyond its reach." He underwent in 1815 the very fate to which, seven years before, he had consigned a hundred Spaniards at Madrid, guilty of no other crime than that of defending their country; and this, as Sir Archibald adds, "by the application of a law to his own case which he himself had introduced to check the attempt of the Bourbons to regain a throne which he had usurped." (*Francis Jacox.*) *God a good paymaster*:—A boy, hearing the Rev. J. Wesley preach, cheerfully put a shilling on the plate. Twenty years afterwards the boy told Mr. Wesley that God was a good paymaster; for he was then worth £20,000, and had the grace of God in his heart. (*Sunday School Treasury.*) *Happiness in doing good*:—Alexander, the Emperor, was one day out hunting; and having gone ahead of his suite, he fancied he heard a groan; the groan pierced his heart; he alighted on the spot, looked around him, and found a poor man at the point of death. He bent over him, chafed his temples; excited the poor man, or tried to do so; he went by a public road, and called the attention of a surgeon to the case of the poor man. "Oh!" said the surgeon, "he is dead; he is dead." "Try what you can do," said Alexander. The surgeon adopted a set of experimental processes at the command of the emperor; and at last a drop of blood appeared. At the mouth of the opened vein there was suction; respiration was forming in the chest of the man. Alexander's eyes flashed fire, and he said—"Oh! this is the happiest day of my life; I have saved another man's life!" What said another great man among ourselves—Lord Eldon? In a letter to his sister, which he wrote in his old age, he says—"It was my duty, as Lord Chancellor, to listen to the record of the sentences passed by the Recorder of the City of London. It used to be a formal thing, when the sentences of death were read over, that the chancellor should give his assent; but I determined after the first time that I would go into each case, and have each case clearly and distinctly stated. It used to give me a great deal of trouble in addition to all my other duties; but the consequence of this was, that I saved the lives of several persons." I say, do good in the cause of truth and righteousness, and you will promote your own honour and happiness; and when the eye sees you it will bless you, and when the ear hears you it will bear witness to you. (*J. Beaumont.*) *The naturalness of giving*:—If we view this microcosm, the human body, we shall find that the heart does not receive the blood to store it up, but while it pumps it in at one valve, it sends it forth at another. The blood is always circulating everywhere, and is stagnant nowhere; the same is true of all the fluids in a healthy body; they are in a constant state of expenditure. If one cell stores up for a few moments its peculiar secretion, it only retains it till it is perfectly fitted for its appointed use in the body; for if any cell in the body should begin to store up its secretion, its store would soon become the cause of inveterate disease; nay, the organ would soon lose the power to secrete at all, if it did not give forth its products. The whole of the human system lives by giving. The eye cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee, and will not guide thee; for if it does not perform its watchful office, the whole man will be in the ditch, and the eye will be covered with mire. If the members refuse to contribute to the general stock, the whole body will become poverty-stricken, and be given up to the bankruptcy of death. Let us learn, then, from the analogy of nature, the great lesson, that to get, we must give; that to accumulate, we must scatter; that to make ourselves happy, we must make others happy; and that to get good and become spiritually vigorous, we must do good,

and seek the spiritual good of others. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Reward of effort for others*:—A traveller, ready to perish amid the snows of the Alps, meets a fellow-traveller in worse condition than himself. He puts forth every effort to save him, and is rewarded by the life of his fellow, and by new warmth and life in his own freezing limbs. *Benefits of liberality*:—I never prospered more in my small estate than when I gave most and needed least. My own rule hath been, first, to contrive to need myself as little as may be, and lay out none on need-nots, but to live frugally on a little; second, to serve God in my place, upon that competency which He allowed me to myself, that what I had myself might be as good a work for common good as that which I gave to others; and, third, to do all the good I could with the rest, preferring the most public and the most durable object, and the nearest. And the more I have practised this, the more I have had to do it with; and, when I gave almost all, more came in (without any's gift), I scarce knew how, at least unexpected: but when by improvidence I have cast myself into necessities of using more upon myself, or upon things in themselves of less importance, I have prospered much less than when I did otherwise. And when I had contented myself to devote that stock which I had gotten to charitable uses after my death, instead of laying out at present, that so I might secure somewhat for myself while I lived, in probability all that is like to be lost; whereas, when I took that present opportunity, and trusted God for the time to come, I wanted nothing, and lost nothing. (*Richard Baxter.*) *The liberal man is always rich*:—In defiance of all the torture, of all the might, of all the malice of the world, the liberal man will ever be rich; for God's providence is his estate, God's wisdom and power are his defence, God's love and favour are his reward, and God's Word is his security. (*Isaac Barrow, D.D.*) *The reward of giving*:—I. As to temporal things. 1. A good conscience. Sometimes the requital of a man's open-heartedness, and the readiness with which he has bestowed of what he has upon others, is furnished to him in the feelings of his own heart; and he herein gains a rich, abundant, and blessed recompense. Labour may have been sweet to him; he may have been willing to toil on, as he was gradually making progress to his object; success has been full of delight, as he gradually mastered difficulties, and looking back upon the way which he had passed, found how he had climbed to heights, to which his youthful ambition hardly dared to aspire. But neither is labour so sweet, nor its most successful results so delightful, as when a man whom God has prospered in his getting, has the heart readily and liberally to bestow. When he has gone to the habitations of the poor, when he has stood by the bedside of the sick, when he has ministered to those human necessities which fell within the compass of his ability to remove, then there has been in his own soul a far better requital for his expenditure, than if he had bestowed his money in any other possible way. 2. Gratitude of those benefited. The most prosperous man, the man to whom in God's providence there seems to be a larger than usual amount of success appointed, has no security; he cannot tell what a year, or even a day, may bring forth. His fortune may be laid in the dust; his riches may make themselves wings; he may be reduced lower even than he was at his starting-place. Be it so; God has not forgotten him. Then will come the very especial occasion on which he will prove, by his own individual instance, that the promise of the text is true. When he possessed much, he gave liberally; he was the friend of all who were in necessity; he turned no deaf ear to the supplications of the desolate; he was not inaccessible to the sons and daughters of sorrow; and in his own day of disaster, many a heart and many a hand are open to him. For whom is it, that a whole neighbourhood are anxious? For whose affliction is it that all are concerned? For whose renovated fortunes are all deeply anxious? Is it not the man who, when he was in other circumstances, held himself the steward of God, and because he possessed all things in charge, used them as one who had to give account. Perhaps it may be that even his temporal condition is restored; but, whether that be so or not, does he not gain a most blessed return for all his charges and all his labour, in that there are hearts which feel for him, and friends who sympathise deeply with him, and those in whose prayers he knows that he has a place? II. In spiritual things. Application to devoted preachers of the gospel, missionaries, &c. Also to parents who have brought up their children conscientiously. Our own portion in heaven will be all the more blessed, because of its being shared with those to whom on earth we were helpers. (*S. Robins, M.A.*) *The gift and its return*:—The New Testament is full of the idea of a natural and necessary reciprocity between man and the things by which he is surrounded (Gal. vi. 7; 2 Cor. ix. 6).

The world seems to be a great field in which every man drops his seed, and which gives back to every man, not just the same thing which he dropped there, any more than the brown earth holds up to you in the autumn the same black berry which you hid under its bosom in the spring, but something which has its true correspondence and proportion to the seed to which it is the legitimate and natural reply. Every gift has its return, every act has its consequence, every call has its answer in this great live, alert world, where man stands central, and all things have their eyes on him and their ears open to his voice. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *The law of reciprocity*:—It is a law of vast extent and wonderful exactness. The world is far more orderly than we believe; a deeper and a truer justice runs through it than we imagine. We all go about calling ourselves victims, discoursing on the cruel world, and wondering that it should treat us so, when really we are only meeting the rebound of our own lives. What we have been to things about us has made it necessary that they should be this to us. As we have given ourselves to them, so they have given themselves to us. 1. Even with man's relations to the material earth the law is true. What different things she is to all of us, this earth we live in! Why is it that one man laughs at another's view about the earth, and thinks him mad because of some strange value that he places on it? Three men stand in the same field and look around them: and then they all cry out together. One of them exclaims, How rich! another cries, How strange! another cries, How beautiful! and then the three divide the field between them, and they build their houses there; and in a year you come back and see what answer the same earth has made to each of her three questioners. They have all talked with the ground on which they lived, and heard its answers. They have all held out their several hands, and the same ground has put its own gift into each of them. What have they got to show you? One cries, "Come here and see my barn"; another cries, "Come here and see my museum"; the other says, "Let me read you my poem." That is a picture of the way in which a generation or the race takes the great earth and makes it different things to all its children. With what measure we mete to it, it measures to us again. 2. The same law holds good with regard to our relations to the world of men. What does it mean, that one man cannot go among any kind of men, however base and low, without getting happiness and good; while another man cannot go into the midst of the noblest and sweetest company without bringing out misery and despair and sin? Here are Jesus and Judas: both go and give themselves to the Pharisees; both stand in the Pharisees' presence and hear what they have to say. To Jesus these Pharisees give back in return every day a deeper consciousness of His own wondrous nature, a devouter consecration to His Father, and a more earnest pity for them. To Judas they give only blacker dreams of treason, a falser disregard of friendship and loyalty and honour. Take two boys in a class at college; two clerks in a shop in town. It is not good when either of them is made cynical, and sneers at the possibility of virtue because of the vice which he has felt in its contamination at his side. The true soul, with a character of its own, will learn the possibility of being good from his own consciousness, all the more strongly because of the vice that touches him. No soul, bad in itself, can really learn the possibility of goodness by mere sight and touch even of a world of saints, and no soul really good can lose the noble consciousness that man was made for goodness, even though all the world but him is steeped in wickedness, nay, in subtle ways he will feed that consciousness there. 3. The same law applies to the truths which men believe, or the causes for which they labour. Generous or stingy, large-idead or small-idead, appreciative or unappreciative of other occupations than your own; these things you will be, not invariably according to the kind of trade you are engaged in, but distinctively according to the kind of manhood which you put into your trade. And so with creeds. A creed must fill a man's character before it really takes possession of his mind, as the ocean has to fill a vessel with its water before it can swallow it up into its depth. You cannot finally judge men by their creeds. A man may hold the most spiritual doctrine, and be carnal and mercenary; a man may hold the broadest truth, and be a bigot; and, on the other hand, all our religious history bears witness that a man may hold hard crude, narrow doctrine, and yet gather out of his belief in it rich, warm, sweet holiness which men and God must love. 4. I turn to one more illustration of the working of our law—the highest, the completest of them all. It is the gift of oneself to Jesus. There are different measures in which men give themselves to Christ, and Christ despises none of them; but in different measures He again is compelled to give Himself back to them. See how they come! One man approaches the

Divine Redeemer asking no Divine redemption, but touched and fascinated by the beauty of that perfect life. He would feed his wonder, he would cultivate his taste, upon it. To him Jesus gives what he asks, and with delighted wonder and with cultivated taste the satisfied asker goes away. It is as if a man painted a mountain for its picturesqueness, and carried off his picture in delight, never dreaming that he left behind him in the mountain's bosom treasures of gold which only waited for his hand to gather them. Another man comes to Jesus with a self that is all alive with curiosity. He takes Christ's revelations—for Christ does not refuse him either—and goes away content to know much of God and man, and what there is beyond this world. Another man comes to Jesus with a self all trembling with fear, all eager for safety, and Jesus satisfies him; He lets him know that even the humblest, and most ignorant, and least aspiring soul, which repents of and forsakes its sin, and seeks forgiveness, shall not be lost. Each gets from Jesus that which the nature which he brings can take. With what measure each gives himself to the Saviour, the Saviour gives Himself in His salvation back to each. Only when at last there comes a man with his self all open, with door behind door, back into the most secret chambers, all unclosed, ready to give himself entirely, wanting everything, ready to take everything that Jesus has to give, wanting and ready to take the whole of Jesus into the whole of himself, only then are the last gates withdrawn; and as when the ocean gathers itself up and enters with its tide the open mouth of the river, like a conqueror riding into a surrendered town, so does the Lord in all His richness, with His perfect standards, His mighty motives, His infinite hopes, give Himself to the soul which has been utterly given to Him. It is not enough that Christ should stand ready to give us His blessings. He must give us the nature to which those blessings can be given. What we want of Him is not merely His gifts; it is ourselves; He must give us them first. To them only can He give Himself, which is His perfect gift. Not merely with outstretched hands but with open hearts we must stand before Him. We must pray not merely that the kingdom of heaven may come, but that we may be born again, so that we may see it. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 39. **Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?** The suggestive supposition is made by Dr. Reid ("Inquiry into the human mind") that it had been as uncommon to be born with the power of sight as it is now to be born incapable of it, in which case "the few who had this rare gift would appear as prophets or inspired teachers to the many." *Blind-led blind*:—Many a paraphrase of the proverb, and of a perishing people where there is no vision, might be cited from the histories and miscellanies of Mr. Carlyle. It is a trite theme with him—the need of what he calls men with an eye, to lead those who need guidance. We might apply what Shakespere's Gloster, in *King Lear*, says, after his eyes have been barbarously put out, and he seeks a guide in Mad Tom, and is warned, "Alack, sir, he's mad!" "'Tis the time's plague, when madmen lead the blind." Ill fare the people that take up with blind guides. Like Elymas, when there fell upon him a mist and a darkness, they go about seeking some one to lead them by the hand. Some one, any one. Who will show us any good—who will deliver us from this hour and power of darkness? And sometimes he that is struck blind takes for guide him that is born blind. And straightway they make for the ditch. St. Gregory the Great, in his treatise on the pastoral care, vigorously censures those who, without proper qualifications, undertake the care of souls, which he calls the art of all arts. Who does not know, he says, that the wounds of the mind are more difficult to be understood than those of the body! And yet men unacquainted with the spiritual precepts will profess themselves physicians of the heart, while those who are ignorant of the effects of drugs would blush to set up for physicians of the body. And anon he quotes the proverb of the blind-led blind. In no such connection, and in no such spirit, Shelley quotes it, when describing priests and princes pale with terror, whose faith "fell, like a shaft loosed by the bowman's error, on their own hearts."

> "They sought and they could find
> No refuge—'twas the blind who led the blind."

But, after all, there may be something worse than even a blind guide; for, as South observes in his sermon on the fatal imposture of words, "A blind guide is certainly a great mischief: but a guide that blinds those whom

he should lead, is certainly a greater." The proverb was full in South's eye when, in another sermon, discussing the case of a man who exerts all the faculties of his soul, and plies all means and opportunities in the search of truth which God has vouchsafed him, the preacher concludes that such a man may rest upon the judgment of his conscience so informed, as a warrantable guide of those actions which he must account to God for: "and if by following such a guide he fall into the ditch, the ditch shall never drown him." But the same vigorous divine elsewhere deprecates a blind watchman as "equally a nuisance and an impertinence"—and such a paradox, both in reason and in practice, he contends, is a deluded conscience, namely a counsellor who cannot advise, and a guide not able to direct. The will and the affections are made to follow and obey, not to lead and direct; and therefore, he goes on to say, if error has perverted the order, and disturbed the original economy of our faculties, and a blind will thereupon comes to be led by a blind understanding, "there is no remedy, but it must trip and stumble, and sometimes fall into the noisome ditch of the foulest enormities and immoralities. (*F. Jacox.*) *Blind leaders*:—I. THE CASE PROPOSED—"Can the blind lead the blind?" Upon this we found the following remarks: 1. All men by nature are in a state of spiritual blindness. The proofs of this moral and spiritual blindness press upon our attention on every hand. (1) Consider, in the first place, the erroneous and mistaken apprehensions which men generally entertain of the character of God. (2) The unconsciousness of men to the moral and spiritual dangers by which they are threatened is another proof that darkness hath covered the human mind. (3) The intense love and ardent pursuit of the things of the present world form another striking manifestation of the blindness of the human heart with regard to spiritual things. 2. I remark that to the blind some sort of guidance is absolutely necessary. We all feel this with respect to the calamity of natural blindness. 3. It is obvious to remark that those who proffer themselves to be the guides of the blind should themselves possess the visual faculty. What supplemental aid can the blind derive from those who are themselves in the same unhappy condition? II. THE CATASTROPHE PREDICTED. "If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch?" Upon this I would remark: 1. That ignorant and unfaithful teachers are to be considered as the heaviest imaginable curse wherever they exist. 2. The text reminds us that the consequence of this state of things is that both shall fall into the ditch. The blind who are led, and the blind leaders by whom they are led, it is much to be feared will share one common doom. They will fall into sentimental errors—they will fall into practical immoralities—they will fall into final perdition—unless the grace and mercy of the Most High prevent. (1) The ruin into which they lead others, and which they prepare for themselves, is, first, inexcusable. (2) As this ruin will be found to be inexcusable, so will it be found to be inevitable. There is nothing that can hinder; but from the erroneous system which I have described as certain, inevitable ruin must follow. (3) And the ruin will be found to be irretrievable. (4) This ruin which is inexcusable, inevitable, and irretrievable, will be found to be eternal. III. Let me apply the principles which have been thus briefly developed in favour of the institution for which I am about to plead. You are aware I am to ask your benevolent aid on behalf of the Home Missionary Society. 1. Let me remind you of the necessity which there exists for the interposition of such efforts as those which this society exerts. 2. Consider the erroneous guidance under which a vast proportion of this population is actually placed. (*C. Clayton, M.A.*) *The choice of a leader*:—Two extremes exist in reference to the pilgrimage and scholarship of life. Some assert that man needs no guide whatever. "Is he not a noble creature, gifted with high intelligence? Can he not reason and judge, and understand and discern? He can surely find his own way, without direction from without. As a learner, why needs he a teacher? He can instruct himself. Such self-sufficient boasters will not, therefore, condescend to sit at the feet of a master, or follow the track of a guide, and consequently they frequently become erratic, singular, lawless, and unreasonable in their modes of thought, and even of act. Into the mazes of infidelity and atheism such pilgrims wander; into foolishness and strong delusion such teachers of themselves conduct their own minds. This scheme is dangerous, but its opposite pole is not less so. Deliver a man from rationalism, and he often swings into superstition, and says, "I see that I need a guide, I will take the one nearest to hand." Between these two extremes there is a narrow path of right, and happy is he who finds it, viz., the honestly and sincerely judging who the leader and teacher should be, the discovery that a leader has been appointed in the person

of the Lord Jesus, and a teacher in the Divine Spirit, and then a complete, willing, and believing submission of the whole man to this infallible guidance. I. The text announces to us A GREAT, GENERAL PRINCIPLE AS A WARNING, viz., that a disciple does not get above his master, but becomes like him. 1. It is evident that the disciple is generally drawn to the master who is most like himself. There is about us all a natural tendency to admire our own image, and to be willing to submit to any who are superior to us, and yet are of our type. If the blind man only could see he would not choose a blind man to be his guide; but as he cannot see he meets with one who talks as blind men talk; who judges things as they are in the dark, and who does not know what sighted men know, and therefore never reminds the blind man of his infirmity; and at once he says, "This is my ideal of a man, he is exactly the leader I require, and I will commit myself to him." So the blind man takes the blind man to be his guide, and this is the reason why error has been so popular. No error would live if it did not chime in with some evil propensity of human nature, if it did not gratify some error in man to which it is congruous. Mind, then, whom you choose for a guide. 2. Having chosen his tutor, the student gradually becomes more and more like his master; or, having taken his guide, the tendency is to tread more closely in his footsteps, and obey his rules more fully every day. We imitate those whom we admire. 3. The pupil does not go beyond the tutor, nor does the man who submits to be led go beyond his guide. Such a case is very rarely found—indeed, I may say, never; for when the one who is led goes beyond his leader, he is not in truth led any longer; rarely enough does it ever come to that. Men, if they outstrip their leaders, generally do so in a wrong direction. They seldom exaggerate their virtues, those they frequently omit, but they usually exaggerate peculiarities, follies, failings, and faults. It is said that in the court of Richard III., because the king was round-shouldered, the courtiers gradually became hump-backed; and we have seen a whole country idiotic enough, not in the last century, but in this century, to have almost all its women limping, because a popular princess was afflicted with a temporary lameness. 4. When a man chooses a bad leader for his soul, at the end of all bad leadership there is a ditch. A small turn of the switch on the railway is the means of taking the train to the far east or to the far west: the first turn is very little indeed, but the points arrived at are remote. Let us not take any man whatever as our leader, for if we trust to any mere man, though he may be right in ninety-nine of the hundred, he is wrong somewhere, and our tendency will be to be more influenced by his one wrong point, than by any one of his righteous. There is One whom you may follow implicitly, and one only—the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of God. II. SPECIAL APPLICATION OF THIS GREAT GENERAL PRINCIPLE TO JESUS CHRIST FOR OUR ENCOURAGEMENT. If we have Him for our leader we certainly cannot go beyond our leader, but we shall be privileged to grow more and more like Him, and we shall be perfected according to our text, as our leader is. 1. This is what we might have expected. He is the Creator; can He not create in us His image! From such an one as He is, we confidently expect it. (1) For, observe, the teaching itself is such that it must have power over hearts that yield to it. Almighty love. Divine teaching brought down to human capacity. (2) But it is not in His teaching alone that His influence lies; the most potent charm is Himself. "Never man spake like this Man;" because never man lived like this Man. His character gives Him a right to speak. (3) We feel quite sure that the disciples will grow like their Master in the case of Jesus, because He inspires them with an intense love to Himself, which flames forth in enthusiasm for Him. Get a teacher whom all the scholars love and admire, and they will soon learn. Make them enthusiastic for him, and no lesson will be too hard. (4) Best of all, our Great Teacher has a spirit with Him, a mighty Spirit, God Himself, the Holy Ghost, and when He teaches, He teaches not with words alone, but with a power which goes beyond the ear into the heart itself, 2. This was virtually promised. (1) It is promised in the great doctrine of predestination (Rom. viii. 29, 30). (2) It is promised in the very name of Jesus—"He shall save His people from their sins," *i.e.*, bring them back into a condition of purity and holiness. 3. What we might have expected, and what God has virtually promised, has been actually seen; for the disciples have been like their Lord. (1) In character. Some reflect this feature, others that. (2) In life-story. Melchizedec. Isaac. Joseph. Stephen. Paul. (3) In struggles and temptations. (4) In their victories. Christ's disciples overcome sin; by their Master's help they rise above doubt, they vanquish the world, and they stand in purity and faith. (5) By and by they shall be like Him in their reward (Rev. iii. 21). III. WE MAY

PUT ALL THIS TO THE TEST IF WE WILL. If you are not already Christ's disciple, you may be. He will receive you though you have been to other masters, and learned a great deal under them, all of which you will have to unlearn. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The blind and the ditch*:—An awful warning to all teachers, especially preachers, followed as it is by the warning of the "beam" that is before "one's own eye," when one sees a small thing before another's. We know of whom it was first intended—men who were not doubted; men who did not doubt themselves; men who led confidently into the ditch; men who killed the Lord of Glory, to save their place and nation, and then destroyed them both. They stand before us as a warning, how awful it is to undertake to lead, only to lead astray or into ruin. Blindness (say some) is no sin, "are we blind also?" "If ye had been blind, ye had not had sin, but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." There is none so bad as that which is blind to itself. There are many blindnesses—as defect of thought, or learning—which drive the hearers into what the speakers never dreamt of; defect of practical knowledge of life and circumstances, making advice untenable or pernicious; such as on the clashing of submi sion to parents and zeal for God; want of spirituality—how can any teach what he has never learnt, and therefore never understood? A dwelling upon some parts of truth to the exclusion of all the rest, as the Pharisees did on the letter of purification, or as some on self-denial, till all religion is swallowed up in it, or some on spirituality and faith, till plain moral laws are broken. It is possible to dwell on sacraments till conversion is ignored; or to make conversion a sole object, till Christian life and edification are despised, and only strong excitement satisfies. It is far easier to preach a party, or a church, or a sect, than to preach Christ. All these are blindnesses, and, so far as they go, injure both guide and followers. But how hard it is to see: to trace out all our thoughts to their consequences, to know how to speak to or of all men, to be thoughtful and not cold, to know the life of the Spirit without pride. In fact, there are none who see all things, no one perfect guide, none to whom we can blindly trust. It is a case of those who see but little, and have more need to advise together than to lead and follow confidently. The work of preaching and advice is not to supersede thought, but to make men think; it is not what you hear, but what you make of what you hear. The best part of a sermon is the application, and that is made by the heart at home. But remember that blind leaders are made by blind followers. People crowd to a preacher as others to a theatre for a new excitement; and when they are moved, they long for a guide. Thinking is a labour, following is easy, a confident leader never lacks followers. This is the attraction in our days of the Church of Rome, and blind followers push her to greater extremes, while blind horror sends some into infidelity, for horror and foolhardiness go hand in hand. But it is not only in religion that these principles hold; in politics, in local business, in fashions and customs, there are the same blind leaders and blind followers. There is the same love of being first, the same desire to stick to one's party, and be saved the trouble of thinking. Let it warn us in all these things to try to know where we are going, not to take other men's fall on our own shoulders and help a whole crowd to destruction. Pause to think. Is it wise to follow? Am I sure I know my own way, when I long so to lead, and am so vexed when others do not follow? For in truth, though all are blind in something, in something all can see. Our first anxiety must be to see our own way, and then not to make others follow us, but to make them see. There are ditches enough. We see men every day falling into them, and there are enough before ourselves. If we think, and speak, and hear thus—as one family—for mutual help—we shall find that though the blind cannot lead the blind, they can help one another very much. (*Bishop E. Steere.*)

Ver. 40. **The disciple is not above his Master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master.**—*The disciple not above his master*:—This saying was already a proverb in the time of our Lord, or He made it a proverb by His frequent use of it (Matt. x. 24, 25; John xiii. 12–16, and xv. 20). On the occasion referred to by St. Luke, He uses it in its widest, its most general scope; for here He is speaking of any and every master, of any and every disciple. "No disciple," He says, "while he remains a disciple, can reasonably expect to be wiser than his master, whoever his master may be." On every other occasion our Lord limits the scope of the proverb by applying it to *Himself* and to the disciples who followed Him. Here it follows a parable with which it seems to many to have little connection, to some no connection at all, although it is not easy to see how

any attentive reader should have missed it. Surely the meaning of the entire passage, and its sequence of thought, are obvious enough. If a teacher be blind, if, that is, he lack intellectual or spiritual discernments, if he therefore frame partial and erroneous conclusions, what can be expected but that his disciples should fall into the very same errors, and fall into them all the more surely in proportion as they are faithful disciples? The disciple is not above his master; the learner is not wiser than the teacher. It is a question whether the disciple will ever rise to the level of his master. He will have done much if he do so much as that. From our Lord's use of this proverb here we may infer some lessons of no small practical importance, and, in learning them, still further develop its meaning. I. THE IMMENSE INPORTANCE OF BOTH HAVING AND PRESENTING A TRUE AIM, A TRUE IDEAL, OF LIFE. What is our aim then? What should it be? The old catechism answer, rightly understood, is surely as good as any: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." But it is of the last importance that we should set a single aim before us, and that the highest of which we are capable. II. How HAPPY ARE WE, AND HOW GREATLY ASSISTED IN OUR PURSUIT OF IT, SHOULD THIS AIM, THIS ABSTRACT IDEAL, CLOTHE ITSELF IN FLESH AND BLOOD, AND STAND BEFORE US IN THE PERSON OF A MAN OF LIKE PASSIONS WITH OURSELVES! An embodied ideal, a realized and incarnate ideal, is worth a thousand pale abstractions. It is much to have a noble aim before us; but, oh, how much more to have it clothed in the loveliness of a perfect life. The lofty but abstract ideals of character which men have framed incarnate themselves, clothe themselves, with life and power and loveliness, in Christ, the Son of Man. III. If it be important that we should have it for ourselves, it is also important that WE SHOULD PRESENT A TRUE IDEAL OF LIFE TO OTHERS. We may seek even the highest good selfishly; but, in proportion as we find it, we shall cease to be selfish: we shall seek to be good for the sake of others as well as for our own sake. Let us remember that if in any respect—national, commercial, intellectual, social, spiritual—we are above any of our neighbours, to them, without our permission being asked, we have become masters, *i.e.*, teachers and examples. And therefore we should seek and strive for grace to set them a good example, that our influence may be stimulating and helpful to them. Above all, we should try so to follow Christ as that we may lead them to the Perfect Example, and make them disciples of the only Master who can never mislead them. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *The force of example*:—This is true as an observation: men do grow up into the likeness of what they admire. It is seldom that any come quite up to it. Great philosophers, men of science, divines, soldiers, statesmen—these are taken as models, and each one has shaped the lives of many others. It is not always a conscious imitation. But we do grow like those we admire or love: even mere association shapes us. A man may be known by his associates. If he is not like them he soon will be. They are his masters in some degree, and he will be like them. We should take care, then, whom we imitate. In very many cases men forget to notice what was the end of those they admire. Statesmen have thought of Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon, without considering their deaths, and the ruin they left behind them. Fame and power draw great men to seek them, and lead them into the ditch into which their masters fell before them. Our leaders are not generally people who have made a name in history, but some one not far off our own station in life, who has made himself a name, and "got on in the world." It is a very good thing to have examples; we all want lifting, and want fresh thoughts to be given us. But before we give ourselves up to follow, we had better consider our masters as a whole. We may never come up to them, but we cannot hope to fare better than they. Are they exactly what we should like to be; did they end as we should like to end? Now, we find mostly some drawback, something we hope to avoid. We must remember that it began far back in their career. There is many a man of business who buys success at the cost of health and life, or of truth and honesty, or of family and duty, or of eternity. If that is what he paid, he is no master for us to follow. There is nothing in the world that cannot be bought too dear. And of our masters in social life, pleasant companions, friends, clever fellows: look at them well—do we want to be like them? One and another of our old acquaintances are gone; what has become of them? Take the man who has gone farthest, and then you will see what the road leads to. If it leads to peace, and honour, and health—follow it. If it leads at last only to some filthy ditch—stop while you can. You say, "I can stop short"; do it then. It will not grow easier, it will cost you more every day. Many a man says, "I was a great fool to begin, but now I cannot help it." It is always easiest to go downwards.

It is not very difficult, if we deal honestly with ourselves, to see to what our mode of life has led, and we may feel sure we shall be no exception to the general law. But then there is another sense in which these same words were used; they are a comfort and support. We must not expect to be free from the losses, trials, difficulties, which have harassed those who went before us. No man ever grew without patient years of work. Our Lord told His disciples to look at Him, and not expect to be better treated. There has never been a time when there has been no undeserved ill-will. God does not make us perfect by always giving us what we wish for. Others have been tried, and where are they? Those who sought rest and pleasure, those who faced difficulty and kept right and truth—where are they? (John xvi. 33.) A good Christian is not known in the world by his good fortune, but by a hope that does not make ashamed. If we choose the highest model, even Christ, what must we expect? Troubles and difficulties enough, and after them—to be as our Master. Here, indeed, is a glorious future worth all the effort it costs. To be like God Himself in heaven! What other service can give such a reward as this? (*Bishop E. Steere.*) *The use of a great leader*:—During one of the campaigns in the American Civil War, when the winter weather was very severe, some of Stonewall Jackson's men having crawled out in the morning from their snow-laden blankets, half-frozen, began to curse him as the cause of their sufferings. He lay close by under a tree, also snowed under, and heard all this: but without noticing it, presently crawled out too, and, shaking off the snow, made some jocular remark to the nearest men, who had no idea he had ridden up in the night and lain down amongst them! The incident ran through the army in a few hours, and reconciled his followers to all the hardships of the expedition, and fully re-established his popularity. (*Mackay.*) *Perfect as the Master*:—The explanation of this verse seems to turn upon the word translated "perfect," a word entirely different from that which is so translated in other passages, *e.g.*, Matt. v. 48. The meaning is this: complete in discipline, finished or perfect in the sense in which we should speak of a piece of workmanship as perfect, when it has received the last touch of the workman's hand. [R. V., "every one when he is perfected."] So that when our Lord speaks of a man who is "perfect" being like his master, He means to describe the condition of a person who has received from his master, whoever that master may be, all the teaching and discipline which the master can give him, and He asserts that all that can be expected from such a finished disciple is that he shall be equal to his master; his master cannot raise him above himself; his master's acquirements are (as it were), the limit towards which the growth of the disciple tends. If this be the meaning of our Lord's words, we find in them an important warning not to His apostles only but to all teachers. The words show the necessity of those who would teach others growing in grace themselves; they must not expect that they can be worldly-minded and their disciples spiritual, that they can serve Mammon and their disciples serve God; and conversely, they may expect that as they grow more in the knowledge of their God and Saviour, their own growth in knowledge will reflect itself in their disciples, and tend to raise them to that point of spiritual life to which they themselves have already attained. (*Bishop H. Goodwin.*)

Vers. 41, 42. **And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?**—*The true and the false reformer contrasted*:—Now, as no age has been without its abominations, so none has been without its reformers. We read of them alike in sacred and in secular history. We hear of them alike in Heathendom and in Christendom, in lands of barbarous darkness and in lands of religious enlightenment. Abel, Enoch, and Noah were reformers. So were Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah—in fact, all the Israelitish prophets, and many of the Israelitish kings. Confucius in China, Zoroaster in Persia, Socrates in Greece, Cato in Rome, were all of the same order. In truth, all genuine Christians, rightly viewed, are reformers. "Ye are the salt of the earth," to rectify its putrescencies. "Ye are the light of the world," to disperse its shades of darkness. But every genuine good thing amongst men has also its counterfeit. The grand forger and fabricator of all such hollow, delusive imitations of the exterior of excellence, is the devil. God prepares a purifying salt, Satan also manufactures an article, resembling it in appearance, but without its pungent savour and antiseptic properties. Our Lord, in His Sermon on the Mount, warns us against being deceived by these pseudo-reformers: and also against the still more fatal position of actually belong-

ing to their ranks. We may gather from this passage of stern rebuke the character of a false or pretended reformer; and, by considering its contrast, that of a true and effective one likewise. Both may be zealous; both may be bold; both may be firm. Earnestness, intrepidity, immobility, may belong to each alike. No! the distinction between the true and the false reformer consists not in any difference of ardour, perseverance, or resoluteness. It is not a variation of degrees, but a variety of kind. It stands not in diversities of intensity, but in contradictions of essential quality. We shall find, by an analysis of our text, that the false reformer is at the antipodes of the true in all that goes to constitute fundamental, or radical, distinctions in moral character. 1. They start from opposite points of the compass. The one begins by reforming his neighbours; the other, by reforming himself. The one begins by looking around; the other, by looking within: the one, by sweeping the streets of the city; the other, by cleaning the rooms of his own house: the one, by attempting to remodel society; the other, by seeking a change in his own character. The one sees first what is amiss abroad; the other, what is amiss at home. "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." 2. When both are engaged in the work of the world's reformation, they differ in the selection of the objects on which their corrective measures are brought to bear. They not only start from contrary points, but they also proceed in contrary directions. The false reformer is presumptuous, the true reformer is condescending. The one looks above himself, the other looks below. All this, too, appears plainly from the text, "Cast out the beam from thine own eye, then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." 3. A distinction between the real and the apparent reformer is to be found in the state of their own minds respectively. The former is clear in his perceptions and correct in his judgments. He knows how to discriminate cautiously and accurately, between good and evil. But the latter is ever confused in his views and erring in his decisions. Through precipitancy and prejudice, he mistakes the sweet for the bitter, and the bitter for the sweet. We do not indeed claim infallibility for the true saint, but we do claim for him as correct a discernment of character and knowledge of truth as may be attainable by man in this world. The Scriptures doubtless guarantee this to every simple-hearted, docile, prayerful man, who studies their pages. Hence we read of the anointing of the Holy One, which leads those who receive it into all truth: and we are told, that if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God. Again, if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light: and, if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men freely, and without upbraiding. Such as are the sons of God are represented as being led by His Spirit. You find him opposing only what ought to be opposed, and promoting only what deserves encouragement. He does not magnify the mole-hill into a mountain, nor minify the mountain into a mole-hill. He does not treat trifles as matters of essential moment, nor momentous matters as trifles. He is not deceived by mere, or by first appearances. The sham reformer hides the real nature of objects, or deceitfully exaggerates their dimensions. He beholds all persons and things through a discolouring and perverting medium. Through the magical spectacles of prejudice he ever looks, and therefore sees not what really is, but what his own fancy conjures up, or his excited passions prompt him to desire. Whilst gazing upon others, their noblest virtues become transformed into foulest vices, their little infirmities swell into hideous sins. And how should it be otherwise? The man has a beam in his eye. He is dismally blinded. His whole soul is in darkness. His mind is bewitched by the sorceries of sin and Satan. A dreadful spell has bound his spirit: a moral madness has distracted his heart. He can see neither perspicuously nor correctly: not afar off at all, and nigh at hand only imperfectly. Such is the delusion and blindness of the pseudo-reformer, hinted at so intelligibly in the expression of the text, "Then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." 4. There is a contrast between the real and the pretended reformer, not only in the head, but in the heart; not only in the perceptions, but in the intentions; not only in the understanding, but in the motives and affections. Indeed, here lies the root of the whole matter. The one is sound, the other "rotten at the core." The one is sincere, the other deceitful. The one rejoices inwardly in the truth, the other in iniquity. The one means to amend, the other to cavil and find fault. The one is actuated by an honest desire to see improvement in others, the other by a malignant censoriousness, which rather revels in prevalent corruption than bewails it. The true reformer loves those whom he strives to benefit: the false reformer really

despises or hates those in whom he professes to be interested. He is spiteful and envious, a carping meddler, a dangerous busy-body. He is a disguised foe to society. He has no love of peace, no relish for trustful concord. 1. We allude to that company of captious borderers just beyond the limits of Church communion, who refuse to step across those limits, because of the alleged inconsistencies or sins of some who are already there. Such persons can see nothing in the gospel but its difficulties, nothing in ecclesiastical organizations but their defects, nothing in Church members but their inconsistencies, real or attributed. 2. There is a class of the hypocrites, rebuked in the text, to be found inside the pale of Church communion. The needed remedy must be applied to thine own heart. It is at home where reform, as well as charity, must begin. Get all set right between thine own conscience and God. Let His love again expand and cheer thy heart: and then thy fellow-believer will appear more amiable in thy sight. If any little inconsistencies attach to him, thou shalt clearly see them, and mayest be able, with all the nice discrimination of a sound mind, and all the delicate dexterity of a charitable hand, to take the mote out of thy neighbour's eye: and both of you shall be benefited by the operation. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (*Sermons by Wesleyan Ministers.*) *The mote and the beam:*—1. This parable implies that there are different degrees of sin. Not that any sin is trifling; but some are more heinous than others, either in themselves, or by reason of aggravating circumstances. 2. Our sins often are really very great in themselves; and they would appear so to us, did we properly consider everything with which we are acquainted in our own case. 3. Men are generally most ready to mark the sins of others, when they are insensible of their own. 4. To be severe on the sins of others, and indulgent to one's own, is very hypocritical. 5. In order to be prepared for the office of a reformer, a man must be reformed himself. 6. It is the duty of those who are reformed, to try to reform others. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *On censuring others:*—Nothing is so easy as to censure, or to contradict a truth; for truth is but one, and seeming truths are many; and few works are performed without errors. No man can write six lines, but there may be something one may carp at, if he be disposed to cavil. Men think by censuring to be accounted wise; but, in my conceit, there is nothing shows more of the fool. For this, you may ever observe, that they who know the least, are most given to censure; and this I believe to be a reason, why men of secluded lives are often rash in this particular. Their retiredness keeps them ignorant of the world; if they weighed the imperfections of humanity, they would be less prone to condemn others. Ignorance gives disparagement a louder tongue than knowledge. Wise men had rather know than tell. Frequent dispraises, at best, show an uncharitable mind. Any clown may see when a furrow is crooked; but where is the man who can plough me a straight one? The best works are not without defects. The cleanest corn is not without some dirt among it; no, not after frequent winnowing. I would wish men, in the works of others, to examine two things before they judge: whether there be more of what is good, than of what is ill, in what they examine? and whether they themselves could at first have done it better? If there be most of good, we do amiss, for some errors, to condemn the whole. As man is not judged good or bad for one action, or for the fewest number, but as he is most in general: so in works, we should weigh the generality, and our censure should be accordingly. If there be more of good than ill in him, I think he deserves some praise for raising nature above her ordinary flight. Nothing in this world can be framed so entirely perfect, but it will have in it some imperfections; if it were not so, it were not from human nature, but the immediate Deity. And next, whether we could do better than that which we condemn? To espy the inconveniences of a house when built, is easy; but to lay the plan well at first, is matter of more pate, and speaks the praise of a good contriver. Judgment is easier in things done, than in knowing what is best to be done. If we decry a copy, and are not able to produce an original, we show more criticism than ability. We ought rather to magnify him who has gone beyond us, than condemn him for a few faults. Self-examination will make our judgments charitable. It is from where there is no judgment, that the heaviest judgment comes. If we must needs censure, it is good to do it as Suetonius writes of the twelve Cæsars, to tell both their virtues and their vices impartially, and leave others to determine for themselves. So shall men learn, by hearing of the faults of others, to avoid them, and by knowing their virtues, endeavour to practise the like. We ought rather to commend a man for the best part of his character, than brand him

for the worst part of it. We are full of faults by nature; we are good, not without our care and industry. (*Owen Felltham.*) *Hypocrisy and self-ignorance:*—The words which thus meet us are not only proverbial in form but have become proverbial in their application. They have passed into the common speech of men. They furnish the readiest answer to the man who condemns another for sins of which he himself is guilty. The hypocrite is confronted by them at every turn. 1. First, then, we have the law, that the habit of judging others—of looking at their evil deeds—is a hindrance to self-knowledge. The man forgets the beam that is in his own eye, because his whole mind is bent on observing the motes that are in his brother's eye. And this is, as the words of Christ imply, the act of one who is a hypocrite. The hypocrisy is all the more deadly and evil in its nature because it is in part unconscious. The man who strives to know what God is—who lets the light shine in on him—who is taught to see himself by that light in the mirror of God's Word, will find it impossible to go on acting a part which is not his own. If he knows truth and goodness to be the great blessings of earth and Heaven, he will find the misery of seeming to be true and good when he is not so, altogether insupportable. The warning which this law involves is necessary for all men. It is absolutely essential for those who have been called, by an outward or inward vocation, by the circumstances of their lives or the solemn purposes which God has put into their hearts, to do battle in His service against the world and the flesh, to feel that in fighting against them they are fighting also against the devil. Consider what the work of those disciples must have been, as they preached the glad tidings of the kingdom in the cities and villages of Galilee, as they afterwards had to proclaim the same message in the great cities of Asia or Europe. How often they must have been tempted to think with scorn of those who were living in brutalizing sins, or bowing before dumb idols, or warring and fighting with each other! Was it not easy to think that their warfare against these monstrous forms of wickedness was so urgent as to leave them no leisure for self-scrutiny or self-discipline? easy to forget the law that the battle could not be fought successfully without it? And was there not an almost equal risk, when they protested, as their Lord had taught them to protest, against proud, self-righteous formalists, of their falling unconsciously into the sin which they rebuked? 2. But, secondly, we are taught that this self-discipline is not to end in itself. It is the means to something beyond it, the preparation for a work which could not be done successfully without it? One who rested in the first half of the precept might satisfy himself by a simple indifference to the acts, whether good or evil, which he witnessed. Silence would seem an adequate fulfilment of it. To check the expression of any judgment with the lips, to endeavour to suppress even the half-formed judgment of the mind, to pass through the world without coming into collision with its selfishness and godlessness—this would be to such a man the ideal of a blameless life. He might easily come to persuade himself that this was the temper of the true Christian charity which "hopeth all things, endureth all things, and believeth all things." But the charity which Christ requires—it would be truer to say, the charity which Christ *gives*, of which His life on earth was the manifestation—is the very opposite of all this. It cannot remain neutral in the great battle between good and evil, between the armies of the living God and the lust and hatred that war against His order. It burns, as with a consuming fire, against the tyranny and wrong-doing wherewith one man works misery and destruction for his brothers, against the worship of sensuous lusts, or the idolatry of wealth, which lead men to forget the honour which is due to God. Words and acts which are to all appearance simply indifferent, light things, which may be passed over—idle words, for which men think that they shall not have to render an account in the day of judgment—will be seen by those whose eyes are opened, to be the outgrowths of some root of bitterness, stifling and strangling the growth of the good seed, hindering it from bringing forth any fruit to perfection. They therefore will, of all men, be least disposed to sit still, in the comfort of an easy-going Epicurean neutrality, when there are giant evils in the world still unchecked, and monstrous wrongs still unredressed. They will least allow those, the souls for whom Christ died and who are fellow-heirs with them of His eternal kingdom, to perish for lack of knowledge or continue in their blindness till they sleep the sleep of death. But then they will have learnt to contend against evil and falsehood, without judging the doer of evil or him who is the slave of falsehood. They will find it possible to make that distinction which the man who has not perceived and cast out the mote that was in his own eye never makes, between the offence which must be condemned, and, if need be, punished, and the offender who stands at God's judgment-seat and not at

ours. They can say, "The thing that has been done is evil; the man who has done it has thereby made himself the slave of evil, and brought himself into darkness and misery, and God is calling us to help him." Conclusion: We must not look, either in ourselves or in others, for a perfect union of these two forms of charity. This is not reached at once. Even he who is earnestly striving after it will make mistakes. But he will not forget that these very mistakes form a part of the education by which God is training him to do His work on earth more effectually. They teach him to retrace his steps, to go through the process of preparation once again, once again to cast out the beam that is in his own eye that he may "see clearly" to pull out the mote that is in his brother's eye. They tend to make his sympathy with the hearts of his fellow-men wider and deeper than it was. (*J. S. Hoare, M.A.*) *The mote and the beam:*—Morality is not religion, but morality and religion have an organic unity. False religions sever religion and morality. Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, makes morality grow out of religion. We are to be kind because God is kind; ready to forgive because God is merciful; slow to judge because we have a Judge whose dealings with us will be regulated by our dealings with others. Let us now say something of the caution in the text, reading it in the light of the great truths which we find in the context. I. If a Christian man be thoroughly penetrated with the truth respecting his own relations, and those of other men, to God it is quite certain that JUDGING AND REPROVING OTHERS WILL BE A WORK WHICH, SO FAR AS MAY BE, HE WILL DECLINE. And this for two reasons: 1. Because he doubts his own knowledge of other men; and—2. Because he doubts the strength of his own sympathy. II. But now, besides these thoughts, there is the most conclusive thought of all—OUR OWN DEMERIT: OUR LYING OPEN OURSELVES TO GOD'S JUDGMENT AND TO MAN'S. The case which the Saviour here points to is not simply that of one judging another, who is himself an evil-doer, but the case of one judging another whose sin is to that of the person he censures as the beam to the mote. When we are wrong-doers ourselves, and when we see our own acts under the colouring lights of self-love; when we review them with the help of all the apologies and extenuations which we are able to devise, and then turn to other persons' acts, all these lights being withdrawn, and criticise them in a clear, cold, and speculative way, or, even worse, under the influence of anger, or jealousy, or prejudice, is it not quite certain that we shall think less of the beam in our own eye than of the mote in our brother's eye? (*J. A. Jacob, M.A.*) *The splinter and the beam:*—This metaphor in frequent use among the Jews. Thus, for instance, Rabbi Tarphon, when lamenting the impatience of correction which marked his time, complains that if any one said to his neighbour, "Cast out this or that straw from thine eye," the response was sure to be, "Cast out the beam from thine own eye." The good man, being one of those just persons who need no repentance, never dreamt that there *was* a beam in his eye, and that therefore the retort was perfectly fair. The Lord Jesus adopted the Hebrew metaphor, but not in the Hebrew spirit. On His lips it does not justify, but censures, those who assumed to judge and rebuke their brethren. 1. If we are so quick to see straws in the eyes of our neighbours that we can hardly look into any face without detecting one, the probability is that we carry a beam in our own eye of which we greatly need to be rid. 2. The Lord Jesus says that we are hypocrites, if, with a beam jutting from our own eye, we say to our brother, "Let me pull out the splinter from thine eye." Is it hypocritical, then, to do a kindness, and to offer help, when we ourselves stand in need of help? By no means. But while our words mean, "O it is very wrong to suffer the smallest speck to remain in the eye"; our conduct means, "There is no great harm in letting even a beam remain in it." That is to say, we are hypocrites; we talk one thing and act another. If the sinner rebuke sin, who will listen? If the sinner, while rebuking sin, affect a righteous austerity and assume to be innocent of transgression, who will not scorn both him and his rebuke? 3. But here we touch on a question of grave practical moment: "Are only the holy to open their mouth against sin?" When Miss Nightingale went about among the sick soldiers of the Crimean hospitals, there was no need to rebuke them for profane language or obscene jests, although these were familiar to many of their lips. They felt they could not utter them in a presence so kind and pure. Many of them, we are told, folded their hands as if in prayer while she passed by. Do you imagine that when she spoke to a man, if she ever did, of his faults and sins, he felt that she had no right to speak, that she was a hypocrite for her pains? But why not? Simply because, as they looked up into that pure, single eye, they could see the splinters in their own, and grew ashamed of them. See what force a holy character gives to rebuke! 4. From this man with a beam in his eye

we may learn at least what to avoid. What are his faults? (1) He does not know that the beam is there. (2) Because he is not conscious of the beam in his own eye, he assumes airs of moral superiority, and carries himself like a judge instead of a brother. Put these two pictures side by side, and you will not doubt from which of them we should draw our inspiration. There goes a judge, immaculate in his own conceit; he stares with cold rebuke at the splinters which deform all eyes but his, and condemns in others faults not comparable to the crimes with which he pollutes the judgment-seat. And here come two brothers; and as they fall on each other's neck, they cry, "Ah, brother, I see you are troubled with the very straws and splinters which afflict me! help me, and let me help you, that we may both be quit of them." 5. Is not this parable true to our experience of life? It is against the unconscious self-assumption so prevalent among us that our Lord warns us in this parable. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *An eye with a beam, and an eye for a mote*:—It takes a long time to learn by heart so as to take to heart Archbishop Whately's maxim, that ten thousand of the greatest faults in our neighbours are of less consequence to us than one of the smallest in ourselves. Elsewhere he says, "Never is the mind less fitted for self-examination than when most occupied in detecting the faults of others." Have you never, asks Ellesmere, found the critic disclose four errors on his own part for one he delights to point out in the sayings or doings of the persons he criticizes? Shakespeare's Biron claims the right to ask his companions, noble and royal alike, Dumain, Longueville, and the King of Navarre, addressing them singly and collectively:—

> "But are you not ashamed? nay, are you not,
> All three of you, to be thus much o'ershot?
> You found his mote; the king your mote did see,
> But I a beam do find in each of three."

Who, exclaims Juvenal, can stand hearing the Gracchi complaining of sedition?

> "O wad some pow'r the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as ithers see us!"

For that, presumably, would from many a blunder free us, and foolish notion—

> "We, who surround a common table,
> And imitate the fashionable,
> Wear each two eye-glasses: *this* lens
> Shows us our faults, *that* other men's.
> We do not care how dim may be
> *This* by whose aid our own we see;
> But, ever anxiously alert
> That all may have their whole desert,
> We would melt down the stars and sun
> In our heart's furnace, to make one
> Through which th' enlightened world might spy
> A mote upon a brother's eye." (*F. Jacox.*)

Among sins, which are motes and which are beams?—We are apt to answer such a question according to our taste, and our habits; the motes being the sins we "are inclined to," the beams those "we have no mind to." To one the mote is covetousness, and the beam the drinking of a glass of wine or the smoking of a cigar. To another the mote is sharp practice in business and the beam taking a walk on a Sunday. To a third the mote is spending the evening in scandalising one's neighbours all round, and the beam spending it at whist. To a fourth the mote is behaving like a bear or any other brute in his own house, and the beam any offence against good manners in his neighbour's house. To a fifth the mote is swindling to the extent of £100,000, and the beam the neglect of family prayer. To a sixth the mote is theft, and the beam the being found out and exposed. To a seventh the mote is fraudulent bankruptcy, and the beam unsound views about original sin. And so we might go on, and show that, in our judgment, the mote and the beam often take each other's places, the less sin being accounted the greater, and the greater the less. Now when we try to learn what Jesus meant by the mote and what by the beam, we arrive at this result—that the sins of the publicans and sinners,

who knew no better, their drunkenness, their lewdness, their Sabbath-breaking, their profaneness, their disregard for all religion and all morality, were, in His estimation, as motes compared with the sins of the scribes and Pharisees who laid claim to much goodness, and yet were covetous, unjust, and extortionate under the cover of a religious profession. Their sins were beams, and the beam of beams was hypocrisy. There was no open and avowed sin that our Lord seems to have detested so much as a false profession of religion. And it were well for us to bear this in mind, so that we may have a just idea of the greater and lesser sins, and so neither deceive ourselves, nor too severely judge our neighbour, whose sin may be to our own no more than the smallest splinter of a lucifer-match in comparison with a tree fit to make the mast of a ship. (*H. S. Brown.*) *Correcting others' faults:*—If it was out of place to set up as the censurer of your brother's mote when your own faults were to his as a plank to a splinter, it is surely still more out of place to set yourself up for his corrector. The comparison sounds extravagant; since, though minute fragments from a twig may get into the eye and need to be taken out, to speak of a great beam of timber in the same connection is absurd. The extravagance of the phrase, however, did not hinder its being a usual and accepted one in oriental speech; and as such our Lord borrowed it to point His moral. What that moral is, is plain enough. In the first place, it is in a preposterous degree unbecoming to be so quick to see, much more to propose to mend, small faults in another when one's own are so very great. It is, as we say, like "Satan reproving sin." Besides, it is not only a grotesque betrayal of self-ignorance, but a presumptuous over-estimate of one's own ability. To mend a brother's fault, one has need of a most clear and undistorted spiritual vision, an eye of the soul quite single and limpid. No task asks cleaner motives, a truer insight, or more of that perfect fairness which can only spring from love, than this task of a reformer of manners. But there is more to be said than this. The interference of such blind guides and ignorant teachers is worse than a blunder. It is an hypocrisy. You profess to be so deeply concerned for the faults of your neighbour, that you would fain do him a service by ridding him of them: you are ardent in the interest of his reformation, a self-constituted preacher of righteousness. That looks well. But if it were really concern for the correction of evil and the cure of souls which inspired this officious zeal of yours, would it not show itself first of all in the reformation of yourself? A very little honest desire to have God's kingdom come and His will done would suffice to reveal to yourself how much more shameful and painful your own moral disorders are than any you propose to remedy; and in the hard task of casting out your own huge sins of heart, you would find work enough to keep your hands full. The *tu quoque* rejoinder, "Physician, heal thyself," is in its place here. "First cast out the beam." This very officiousness in well-doing, this arrogant setting up as a corrector of morals, this immodest and loveless meddling with your neighbours—what is it but a sign how pride has made you stone-blind, and a proof that it is not the sympathy of a penitent which inspires you, but the conceit of a fault-finder? (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *Fault-finding reproved:*—Why will you search another man's wound while your own is bleeding? Take heed that your own vesture be not full of dust, when you are brushing your neighbour's. Complain not of dirty streets, when heaps lie at your own doors. Many people are no longer well than while they are holding their fingers upon another person's sores: such are no better in their conduct than crows, which prey only upon carrion. (*Archbishop Secker.*) *Beholding others' faults:*—A wise heathen said, "Every man carries two wallets with him, hanging the one before and the other behind him. Into that before, he puts the faults of others; into that behind, he puts his own. By this means he never sees his own failings, while he has those of others always before him." *Ignoring the "Beam":*—I recollect firing a shot once with much greater success than I knew of. A certain person had frequently said to me that I had been the subject of her earnest prayers lest I should be exalted above measure, for she could see my danger; and after having heard this so many times that I really knew it by heart, I just made the remark, that I thought it would be my duty to pray for her too, lest she should be exalted above measure. I was greatly amused when this answer came, "I have no temptation to be proud; my experience is such that I am in no danger whatever of being puffed up"; not knowing that her little speech was about the proudest statement that could have been made, and that everybody else thought her to be the most officious and haughty person within ten miles. Why, do not you believe there may be as much pride in rags as in an alderman's gown? Is it not just as possible

for a man to be proud in a dust cart, as if he rode in her Majesty's chariot? A man may be just as proud with half a yard of ground as Alexander with all his kingdoms, and may be just as lifted up with a few pence as Crœsus with all his treasure. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Self-reformation the most effective:*—That earnest-minded man, Legh Richmond, was passing once through Stockport, at a time when political strifes disturbed the country. In consequence of his lameness, he was never able to walk far without resting. He was leaning on his stick and looking about him, when a poor fellow ran up to him, and offering his hand, inquired with considerable earnestness, "Sir, are you a radical?" "Yes, my friend," answered Mr. Richmond, "I am a radical; a thorough radical." "Then give me your hand," said the man. "Stop, sir, stop," replied Legh Richmond, "I must explain myself: we all need a radical reformation; our hearts are full of disorders—the root and principle within is altogether corrupt. Let you and me mend matters there, and then all will be well, and we shall cease to complain of the times and government." "Right, sir," answered the radical, "you are right," and bowing, retired. (*Sword and Trowel.*) *Goodness essential to the true reformer:*—How bitter is the wail of the mighty Mirabeau, "If I had but character, if I had but been a good man, if I had not degraded my life by sensuality, and my youth by evil passions, I could have saved France." Many a man has felt the same; he has clipped his own wings, he has suffered to be shorn away the sunny locks of the Nazarite who once lay weeping upon his shoulders, and wherein would have lain his strength. He has wounded himself, and even when the wound is healed, the fearful scar remains. But if, while he is himself still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, he essays to amend the morals of the world, he will either disgrace and weaken his own cause, or the good he does in one direction will be more than undone by the evil he is doing in another. To such a one, shaming him, warning him that they who bear the vessels of the sanctuary must themselves be clean, come the stern words of Christ—"First cast the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote which is in thy brother's eye." (*Archdeacon Farrar.*)

Vers. 43, 44. **For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither a corrupt tree bringeth forth good fruit.**—*Good works the evidence of new creation:*—We cannot perform any good works, unless we are created unto them in Christ Jesus; and hence that creation in Christ Jesus cannot be anywise the effect or consequence of our good works: we were saved, as the apostle tells us, by grace, when we were dead in trespasses and sins. But if we are indeed created anew in Christ Jesus, our good works must follow, as a necessary, certain, irrepressible result. They are the only evidence of that creation to others: and they are no less indispensable to ourselves, to certify us of its reality. If we do not bring forth good works, we ought to be convinced that we cannot have been created anew in Christ Jesus, that in one way or other the process of our regeneration has been marred. Good works are the mark, the proof, the evidence of Christian life; they are the badge of a Christian community; and they are the means through which the members of that community are bound together, and the Christian life is brought to pervade them all. When they are scanty, the Christian life must be feeble; when they are totally wanting, whether in an individual or a community, the Christian life must be all but extinct. They are the evidences of the Christian life, and they are also the means of growing in it; for it is by exercise, by action, that every living principle is strengthened. This is no way at variance with the assertion that the Christian life is not the effect of our good works. The primary creative cause is, in all instances except the highest, distinct from the highest nutritive causes. The bread which feeds will not beget a man. By study we do not acquire the power of knowing; but we improve and increase that power, and may do so almost indefinitely. By practising any art—be it music, or painting, or statuary—we do not acquire that particular faculty of the mind which fits a man for becoming a musician, or a painter, or a sculptor, any more than we acquire our eyes by seeing: indeed, if a man has not that faculty already within him, no teaching or practising will draw it out of him; but when he has it, practice will greatly sharpen and better it. Such, too, is the case with the Christian life. It is not created by our good works, but is to be fostered and nourished by them, and may be so to a wonderful extent, if we always bear in mind how it originated, and are careful to have it replenished from its only source; while, on the other hand, without them it will pine and die. Indeed, in this instance we have the special assurance: "To him who

hath shall be given," &c. (*J. C. Hare.*) *A new nature needed to produce good fruit*:—Without a change of nature, men's practice will not be thoroughly changed. Until the tree be made good, the fruit will not be good. Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. The swine may be washed, and appear clean for a little while, but yet, without a change of nature, he will still wallow in the mire. Nature is a more powerful principle of action than anything that opposes it: though it may be violently restrained for a while, it will finally overcome that which restrains it. It is like the stream of a river, it may be stopped for a while with a dam, but if nothing be done to dry the fountain, it will not be stopped always; it will have a course, either in its old channel, or a new one. Nature is a thing more constant and permanent than any of those things that are the foundation of carnal men's reformation and righteousness. When a natural man denies his lust, lives a strict, religious life, and seems humble, painful, and earnest in religion, it is not natural, it is all a force against nature; as when a stone is violently thrown upwards. But that force will be gradually spent; nature will remain in its full strength, and so prevails again, and the stone returns to the earth. As long as corrupt nature is not mortified, but the principle left whole in a man, it is a vain thing to expect that it should not govern. But if the old nature be indeed mortified, and a new heavenly nature infused, then may it well be expected that men will walk in newness of life, and continue to do so to the end of their days. (*Jonathan Edwards.*) *Reformation must begin at the heart*:—If we desire a true reformation, let us begin on reforming our hearts and lives, in keeping Christ's commandments. All outward forms and models of reformation, though they be never so good in their kind, yet they are of little worth to us without this inward reformation of the heart. Tin, or lead, or any baser metal, if it be cast into never so good a mould and made up into never so elegant a figure, yet it is but tin or lead still; it is the same metal that it was before. If adulterate silver, that has much alloy or dross in it, have never so current a stamp put upon it, yet it will not pass when the touchstone tries it. We must be reformed within, with a spirit of fire and a spirit of burning, to purge us from the dross and corruption of our hearts, and refine us as gold and silver, and then we shall be reformed truly, and not before. (*R. Cudworth, D.D.*) *Underlying element of moral character*:—Moral character is—1. Man's only real property. 2. The only measure of man's real worth. 3. The only earthly product man will bear to another world. 4. The source whence springs lasting weal or woe. I. It is a vital source of action. II. It is either radically corrupt or good. III. When corrupt, generally disguised. IV. When disguised, may, and should be detected. (*Dr. Thomas.*) *Religion seen in principle before it appears in conduct*:—When the Sidonians were once going to choose a king, they determined that their election should fall upon the man who should first see the sun on the following morning. All the candidates, towards the hour of sunrise, eagerly looked towards the east, but one, to the astonishment of his countrymen, fixed his eyes pertinaciously on the opposite side of the horizon, where he saw the reflection of the sun's rays before the orb itself was seen by those looking towards the east. The choice instantly fell on him who had seen the reflection of the sun; and by the same reasoning, the influence of religion on the heart is frequently perceptible in the conduct, even before a person has made direct profession of the principle by which he is actuated. *False reputation of trees*:—The upas tree once had a bad name, as its leaves were supposed to exhale a poison, which, spreading over a wide region, was fatal to man and beast. But scientific investigation has shown that the tree is harmless, and that its reputation is due to its growing in a bad neighbourhood. The tree grows in volcanic valleys in Java, which are noted for their desolation. It is the only green thing in a region where death seems to reign. But the fatal poison comes not from the tree, but from the gases of the volcano, amid which the upas thrives though all other vegetable forms perish. Another tree, the Eucalyptus, has enjoyed undue credit, as the upas has suffered undue odium. This tree was said to exhale from its leaves healthful influences, which made it an antidote to many forms of malaria. It belongs to Australia, and it was noticed that in its neighbourhood malarial fevers were unknown. This fact caused it to be planted in some of the worst malarial districts of Italy, and there, too, fevers gradually disappeared. The inference seemed inevitable that its foliage exerted some occult influence which prevented malaria. But science, by careful examinations, explains the mystery in a new way. The tree is such a great absorbent of water that its roots easily drain marshy land. It destroys malaria, not by giving out healthful influences, but by absorbing the moisture which

creates the disease. It is believed that the terrible Campagna of Rome can be made healthy by the draining power of the Eucalyptus. *Judging by the fruits:*—A young man of considerable gifts was introduced to a knowledge of the truth in the revival of 1859, and became an occasional preacher or exhorter at the meetings. When he went to study in Edinburgh he parted with all his old beliefs one by one, and ultimately embraced Pantheism. For several years he lived a blameless life morally, but an utterly blank life spiritually, having no hope and without God in the world. He went out to India, where the unnameable horrors of heathenism had the extraordinary effect of convincing him that Christianity must be true, and could be the only hope of the world. Meekly and humbly he began to seek a true knowledge of God, and in due course entered into the family circle of the children of God. (*A. Craig.*) *Christianity's fruits Divine fruits:*—The subject of my lecture this evening is, The truth of Christianity proved by its fruits. I. I begin, then, by showing WHAT EFFECT CHRISTIANITY HAS HAD ON LIBERTY. What was the state of matters in regard to liberty in the Roman Empire in the days of the apostles? When we look at Roman society, we see that there was no recognition of individual liberty as a natural right, and that a most debasing slavery had obtained gigantic proportions. In the city of Rome there was a population of 1,610,000, and of that number 900,000 were slaves: that is to say, that of every five persons in the capital three were slaves. And if we take the whole of the empire, then Gibbon's deliberate opinion is that "the slaves were at least equal in number to the free inhabitants of the Roman world"; and the entire population he estimates at 120,000,000; so that there were, as stated in a previous lecture, 60,000,000 slaves. Their numbers were recruited, not wholly, indeed, but largely from war. The Romans made slaves of those whom they captured. And how were they treated? In its mildest form, slavery is a galling burden; but Roman slavery was noted for its cruelty. The slaves were the absolute property of their master. He could treat them as he chose, so that, as it has been said, "a dog with us has more rights than a Roman slave had." Tholuck, in his work on the "Nature and Moral Influence of Heathenism," gives the following description of their treatment: "A scanty and disgusting dress, and dog-skin cap, distinguished them from all the rest of the inhabitants. Those who were too strong had to be weakened by various kinds of ill-treatment; and if the masters did not do this, they became themselves liable to a penalty. Every slave received annually a certain number of stripes to remind him that he was a slave. Hymns of a nobler kind they were not allowed to sing, but only gay and sensual songs. To complete their degradation, they were sometimes compelled to sing songs in disgrace and ridicule of themselves; and to the same purpose they were also compelled to perform indecent dances. In order to make the sons of the Spartans loathe the vice of drunkenness, the slaves were compelled to intoxicate themselves in public assemblies. When they became too numerous, they were murdered clandestinely; every year at a certain period the young Spartans, clad in armour, used to hunt them, and to prevent their increase they were killed with daggers." Christianity is thus in its very essence hostile to slavery; and this was one reason why the educated heathen opposed it so bitterly. But this was what it did; and hence the social change it accomplished. It undermined and threw down this monster evil of Roman slavery. As early as the time of Trajan, A.D. 98–117, one Hermes, who had embraced Christianity, liberated 1250 of his slaves; and even under Domitian, who reigned before him, A.D. 81–96, a prefect of Rome, called Cromacius, "liberated 1400 slaves, who had been baptized, and said unto them: 'Those who begin to be the children of God ought no longer to be the slaves of men.'" That was the way in which it began to work, and as the gospel leaven widened its area, slavery disappeared. Through their contact with the Mahommedans in the fifteenth century, the Portuguese began to traffic in negro slaves; and you know to what the traffic grew, how it spread over the colonies, and continued to hold its ground in spite of Christian influence. But the gospel has also proved itself victorious here. It was through the power of Christian principle that Great Britain, at a vast pecuniary sacrifice, washed her hands of all complicity with the evil in her colonies. II. I next proceed to show WHAT EFFECT CHRISTIANITY HAS HAD ON LABOUR. But let us see what change Christianity has wrought on the industrial life. It gave no countenance to the old Roman idea that labour was unbecoming a free man. To labour was in a sense to pray; work was worship. And its civilizing power is especially striking when we look at what it has wrought in our own time in heathen lands. When Christianity has been fairly rooted in heathen soil, its inhabitants are lifted up to the

plane of a new and civilized life. They begin to clothe themselves, to build proper houses, to cultivate the land, and to develop all its resources. This is the effect of their new belief; this is one practical shape which Christianity takes in them, when it has been received in the love of it. And so commerce has followed in the wake of the missionary enterprise. Some have spoken contemptuously of the expenditure on Christian missions, as if it were a waste of money. But I hold that, even on the low ground of purely worldly profit, they pay themselves many times over in commercial gain, and I adduce the following facts in proof:—The Basutos in South Africa are now beginning to dress decently, to cultivate the land, and to build proper villages, and they have created a traffic of £150,000 a year. And every year English goods find their way to Kuruman to the value of £75,000, where, according to Dr. Moffat, scarcely a pockethandkerchief, or string of beads, or other trifle was bought. In Samoa, in the Pacific, where the people have nearly all become Christians, the imports reach the value of £50,000 and the exports £100,000, and all this within fifty years. Before that time there was almost no trade with the island. An American clergyman has calculated, on the ground of statistical data, that the traffic originated by means of the mission repays tenfold the capital expended. But can we not give the heathen our civilization without our Christianity? I most emphatically answer, No; for, as it has been well said, "no nation can appropriate the fruits of Christian civilization apart from its roots." III. The next point with which I propose to deal is THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE. But let us now turn to the marvellous and beneficent change effected by Christianity. It has lifted up woman, and made her, as a moral and spiritual being, man's equal in privilege. Home life under the influence of Christianity became a new thing, nobler than what had ever existed under heathenism. Moreover, Christianity defined and hallowed the relations of parents and children. And in confirmation of this, I would adduce one or two facts from the records of modern missions in savage lands. "In the Polynesian Islands," says Dr. Warneck, "Christianity has the undeniable merit—that it has suppressed cannibalism, human sacrifice, and child murder, ameliorated the family life, restrained drunkenness, and wherever it has got a footing has led to the orderly establishment of rights. . . . The weapons of war and instruments of death may be seen hanging from the rafters of their humble cottages, covered with dust and become unusable, or they are converted into tools of industry, or they are given to visitors as useless curiosities." That is how Christianity has affected those who were living in a savage state. I give another quotation, containing the confession of a Christian who had been a cannibal, and from it you will see what has been in his case the gospel's power. It was a sacramental day at the mission church. "When I approached the table," he says, "I did not know beside whom I should have to kneel. Then I suddenly saw I was beside the man who, some years ago, slew my father, and drank his blood, and whom I then swore I would kill the first time that I should see him. Now think what I felt when I suddenly knelt beside him. It came upon me with terrible power, and I could not prevent it, and so I went back to my seat. Arrived there, I saw in the spirit the upper sanctuary, and seemed to hear a voice, 'Thereby shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.' That made a deep impression on me, and at the same time I thought I saw another sight—a Cross and a Man nailed thereon, and I heard Him say, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Then I went back to the altar." All this will show you what great and beneficent changes Christianity has wrought in family and social life, and what evidence is thus furnished of its being a stream from the fountain of Divine love. IV. I proceed now to show HOW CHRISTIANITY HAS AFFECTED THE INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL LIFE. There has been high intellectual culture without Christianity. In pagan Greece and Rome, as we have seen, it reached a lofty eminence. But neither the ancient religions, nor any philosophic teaching, nor any literary culture, could so transform the heart as to ennoble the moral life of society. The ancient religions did not even attempt this. When morality was taught, it was the philosophers who stepped forward and not the priest. The old mythologies were demoralizing. The gods were represented as fighting with one another, and goddesses as engaging in intrigues; and thus the conscience of the people who believed in this was debauched. But what have been the intellectual and moral fruits of the gospel? Christ came not only to free men from guilt, but from corruption. It is the religious teaching of Christianity which gives power to its moral teaching. As the natural sun not only gives us light but heat to quicken life, so from Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, come those Divine

rays which vitalize while they enlighten. And if we turn to the New Hebrides, we find the evidence to the regenerating power of Christianity equally striking. Take Aneityum, one of the group. In 1848 this was its condition, according to the Rev. J. G. Paton, the devoted missionary who has long laboured, and is still labouring, there: "Every widow was strangled to death the moment her husband died; infanticide was common; and children destroyed their parents when long sick or aged. Neighbouring tribes were often at war with each other; and all the killed were feasted on by the conquerors." But now the whole population of this island, then 3,500, has been led to embrace Christianity. "Heathen practices have been abolished; churches built; family worship established; and the Sabbath has become a day of rest." And they have sent 150 of their best and ablest men and women as teachers to the other islands. They have paid £1,400 for printing the Bible, and will contribute £200 this year (1885) for the support of the gospel. I should like to have been able to deal more fully with the influence of Christianity on the believer in all his varied circumstances; but I have drawn so long on your attention that I must close. (*A. Oliver, B.A.*) *A fair test*:—When I was in Rome a priest came to one of my meetings and asked me what authority I had to preach. I said, "Two horses ran a race on your Corso. One had a grand pedigree, but he was lame in three legs and could not stand on the other. The second horse had no pedigree, but quickly ran over the course. Which should have the prize? Can you show thieves made honest, drunkards sober? Come to my tabernacle and I can show you hundreds. These are my certificates." The people cheered vociferously, and the priest, a notorious profligate, beat a retreat. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Personal effects of Christianity and Atheism contrasted*:—A youth who had been carefully brought up in the fear of God, and had been a Sunday-school teacher, and a frequent speaker in small meetings, went to college to study for the ministry. There he was led to become a Freethinker. It took a good while to do, but in course of time he did not even believe in a God. In this way he lived about a year, hiding the truth from friends as well as he could. One day, in the class-room, there came a thought into his mind which he could not get rid of. "What kind of man are you now as compared with what you were when a Christian?" Reason and conscience combined in answering: "A worse man every way. As a Christian you were a better man to your parents and to others; you lived a worthier, nobler, and more unselfish life; your unbelief has lowered you in every respect: what produces the best life must be the right creed." The Father, whose loving heart had thus spoken to him, was not far away, speedily received him back as a wanderer made welcome, and in due time sent him out to preach the faith he had once denied. (*A. Craig.*) *Fruits of Godliness*:—Faith in Jesus is the invisible root of religion concealed within the soul; but deeds of holy duty are the glorious outgrowth of stalwart trunk, and branches broad, and luxurious masses of foliage lifted into the airs of heaven. And amid these goodly boughs are found the fruits of godliness, shining—as quaint Andrew Marvell said of the Bermuda oranges—

"Like golden lamps in a deep green night."

Aim immediately at fruits. (*Dr. Cuyler.*) *The constant and legitimate result is the test of every doctrine*:—The general principle laid down here is, that the truth of a doctrine, a system of doctrine, is to be tested by the life and conduct of its professors. Stated thus broadly, the rule commends itself at once to the common sense of men, partly in consequence of the truth contained in it, and partly from its being mistaken for a statement that the effect of a practical doctrine upon the life of its professor is the true test of the hold which that doctrine has upon his mind. This is something quite different from the truth or falsehood of the doctrine in itself. A life which would be conclusive as to a man's sincerity might be no proof at all of his doctrinal soundness. I. THESE TWO QUESTIONS, THEN, MUST BE KEPT DISTINCT from one another in the inquiry suggested by the text, viz., how the rule that good conduct is evidence of sound doctrine must be understood when we come to apply it to the different cases in which, as we shall see presently, we need great caution in its application. 1. All the difficulties that meet us are contained in this one, viz., that men who hold sound doctrines lead bad lives, and men who hold unsound doctrines lead good lives. This is a useless weapon in controversies between conflicting creeds, because there never has been a religious party without discreditable adherents. Its

tendency is, not to establish any doctrine as superior to any other, but to produce an indifference to doctrine altogether. It tends also to engender the belief that it is no matter what any one believes if his life be such as to call for no unfavourable comment. 2. Time enough to refute this view when people apply it to other matters as well as to religion. Conventionalisms in society, &c. 3. The question is not as to the value of the fruit or its desirableness; but as to its use in enabling us to judge of the doctrine from which it springs. For this we must take into consideration something more than the mere fact of its being good when presented to us for examination. 4. Our Lord assumes, in those who were to apply the test, a knowledge of the natural productions of trees, *i.e.*, a knowledge of the tendency of particular doctrines, as a necessary qualification for judging how far practice, presented in connection with them, may be regarded as attesting their truth. 5. The fruit by which we may judge of a tree must be its legitimate fruit and its habitual, or average, fruit. II. Bearing this in mind, let us APPLY THE RULE OF THE TEXT TO SOME OF THOSE CASES IN WHICH WE MIGHT BE LED ASTRAY BY A WANT OF SUFFICIENT CAUTION. 1. There are trees artificially covered, for an occasion, with fruits by which, obviously, the tree could not be "known." A fir-tree, adorned for an occasion with oranges, could assuredly not be known by them. Its power of producing oranges could not be known. So, impulsive and exceptional acts of kindness and benevolence on the part of persons without any definite belief at all furnish no tests as to the practical creed of those by whom they are performed, from the circumstance that they are impulsive and exceptional. 2. When conduct, undeniably good, is found constantly to attend upon the holding of doctrines which legitimately should issue in what was positively bad, or in nothing practical whatever, we are in danger of accepting the doctrines on beholding the fruit. This is as though a mountain-ash had been engrafted with a cutting of a pear-tree, and a person, from seeing the fruit, and knowing that it grew upon a particular stock in the present instance, should thence conclude that in all cases the same stock might be expected to bear the same fruit, and that the surest way to produce an abundance of pears would be to secure the multiplication of mountain-ash trees! In such cases, though the fruit is habitual, it is not legitimate. 3. A third kind of conduct which is constantly appealed to as attesting the truth of doctrine is that which may be likened to fruit produced by means of unusually stimulating culture, and in very high temperature. Extraordinary means have been used, and an extraordinary produce is the result; and its worthlessness as a test is the fact that it is extraordinary. III. The rule remains thus: That WHEN CONDUCT, LEGITIMATELY FOLLOWING FROM DOCTRINE HELD, IS GOOD—HABITUALLY GOOD—THAT DOCTRINE IS TRUTH; that where there is genuine piety, self-denial, humility, where what the New Testament calls the "fruits of the Spirit" are found in place, in proportion, in constancy, the doctrines of which they are the lawful consequences are true. 1. To this it will at once be said that the spirit of the New Testament teaching has manifested itself in the lives of men whose creeds were widely different, and even avowedly antagonistic. True; but between a man's "creed" in the sense of the document of his Church or sect and his "creed" in the sense of his working belief there is often a wide difference. If the lives of many men are worse than their pure creed, the lives of others may be better than their corrupt one. In the creed which produces a life like that sketched out in the New Testament there is undoubtedly some of the essential truth of the New Testament doctrine; and it is from this that the practice springs. 2. There are many whose hearts are better than their heads; who will do what is right, while they maintain what is wrong; or who will hold at the same time two doctrines subversive of one another, without being aware of it. They live by truth while they profess with it a great deal of falsehood. 3. It is true, then, that men of different religious professions will produce the genuine fruits of righteousness by which the trees may be "known." But these are not the produce of the different creeds; but of such parts of each of them as agreed in being essential truth. They are the fruits of gardens stocked very differently—some of them full of tempting and poisonous shrubs, through which few could pass without harm—but still the fruits of the same tree in each garden. In a garden bad on the whole, good fruit may be found, and it may be spoken of as the fruit of that garden. In a garden good on the whole, evil fruit may be pointed out; but "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them; of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes." Conclusion: For the most part men will apply

the test of the text inconsiderately, and decide for or against doctrines on insufficient grounds. They will be won to a creed, or turned away from it, by the exceptional conduct of its professors. Much is it to be wished that men had sufficient grounds for their belief, and had them capable of ready production; but a very little experience will dispel any large expectations we may have formed in this direction. And, therefore, so long as men will judge of doctrines by individual instances among their professors, and the more men do this, the more important is the conduct of each individual Christian. (*J. C. Coghlan, D.D.*) *Christians known by their fruits*:—The religion of Jesus Christ is one of deeds, not words; a life of action, not of dreaming. If we would know whether we are being led by the Holy Spirit, we must see if we are bringing forth fruits of the Spirit. If we would discover if the works of a clock are right, we look at the hands. So, by our words and deeds, we shall show whether our hearts are right with God. A religion of the lips is worth nothing. It is easy enough to assume the character and manner of a Christian, but to live the Christian life is not so easy. A man can make a sham diamond in a very short time, but the real gem must lie for ages in the earth before it can sparkle with perfect purity. We have far too many of these quickly-made Christians amongst us, who have never brought forth fruits meet for repentance, nor gone through the fire of trial, and sorrow, and self-sacrifice. Do not trust to feelings or words in yourselves or others, but look at your life; a real and a false diamond are very much alike, and yet there is all the difference in the world in their value. Let us look into our lives very closely, and see whether we are mistaking outward form for true religion, words and professions for holiness, leaves for fruit. What are some of the fruits which God looks for in the life of a Christian? 1. At the head of all we must place love. Really trying to do God's will; showing kindness to brethren; trying to lead others to God. A Christian cannot be selfish. 2. Another fruit for which God looks in a Christian's life is humility. Every act and word of Christ's earthly life teaches this. The longer we go to His school, and the more we know of the way of godliness, the humbler we become. 3. Another fruit God expects to find in the lives of His people is forgetfulness of self. (*H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, M.A.*) *The true test*:—The most important thing to know is one's self. No one, however, can know his own character aright without first making himself acquainted with that of God. It is in His light that we see light clearly. What a miserable thing for a man to know how to make money, and make it too—to know science so well that he is familiar with the secrets of nature, can measure the distance of a star, and follow a wandering comet on its fiery track—to know statesmanship so well that his country, in a crisis of her affairs, might call him to the helm, as before all others the pilot that could weather the storm—and yet not to know whether he is at peace with God; whether, should he die to-night, he is saved or lost, is going to heaven or to hell! I. IT IS POSSIBLE TO ASCERTAIN OUR REAL STATE AND CHARACTER. Who has any difficulty in settling whether it is day or night? whether he enjoys sound health or pines on a bed of sickness? whether he is a free man or a slave? No man could mistake a Briton sitting under the tree of liberty which was planted by the hands of our fathers and watered with their blood for the negro who stands up weeping in the auction-mart, to be sold with his master's cattle, or crouches in the rice-swamp, bleeding under his master's lash. Degraded by a system that curses both man and master, the black man may be content to eat the bread and wear the brand of bondage. Still he, as much as we do, knows the difference between fetters and freedom; he feels that he is a slave, and I feel that I am free. Even so may we know whether we belong to the class of saints or to that of sinners; for sin is darkness, sickness, bondage. II. OUR RELIGIOUS PROFESSION IS NOT ALWAYS A TEST OF OUR STATE. I. It may be a test in certain circumstances. Look, *e.g.*, at two men on parade. They wear the same dress and arms; and both, the result of drill and discipline, have acquired such a martial air that you cannot tell which is the hero and which the coward. But change the scene. Leave the parade-ground for the field of battle; and when, as bugles sound the charge, I see, through clouds of smoke and amid the clash of arms, the sword of one flashing, and his plume dancing in the very front of the fight, while his comrade, pale and paralyzed with fear, is only borne forward in the tumult like a seaweed on the rushing billow—how easy now to tell beneath whose martial dress there beats a soldier's heart! So, though the profession does not prove the possession of religion in a time of peace, show me a man, like the soldier following his colours into the thick of battle, who holds fast the profession of his faith in the face of obloquy, of persecution, of death itself,

and there is little room to doubt that his piety is genuine—that he has the root of the matter in him. 2. The profession of religion is not a test of the reality of religion in our times. Like flowers which close their leaves whenever it rains, or birds that seek shelter and their nests when storms rise, there are Christians so timid by natural constitution, that they shrink from scorn, and could as soon face a battery of cannon as the jeers and laughter of the ungodly. Granting this, still it is true that, where there is no profession of serious religion, we have little reason to expect its reality. Perhaps there never was a time when the mere profession of religion was a less satisfactory test of its reality than at present. There have been dark and evil days, and these not long gone, when religion was, if I may so express myself, at a discount: piety was not fashionable: profane swearing and deep drinking were the accomplishments of a gentleman; the man who assembled his household for prayer was accounted a hypocrite, the woman who did so a fool: missionary societies were repudiated by the courts of the Church, and eyed with suspicion by the officers of the Crown; Robert Haldane was denied an opportunity of consecrating his fortune to the cause of Christ in India; Carey and Marshman, while seeking to convert the Hindoos, were driven from the British territories, and had to seek protection from a foreign Power; and such as formed missionary associations launched them on society with the anxieties and prayers of her who, cradling her infant in an ark of bulrushes, committed him to the waters of the Nile and the providence of her God. Power, rank, fashion, science, literature, and mammon were all arrayed in arms against everything that appeared in the form and breathed the spirit of a devoted piety. Thank God, it is not so now! He has touched the heart of the Egyptian, and she has adopted the outcast as her son. From holes and caves of the earth, religion has found her way into palaces and the mansions of the great and noble. Science has become a priestess at her altar. Literature has courted her alliance. Infidelity assumes even a Christian-like disguise. Iniquity, as ashamed, is made to hide her face. The tide has turned; and those who now make a profession of zealous and active piety find themselves no longer opposed to the stream and spirit of the age. This is a subject of gratitude. Yet it suggests caution in judging of ourselves; and warns us to take care, since a profession of religion is rather fashionable than otherwise, that in making it we are not the creatures of fashion, but new creatures in Jesus Christ. Hence the necessity for trying ourselves by such a test as my text suggests. The tree is known, not by its leaves, nor we by our professions; not by its blossoms, nor we by the promises of which they are lovely images; but by its fruit, and we by those things which the fruit represents—our hearts and habits, our true life and character. "The tree is known by its fruits; moreover, every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." III. THE TRUE EVIDENCE OF OUR STATE IS TO BE FOUND IN OUR HEART AND HABITS. We have often sat in judgment on others; it is of more consequence that we form a right estimate of ourselves. In attempting to form a correct estimate of our own state and character—in the words of the Greek sage, to know ourselves—let us bring to this solemn task all the care and the conscientiousness with which a jury weigh the evidence in a case of life and death. They return from their room to the court to give in a verdict, amid breathless silence, which sends him whom they left pale and trembling at the bar to liberty or to the gallows; yet, sacred as human life is, on our judgment here hangs a more momentous issue. A mistake there may send a man to the scaffold, but one here to perdition; that involves the life of the body, this of the immortal soul. Judges sometimes find it difficult to know how to shape their charge, and juries how to shape their verdicts—the evidence is conflicting—not clear either way. The case is obscure, perplexing; perhaps a bloody mystery, from which no hand but God's can raise the veil. But light and darkness, life and death, are not more unlike than the heart and habits of believers, on the one hand, and those of unbelievers, on the other; and with such a catalogue of the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit as Paul has given us, how can it be difficult for a man to settle under which of these two classes his are to be ranked—with which they most closely correspond? A man may fancy himself possessed of talents which he has not, and a woman of beauty which she has not. But with all our strong bias to form a favourable and flattering opinion of ourselves, each "to think more highly of himself than he ought to think," it seems as impossible for a man who is an adulterer, a fornicator, unclean, a drunkard, whose bosom burns with unholy and hateful passions, to imagine himself virtuous, as to mistake night for day, a bloated, fetid corpse for one in the bloom and rosy beauty of her youth. It

is often only by a careful application of delicate tests that the chemist discovers a deadly poison or a precious metal; but how easy is it by a few simple questions to bring out our real character! Have you suffered a heavy wrong, for example, at the hands of another? You remember it. But where? Is it at the throne of grace, and to pray with Him whose blood fell alike on the head of foe and friend, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"? Again, when you think of perishing souls, is yours the spirit of Cain or of Christ? Can you no more stand by with folded hands to see sinners perishing than men drowning? Are you moved by such generous impulse as draws the hurrying crowd to the pool where one is sinking, and moves some brave man, at the jeopardy of life, to leap in and pluck him from the jaws of death? There is no better evidence that we have received the nature as well as the name of Christ than an anxious wish to save lost souls, and a sympathy with the joy of angels over every sinner that is converted. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *The testing time*:—"The tree is known by his fruit." That is a fact with which we are all familiar. To stock the garden with fruit-trees, I repair to the nursery, but not in spring, when all are robed alike in green, nor in summer, when the bad equally with the best are covered with a flush of blossoms: it is when the corn turns yellow, and sheaves stand in the stubble-fields, and fair blossoms are gone, and withered leaves sail through the air and strew the ground—it is in autumn I go to select the trees, judging them by their fruit. And as certainly—may I not say as easily?—as the tree is known by his fruit, may we know our spiritual state and character, if we will only be honest, nor act like the merchant who, suspecting his affairs to be verging on bankruptcy, shuts his eyes to the danger, takes no stock, and strikes no balance. Or take, for another example, two houses that stand on the banks of the same stream. Under a cloudless sky, amid the calm of the glen in a summer day, with no sound falling on the ear but the bleatings of the flock, the baying of a sheep-dog, the muffled sound of a distant waterfall, the gentle murmur of the shallow waters over their pebbly bed, each house in its smiling garden offers, to one weary of the din and dust of cities, an equally pleasant and, to appearance, an equally secure retreat. But let the weather change; and after brewing for hours, from out the darkness that has deepened into an ominous and frightful gloom let the storm burst! Suddenly, followed by a crash like that of falling skies, a stream of lightning, dazzling the eye, glares out; and now the war of elements begins. Peal rolls on peal; flash follows flash; and to the roar of incessant thunders is added the rush of a deluge, and the hoarse voices of a hundred streams that leap foaming from hill and rock down into the bed of the river. Red, rolling, swelling, it bursts its dykes, overflows all its banks, and, attacking the foundations of both houses, breaches the walls of one, and at length tumbles the whole fabric, all of a heap, into the roaring flood; and while the houseless family that had fled from its rocking walls gather, shivering on a neighbouring height to see, where once stood their pleasant home, only the rush and hear only the roar of waters—how easy, as we look on the other, erect and defiant in this widespread sea, to know that the one had been built on sand, but the other founded on a rock. (*Ibid.*) *The fruits of heathenism and of Christianity*:—The intellect of Greece was keen, her poetry splendid, her art unrivalled, her eloquence overwhelming; and yet when the poor worn Jew of Tarsus trod the streets of Athens, a hunted, persecuted man—when his bent frame and feeble steps passed along her avenues of noble sculpture; when his strange words were jeered at by philosophers under the shadow of the Acropolis; when the stoic mocked at the message of Jesus and the resurrection—who could have believed that the might and glory of the future was with the poor Jew, not with these philosophic and gifted Athenians? Who would have guessed that, in spite of her ægis, and flaming helm, and threatening spear, the awful Pallas of the Acropolis should be forced to resign her Parthenon to the humble Virgin of Nazareth? Not many years afterwards, that same suffering missionary who had been ridiculed in Athens was dragged a prisoner to Rome. At that time her Cæsar seemed omnipotent, her iron arms unconquerable. And Rome did not yield without a desperate struggle. She strove to crush and extirpate this "execrable superstition" (as her great writers called Christianity) with sword and flame; she made Christianity a treason; she made her Coliseum swim with the massacre of its martyrs. Yet it was all in vain! The worshippers of the Capitol succumbed before the worshippers in the Catacombs. The thirty legions, the white-robed senators, the ivory sceptre, the curule chair, were all defeated by the Cross, which was the vilest emblem of a slave's torture; and the greatest of earthly empires, with her dominion yet unim-

paired, embraced the gospel preached by the unlettered peasants of the race which she most despised. Why was it? It was because a tree is known by its fruits, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. The fruits of heathendom had been selfishness, and cruelty, and corruption; the fruits of Christianity were love, joy, peace, longsuffering, temperance, goodness, faith, meekness, charity, and the leaves of that tree were for the healing of the nations. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Reasons for watching our actions*:—The whole value of our deeds depends upon the state of heart out of which they come. As our hearts are, so are our deeds. 1. One reason, then, why we ought to be careful to notice our actions is, because they help us to read ourselves. We may have succeeded in persuading ourselves that we are very kindly and charitably disposed towards others; many a man goes on fancying this to be the case, year after year, simply trusting to his own feeling that he is so. But now, let him just try himself by this simple practical test: let him ask himself, What kind and charitable actions have I performed within the last day, or week, or month? and if, in putting this question to himself, he finds that, with all his warmth and kindness of heart, he has done nothing in the way of helping his poor and distressed neighbours, he must confess that he is very much mistaken in the estimate which he has hitherto formed of himself. 2. Not only do our actions show us exactly what we are, but they also materially contribute to make us what we are; over and above the impression which they receive from the heart which originates them, they themselves in turn react upon the heart. Take, *e.g.*, the case of a boy who feels very much tempted to take something that does not belong to him. No doubt the very indulgence in such a thought is highly dishonest in itself; still, there is something in the very act of stealing, when he at last comes to it, that puts him in a worse state than he was in before. He has now actually committed himself to what he might still have drawn back from only a few minutes since; he has set his seal to what was before only melted wax, already softened indeed, and quite fitted to receive the impression, still not moulded as yet into any defined and permanent shape. 3. A third and last reason why we must attend carefully to the deeds which proceed from our hearts, as well as to our hearts themselves, is, that our deeds will form the standard by which we shall all be judged at the last day (Rev. xx. 11, 12; 2 Cor. v. 10). What the body is to the soul, so are our deeds to the heart out of which they spring; our deeds are the bodies in which our hearts and desires show themselves and clothe themselves. And as our bodies form a real part of ourselves, so do our actions; as our bodies obey the direction of our souls, so do our actions; as our bodies will rise again at the last day, so our actions, too, will rise again along with them, and will be judged along with them. (*Henry Harris, B.D.*) "*Every tree is known by his own fruit*":—I. We observe of a tree, THAT WHAT IT IS BY NATURE IT WILL, IF LEFT TO ITSELF, EVER REMAIN. The thorn will continue a thorn, the bramble-bush will ever be a bramble-bush. If you go and seek for fruit on either, you will be disappointed, and the prickly branches may wound your hands. No mere pruning of the tree or fertilizing of the soil around its roots will alter its nature. II. Having thus seen that the natural man, when left to himself, must ever continue unproductive in good works pleasing and acceptable to God, LET US NOW OBSERVE THE WORK OF GRACE IN THE HEART FOLLOWING UPON REPENTANCE, AND CAUSING AMENDMENT OF LIFE. "Every tree is known by his own fruit." The wild vine, the wild olive, the wild apple, bear each a semblance of fruit. So in the natural man there may be a semblance of good works. Moral virtues, amiable qualities, a noble disposition, adorn the character of many an unrenewed nature, spring from many an unconverted heart. Moral excellencies and Christian graces often so nearly resemble each other, that they are confounded together in the estimation of man, but never in the judgment of God. Our Saviour said of the Pharisees, who rested upon an outward appearance of holiness, "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." When a bud or graft has been made upon a wild tree, all which springs from that scion resembles the parent stem from which it was taken. The rose will have the same colour, fragrance, and shape; the apple will have the same taste and form. The beauty of the flower and the sweetness of the fruit are owing, not to the nature of the stock, but to the character of the graft made upon it. And yet the roots and stem of the wild tree are in a measure necessary and conducive to the fruitfulness of the graft. The sap, in being conveyed through a new branch, undergoes such a change, that it is made to produce fragrant and beautiful flowers or fine and luscious fruit. So with the converted man who has been united by living faith to Jesus: by union to his

Saviour his moral virtues become Christian graces. There is the same brain, the same heart, in their material properties, but all the thoughts, feelings, and desires which they originate flow through a renewed nature, and become changed in principle and action. Even the very passions which expended themselves in vice and lust, now flowing through the pure channel of a sanctified mind and will, breathe the fragrance and assume the loveliness of heaven-born virtues. In gardening, we can perceive and understand how the process of grafting is carried on. The bud or shoot is made so to adhere to the stock on which it is placed, that it unites to the stem, and grows into it and with it; the flow of the sap passes on unchecked, and produces growth and fertility to the scion. It is by the closeness of the union, and the assimilation of the parts, that life is maintained, and vegetation proceeds. In spiritual things, we know that it is by our union to Christ that the life of faith and the fruits of righteousness are produced, through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The practical application of our subject leads to the personal inquiry, "What fruit do I bear?" The vitality of our spiritual life depends upon our union with Christ. (*S. Charlesworth, M.A.*) *The fruits of Christianity*:—Let us not be guilty of the rashness that ascribes all the good of earth to the Christian philosophy. There are those who, in a zeal without knowledge, will declare all our arts and sciences, our compass, telegraph, and steam-engine, to have come to the world through the evangelical religion. But all such generalities damage the cause they are designed to support. The youth drilled in this kind of declamation subsequently find that the Greek and Roman worlds were wonderful in science, art, literature, law, and inventions before our era began; that they had grand things which we boastful ones of the nineteenth century cannot equal. Four thousand years before Christ came, God the Father declared the world to be "very good," and, having such a Creator, the goodness poured into man at his creation burst forth from the soul all along, from Adam to Socrates. We need not take the garlands from the Father to bestow them upon the Son. The world of God was good, the world of Christ only better. The first great fruit of the Christian tree is certainly the better path of salvation it brought. It brought no wholly new method; but it perfected the ideas that lay only in outline. The idea of sacrifice can never go beyond the death of Christ. After God came with His Lamb there was no more need of the flocks and herds of a thousand hills. And after Christ taught His ethics there was room for nothing more; His hopes, His penitence, His virtue, His love, were all the zenith of those moral heights. Let us pass by these fruits and go to fields less familiar to all our thoughts. It is a great injustice to Christianity if one views it only as being an escape from hell hereafter to a heaven also beyond. The real truth is, Christ has blended Himself with all the annals of Christian lands, and He has given new colour to all the days of the great era that wears His name. As the setting sun shining through a watery air makes all things—fence, hut, log, forest, and field—to be gold like himself, so Christ blends with the rich and the humble details of society, and sheds His heavenly blush upon the great pageant of humanity marching beneath. If we dare not say Christianity invented the steamboat and the railroad, we may say that it reshaped literature and all the arts, and has deeply affected law and the whole moral aspect of civilization. There is an art which Christianity created almost wholly, asking little of outside aid. Music is that peculiar child. The long-continued vision of heaven, the struggle of the tones of voice and of instrument to find something worthy of the deep feelings of religion, resulted at last in those mighty chants that formed the mountain-springs of our musical Nile. There could have been no music had not depths of feeling come to man. The men who went up to the pagan temples went with no such love, with no sorrow of repentance, with no exultant joy. It was necessary for Jesus Christ to come along and transfer religion from the form to the spirit, and from an "airy nothingness" to a love stronger than life, before hymns like those of Luther, and Wesley, and Watts could break from the heart. The doctrine of repentance must live in the world awhile before we can have a "Miserere," and the exultant hope of the Christian must come before the mind can invent a "Gloria." There could be no music until the soul had become full. Therefore, when John drew his picture of heaven, when Magdalen shed her tears, when Christ died on the cross, when the Christian martyrs began to die for their faith, when Paul astonished the world with his self-denial and heroism, when the religion of Jesus began to picture the immortality of man, then the foundation of music began to be laid, wide, and massive, and deep. Thus you may glance over all the arts, and find that the great

ideas and emotions of the new religion affected them all—the paintings of Raphael and Angelo, and the architecture of all the great middle centuries, great in the construction of temples. Christianity helped to make Angelo and Raphael by furnishing them with grand themes. As no lips can be eloquent unless they are speaking in the name of a great truth, so no painter can paint unless some one brings him a great subject. Heaven and hell made the poet Dante; Christianity made Beatrice; paradise made John Milton; the mother of our Lord and the last judgment made Angelo. It is the great theme that makes the orator, the painter, the poet. (*David Swing.*)

Ver. 45. **A good man out of the good treasure of his heart.**—*Religion seated in the heart*:—1. Christ referred true religion to the heart as the seat of its vitality. 2. Nor is it in essence alone that religion is thus intensely spiritual and inward; religious acts, to have reality and value, must proceed from the heart, and fairly represent its spiritual frames. 3. What, then, is this good treasure of the heart? True religion is an inward *principle* of holy living, through consecration to a holy God. (*J. P. Thompson.*) *Prepared heart treasures*:—Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; and our best abundance of the heart must be slowly and in quietness prepared. The cattle, when they rest, are yet working to prepare from the grass that sweetest and most wholesome of beverages—milk. So must we prepare the abundance of the heart. If the milk of our word is to flow from us nourishingly, we must turn the common things of daily life—the grass—by slow and quiet processes, into sweet wisdom. In retired, meditative hours the digesting and secreting powers of the spirit act; and thus ourselves are nourished, and we store nourishment for others. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *Words reveal hearts*:—Our words are the commentaries on our wills; for, when we speak we make, as it were, a dissection of our own hearts, and read an anatomy-lecture upon ourselves. Our wanton talk discovers a stew in our heart; when our words are swords, our hearts are a slaughter-house; when we bear false witness, that is the mint; when we worship Mammon, that is the temple. The heart is the shop and workhouse of all evil (Prov. iv. 23, 24; Matt. xv. 19). (*A. Farindon.*) The rising of the sun is known by the shining beams; the fire is known by its burning; the life of the body is known by its moving: even so certainly is the presence of God's Spirit known by the shining light of a holy conversation; even so the purging fire of grace is known by the burning zeal against sin, and a fervent desire to keep God's commandments; even so, certainly, the life and liveliness of faith is known by the good motives of the heart, by the bestirring of all the powers, both of the soul and body, to do whatsoever God wills us to be doing, as soon as we once know He would have us do it. He that hath this evidence hath a bulwark against despair, and may dare the devil to his face; he that hath this hath the broad seal of eternal life, and such a man shall live for ever (Acts ix. 6; 1 John ii. 3). (*J. Mede.*)

Ver. 46. **And why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?**—*Religion, the doing of God's will*:—I. In the first place, LET US BE WARNED AGAINST MAKING OUR RELIGION A MATTER MERELY OF OPINION. Said William Law to John Wesley, "The head can as easily amuse itself with a living and justifying faith in the blood of Jesus, as with any other notion." It is even so. A truer word, pointed in warning against a greater peril, was never uttered. The mistake in question is a very subtle one, but very serious, and more common than, perhaps, we think. As thus of the doctrines, so also of the duties of our religion. These duties may be objects merely of belief, arranged in well-ordered systems, and acknowledged to be the proper code of life, without being actually reduced to practice. II. In the second place, LET US BE WARNED AGAINST MAKING OUR RELIGION A MATTER MERELY OF FEELING. This piety of moods and feelings, which goes by spasms, and not by the even pulses of a robust life, is not the sort of piety we need, my hearers. It dishonours our Master, who has something larger to do for us than simply to make us happy in our religion. It wrongs our own souls, which ought to be looking higher than their own enjoyment. III. Finally, LET US BE MOVED TO MAKE OUR RELIGION A MATTER OF THE LIFE; FINDING THE TEST AND MEASURE OF OUR DISCIPLESHIP, NEITHER IN WHAT WE BELIEVE, NOR IN WHAT WE FEEL, BUT IN WHAT WE ARE, AS ANNOUNCING ITSELF IN WHAT WE DO. Not that we counsel the disparagement of Christian doctrine. There must be religious opinions, more or less clearly defined, conditioning the religious life; and the more clearly defined, the better. And the nearer we come to the teachings of Scripture, as interpreted by the Christian consciousness

of the successive generations of believers; the nearer we come to those grand settlements of doctrine effected by the great expounders of doctrine, as Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Edwards, the nearer we shall come to the hidings of Christian power. Neither would we disparage religious feeling. The new life has its beginning in feeling; while to be past feeling is the surest mark of reprobation. It is impossible for a man to be convinced of sin by the Spirit of God without being profoundly agitated. (*R. D. Hitchcock, D.D.*) *Obedience—not profession:*—I. WHY IS DOING THE WILL OF GOD LIKE BUILDING UPON A ROCK? 1. Doing is the way to being. God's doing flows from His being; His work is the outflow of His nature. He radiates outwards into all the departments of the universe from a settled centre; and because He is so gloriously good, all His works are gloriously good. The work derives its character from the being—the unchangeable being or nature of God. But there is a vast immeasurable distance between us and God; and the grand question is, How a nature so disordered, so miserably poor in knowledge, so shallow in thought and conviction, so low in aspiration, so uncertain in the use of its freedom, prostituting it so often to low ends, and so seldom using it for our emancipation from evil; how is such a nature as ours to find its way up to God till it shall have attained to His settled goodness and unchangeable excellence? The answer is, By exercising ourselves in those rules of goodness which Christ has given us as Divine. We must do in order to be. You must learn how to love your enemy, how to pray for them that despitefully use you. For there can be no true and perfect love in a nature that harbours hatred even towards an enemy. Self-denial and self-sacrifice, constraint and cross-bearing, are painful now, because we are only learning; but when we have left school, and our nature has reached the standard for the attainment of which it has been under discipline, to love God and all creatures will involve no effort or constraint or painful cross-bearing; for love in us will be as spontaneous as it is in God: we shall have become a law unto ourselves, and we shall instinctively, and of our own free impulse, choose the good, the right, and the pure. 2. Doing is the way to knowing. To know physical facts is the way to gain material power; to know the hidden laws that govern nature is to become its lord and master, able, as with a magician's wand, to call forth her inexhaustible resources for the service and advantage of man. To know human nature in its prejudices and passions is necessary to the statesmen who would make laws that are to be beneficial to our empire. And Christ says, if you will do the will of God, you shall know what doctrine is Divine and what is not. Such knowledge—growing out of a hallowed experience—plants our feet immovably upon the Rock of certainty, and not all the storms of opinion and doubt will be able to dislodge us. 3. Doing is the way to bless others. Even when a man is not making his fellow-man the object of his thought or deed—when he is not directly fulfilling some social duty, but while he is more specially engaged in nourishing his own interior manhood, strengthening his own attachment to what is true, and pure, and brave—he is nevertheless blessing others. For such a man creates unconsciously a moral atmosphere around him which his neighbours breathe he loads the air with a sacred perfume; an influence goes forth from him, like heat from fire, which insensibly leavens the minds of others. But when such a man comes into contact with his fellows in the relations of life—in business, in friendship, and in religion—he strengthens and perpetuates his unconscious influence. He does the will of God; he does to others as he would they should do unto him. He upholds the laws of justice and generosity against injustice and meanness. II. HEARING BUT NOT DOING IS LIKE BUILDING ON THE SAND. 1. It issues in a false self-deceptive life. "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you." One of the most portentous facts in the constitution of our nature is—the power we have of self-deception. And yet when we come to consider, there is nothing capricious or malignant in it. It begins in conscious unfaithfulness. We hear the Word of God, but knowingly neglect to do it. We do not obey, but we must come to terms with the conscience. 2. Hearers and not doers will be convicted of egregious folly. "I will liken him unto the foolish man." Disobedience to known duty is not only a violation of the conscience, which is guilt; it is also a violation of the reason, which is folly. Reason says it is folly to choose the evil and reject the good. No man would prefer the delusions of madness to the realities of a healthy mind. Reason says it is folly to purchase the present at the cost of the future. But this is what men are doing who are only hearers. For if our life-house should fall, great will be the

fall of it. A mighty catastrophe is the fall of a soul! (*C. Short, M.A.*) *The sin, folly, and danger of men's calling Christ their Lord, and not yielding obedience to His laws; or the sinfulness and hazard of a profession of religion, without a correspondent practice:*—Wherein we have—1. A concession. He grants they made a fair profession; they called Him Lord, their Lord. 2. A charge. He charges them with nothing like this in their practice. Though they called Him their Lord, they carried not themselves at all as His subjects and servants. 3. An expostulation. He puts them to consider the inconsistency of these things, and the unaccountableness of yoking together a profession and a practice that destroyed one another. Why will ye plead the relation and yet throw off the duty of the relation? "If ye call Me your Lord, why do ye not what I say or bid you? If you will not do what I say or bid you, why do ye call Me your Lord?" Two doctrines are deducible from the text thus explained. I. There are who call Christ their Lord, owning His authority over them, and looking for benefit by Him, who yet make not conscience of doing the things which He as a Lord says to them, and requires of them. In discoursing this doctrine I shall—I. Consider men's calling Christ their Lord. II. Consider their not doing the things which He says, notwithstanding of their calling Him their Lord. III. Show how it comes to pass that people call Christ Lord, and their Lord, and yet make not conscience of doing what He says. IV. Apply the doctrine. I. I will consider MEN'S CALLING CHRIST THEIR LORD. Under this head, I will show—1. How men call Christ their Lord. 2. What they do call Christ, that call Him their Lord. 3. What is the import of their calling Him Lord. 1. I will show how men call Christ their Lord. Men call Him their Lord—(1) Professing Christianity. Christians is the name of Christ's disciples who owned Him for their Lord and Master—"The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" (Acts xi. 26). "One is your Master, even Christ" (Matt. xxiii. 10). Nay, at that rate ye take the name, and throw off the thing. (2) Being baptized in His name (Matt. xxviii. 19). They are thereby externally marked for His subjects and servants, and renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. (3) Praying unto Him, or to God in His name (Acts vii. 59; Dan. ix. 17). (4) Attending the assemblies of His people to hear His word (Ezek. xxiii. 31). (5) Consenting personally to the covenant (Isa. xliv. 5). Thereby they say, He is, and shall be for ever their Lord, and that they shall be His only, wholly, and for ever. (6) Lastly, Partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. The very name of that ordinance bears the partakers to call Him so (1 Cor. xi. 23, 26). 2. I will show what they do call Christ, that call Him their Lord. (1) They call Him their Lord God; as Thomas did—"My Lord, and my God" (John xx. 28). (2) Their Lord Proprietor, Master, and Owner, however little regard they show to the will of His providence and precepts (Rom. xiv. 9). (3) Their Lord Redeemer (Exod. xx. 2), however unsuitably they walk to the redemption purchased by Him. (4) Their Lord Husband, however refractory and disobedient they prove to Him (Jer. iii. 14). (5) Their Lord King, however rebellious they be—"The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, He will save us" (Isa. xxxiii. 22). 3. What is the import of their calling Him Lord? Men calling Him so, do in effect own, acknowledge, and profess—(1) His undoubted authority to command and prescribe duty to them: owning Him as their Lord Husband, King, and God, they cannot deny but He has authority to bind them with laws. (2) The justice and equity of His commands—"The law is holy; and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. vii. 12). (3) Our absolute obligation to obey Him. As the clay is in the hand of the potter, so are we in His. The potsherds of the earth may strive with one another, but shall they strive with their Maker? (4) The strongest ties upon us to be for Him. If He is our Proprietor and Redeemer, are we not bound by all the ties of honour and gratitude to be wholly His? (5) The expectation of happiness from Him. Calling Him our Lord, we expect from Him and by Him the pardon of our sin, the favour of God, and a part in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. vii. 21). II. I will consider MEN'S NOT DOING THE THINGS WHICH HE SAYS, NOTWITHSTANDING ALL THIS. We may take it up in three things. 1. Christ as a Lord prescribes duty to His subjects. He has not an empty title of lordship and dominion, but is a Lawgiver—"He is our Lawgiver" (Isa. xxxiii. 22). And the law of the ten commands, in their spirituality and extent, is His law, binding by His authority on all that call Him Lord (Exod. xx. 2, 3, &c.). 2. He intimates His will to them as to their duty. He says what He would have them to do. We have His written laws in the Bible, which is God's Word to every one into whose hand it comes. 3. Yet men neglect it, and regard it not in their

practice. They plead the relation to Him, but make no conscience of the duty of it. (1) They have no due sense of their being absolutely bound up to His will, but fancy themselves to be at some liberty to walk according to their own, as if the government were divided betwixt Christ and themselves (Psa. xii. 4). They do not feel the tie of the yoke of Christ always upon them, but are like bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, skipping at ease according to their own pleasure. (2) They frame not their life according to His will. (3) They never set themselves to do all that He says; contrary to what the Psalmist did (Psa. cxix. 6), who "had respect unto all God's commandments." (4) They habitually do against what He says, making their own lusts and inclinations their law; like those who said, "I have loved strangers, and after them will I go" (Jer. ii. 25). They call Him their Lord; but Satan and their lusts are really their lords, to whom they yield their obedience, being captives at their pleasure. (5) They do nothing purely because He says it, else they would endeavour to do all. In what they do, they have other ends than to please Him: they do it to please themselves, for their own profit, pleasure, or safety. III. The third general head is, to SHOW HOW IT COMES TO PASS, THAT PEOPLE CALL CHRIST LORD, AND THEIR LORD, AND YET MAKE NOT CONSCIENCE OF DOING WHAT HE SAYS. The springs of this ruining practice, that so prevails, are many: as—1. The want of a thorough change in their nature: "A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit: neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Luke vi. 43, 44). (1) Good education and religious company embalms some dead souls; but still they want the principle of the Spirit of life; like those of whom the apostle says (Jude ver. 19). (2) The gospel being new to some, makes a reel among their affections; as it did among the stony-ground hearers (Matt. xiii. 20, 21). (3) They get some new light into their heads, but no new life into their hearts. (4) Many get awakening grace, that never get converting grace. 2. Entertaining wrong notions of religion. They form to themselves such notions of religion, as leave them at liberty in the course of their walk. (1) They think that is religion to call Christ Lord in performing duties of worship, praying, &c., and consider not that the substance of religion lies in holy, tender walking (Tit. ii. 11, 12). (2) They think that faith will save them, though it be dead, idle, and inactive; contrary to what the apostle saith: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James ii. 14.) "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (ver. 26). They do not consider that that faith is not saving faith which is so. 3. Reigning unbelief. Of this our Lord complained: "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (John v. 40). 4. Want of consideration (Luke xv. 17). 5. The natural enmity of the heart prevailing against conviction (Rom. viii. 7). 6. Unmortified lusts still keeping the rule and dominion over the soul, though Christ has the name of their Lord. Doctrine II. It lies on men's consciences before the Lord, to take it home to themselves, to consider and answer it, how they come to call Christ their Lord, and yet not make conscience of doing the things which He as a Lord says to them, and requires of them. In discoursing this doctrine, I shall only show the import of the expostulation in the text, and then conclude with a word of application. I will show the import of this expostulation. It imports—1. That Christ is in earnest for our obedience. He is not indifferent what regard we show to what He says as our Lord (Psa. cxix. 4). (1) The evidence of our belonging to Christ, in a saving relation, lies upon it. "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John xv. 14). (2) The evidence of your right to heaven lies on it. "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they might have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. xxii. 14). 2. It is possible for us in this life to get the things that Christ says, done acceptably, in all the parts thereof. If it were not so, then, by the text, nobody at all would be allowed to call Him Lord; which is certainly false (Matt. vii. 21). So there are two sorts that call Him Lord; some that do, some that do not what He says; the former allowed, the other rejected. The doctrine of the imperfection of the saint's obedience is a stone of stumbling to many a blind soul. To prevent your stumbling—(1) Distinguish between doing the will of Christ in all its parts, and in all its degrees. A whole family hears so many particular pieces of work prescribed to them all by the father and master of the family. His grown children do them all exactly to his mind; the younger children, who are but learning to work, put hand to every one of them, and baulk none of the pieces; but they do none of them exactly. Refractory servants do some of them, but others of them they never notice. Just so it is with the saints in heaven, true believers on earth, and

hypocrites. (2) Distinguish between doing the will of Christ perfectly, and acceptably. No man in this life can do the former (Philip. iii. 12). But every true believer does the later (Acts x. 25). (3) Distinguish between ability in ourselves to do the will of Christ acceptably, and ability for it in Christ, offered to us in the gospel, and to be brought in by faith. No man, saint nor sinner, has the former. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves" (2 Cor. iii. 5). But all true believers do get the latter (Phil. iv. 13). 3. Notwithstanding the things that Christ says may be got done acceptably, yet many that call Him Lord will not do them. "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him," &c. (Tit. i. 16). (1) Obedience to sin, and disobedience to Christ, is their choice. (2) They have neither heart nor use for the grace and strength that is in Christ Jesus (John v. 40; Psa. lxxxi. 11). 1. Christ is highly displeased with the disobedience of those that call Him Lord, who will not do what He says (Psa. l. 16–22). But to persuade you of it, consider—(1) His infinite purity and holiness (Isa. vi. 3). He is the Holy One of Israel. (2) The dreadful strokes He has brought on such as called Him Lord, for not doing the things that He says. (3) Does he not refuse communion with such persons in holy ordinances, and thereby testify his displeasure against them? "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face" (Hos. v. 15). Lastly, Consider how He will treat them at the last day (Luke xix. 27). 5. There is a great evil in calling Christ Lord, and not doing what He says; an evil that highly provokes Him, as casting dishonour on Him in a very special manner. (1) Their sins and looseness of life reflect a peculiar dishonour on Him, as pretending a relation to Him (Rom. ii. 24). (2) They do Satan a peculiar pleasure. (3) They wound the heart of the real children of God, and make the whole family sigh more heavily than the sins of others would do (Psa. lv. 12). But there are three things they do not consider. (1) What inconsistency is in this course: "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15). (2) How heinously the Lord Christ takes it, that men should yoke Satan's service with His (2 Cor. vi. 15, forecited). (3) What the end of such a course will be, what it will issue in at length. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" (Deut. xxxii. 29). 6. People ought to consider it, see what account they can make of it, and how they will answer it. And—(1) How they will answer it to their own consciences. (2) How they will answer it to the Lord Christ in the judgment. (*T. Boston, D.D.*)

Practical obedience:—I. In the first place, OUTWARD OBEDIENCE IS THE NECESSARY FRUIT, AND THE ABSOLUTE TEST OF INWARD LIFE. He alone will enter into the kingdom of heaven "that *doeth* the will of My Father which is in heaven." Let us pause over the words. They cannot refer to the man who accidentally does the will of God because it so happens that his pleasure coincides with God's pleasure, just as a person may walk in the same path as another without intending to be his companion. In such an act there would be no inward element. But they must refer to the man who intentionally does God's will; does it, that is, because it is God's will; independently of any further consideration of whether it be pleasant or not in itself. Observe, therefore, there is no picking and choosing in such an obedience. The word "doeth" does not mean intention, profession, or promise, but action in those practical details of actual life, which make up the real sum total of human existence. A saving religion is not that which is up in the air, but that which plants its sacred feet on the solid earth of daily life. Such a religion is exceedingly difficult, and there is one power alone which can accomplish it in us. It is the power of God. To use an inspired illustration, "we are God's workmanship." Not only does an artist's work show the genius of the artist, but every artist has his own touch and style. We look at an exquisite picture, and we recognize the hand of the painter: we exclaim, with undoubting confidence, "Raphael," "Guido," "Rembrandt." Thus when we look at a true Christian who bears and reflects Christ all over him, we say, "God." That is God's work; God's Spirit alone can have done that. God is "admired in His saints, and glorified in all them that believe." And how can it be otherwise if we reverse the order, and, instead of looking from the act to the principle, trace the principle down into the act? For what is salvation, but deliverance from sin; and what is sin, but opposition to the will of God? To be saved, therefore, is to be brought into conformity with God's will. A good man is full of the Holy Ghost. But the Holy Ghost can no more abide in a heart without making it holy, without compelling it by the most

sweet inward necessity to do God's will, than there can be a sun without light, a stream without water, a summer without flowers, a life without activity. II. But there is another point of view from which the lesson may be regarded. OUTWARD OBEDIENCE MAY BE, IN THE HANDS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD, THE INSTRUMENT OF INWARD LIFE, AND THEREFORE, WHERE INWARD LIFE ALREADY EXISTS, THE MEANS AND STIMULANT OF A HIGHER GROWTH IN GRACE. A man is truly in earnest, and sets himself without reserve to do God's will as he finds it in His Word. What is the first experience that such a man will gain? what his earliest lesson, his first upward step Godward, although it be apparently a step downward into the dark? I say that it is a knowledge of failure and of sin. He cannot keep God's will in its inward spirit and power through the weakness of his flesh. Must he not ask himself why he fails? Ah, why, indeed, but from indwelling sin! Thus there flashes upon the soul a sense of sin and a consciousness of guilt before God. And when the soul once stands face to face with this truth, the impossibility of self-righteousness and of doing God's will as he fondly thought in his own strength must become clear as the flash of the sunshine. "Then I am a helpless sinner," he exclaims, "vile and worthless, and where shall I find help and hope? If I cannot save myself, who can save me?" He flings the arms of his faith around the feet of the dying Jesus, and cries out, "My Lord and my God, my Saviour, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification." (*E. Garbett, M.A.*) *The necessity of doing the will of God*:—Some of you, perhaps, suppose that you do enough to show that you are Christians if you come here on Sundays. One purpose for which you come here is to learn how to live elsewhere. It can be no excuse for breaking God's commandments on Monday that you made a great effort on Sunday—came a mile and a half through the wind and rain—to learn what God's commandments are. Suppose a man were caught trespassing in a gentleman's private grounds, and when asked for a defence of his conduct answered that though no doubt he was trespassing, he hoped that it would be a palliation of his offence that once a week for twenty years he had taken care to read the notice on the board—"Private road. Trespassing forbidden." Would that be a rational excuse? Or suppose you had a man in your works who was constantly breaking some of the printed regulations which are put up in the shops, what would you say if he asked you to look over his bad conduct because he always read through the regulations every Monday morning? We see the folly of a plea of that kind when alleged to cover a violation of any of our own rules and regulations; and yet so easily do we deceive ourselves, that we are all in danger of supposing that because we read the Bible and come to public worship in order to learn God's laws we have something to set off against breaking them. Christ's words are clear. We are none the better for knowing the will of God; we must obey it. We must *do* the will of God. Some men have such a keen admiration for moral goodness that they take it for granted that they are really good. You admire industry—good; but if you are to enter into the kingdom of heaven you must be industrious. Emotion of other kinds—good in its place—is also mistaken for actual well-doing. When we begin to hold political meetings in the winter there will be hundreds of men, belonging to both political parties, who will think that they are animated by a generous patriotism and a noble zeal for the public good, because they give enthusiastic cheers to the eloquence of their favourite orators; but ask them to do some canvassing, or to give a subscription towards the expenses of a contested election, and you will find that their patriotism and their zeal have all vanished. Doing God's will is one thing, being sorry for not doing it is a different thing altogether. But suppose we resolve to do better—is not this satisfactory? Satisfactory? No; not unless we actually *do* better as the result of our good resolutions. Christ does not say that the man who resolves to do the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the man who does it; and between good resolutions and good deeds there is apt to be a very precarious connection. Some people appear to use up all their strength in making good resolutions, and they have no strength left to carry them out. We must *do* the will of God if we are to enter into heaven. However perfect our excuses may seem for not doing it, I cannot see that these excuses are admissible. One man pleads his natural temperament as a justification of the violence or irritability of his temper. Another pleads the sharp necessities of business as an excuse for resorting to accommodation bills and other illegitimate methods of raising money. Another pleads the bad treatment he has received from a relative or a friend in defence of rough and hard and uncharitable words about him. God who made us, knows our frame and He remembers that we are dust; Christ can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities,

having been tempted in all points as we are. We may rely on the Divine tenderness and mercy. God will not deal hardly with us; He treats us more generously than we treat each other; sometimes He treats us more mercifully than we treat ourselves. But to allege temptation as an apology for sin is clearly to defy the authority of the Divine law and to dissolve all moral obligations. (*R. W. Dale, LL.D.*) *The folly of a fruitless profession*:—I. SHOW WHO THEY ARE WHO DESERVE THE CENSURE IN THE TEXT. 1. Mere nominal Christians. 2. Formal, self-righteous persons. 3. False professors. II. EXPOSTULATE WITH THEM ON THE FOLLY OF THEIR CONDUCT. 1. Is not a conformity to Christ's precepts practicable? 2. Is not obedience to Him necessary? 3. Will not a feigned allegiance be discovered by Him? 4. Shall we not wish at last that we had been sincere and upright. APPLICATION. (1) Let us all seek to become Christians indeed. (2) Let us not be afraid to confess our Lord before men. (3) Let our lives be consistent with our professions. (4) Let us trust in the Lord as simply as if obedience were not required. (5) Let us obey the Lord as zealously as if obedience only were required. (*Theological Sketch Book.*)

Vers. 47–49. **Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like.**—*The similitude of hearing Christ's sayings*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE SAYINGS OF CHRIST. 1. The doctrine of faith and repentance. 2. The doctrine of regeneration. 3. The doctrine of self-denial. 4. But, more particularly, that doctrine and those sayings which He had just concluded, urging a holy life, and explaining the nature and spirituality of the moral law. II. WHAT IS MEANT BY HEARING CHRIST'S SAYINGS. 1. To hear His word and sayings with attention: to hear in hearing. 2. To hear His sayings and holy doctrine, as it is His word, not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the Word of God. Thus those in Thessalonica heard it, and received it, which becomes effectual in all that believe. 3. They hear Christ's sayings with holy trembling. Thus the good king Josiah heard the book of the law. 4. To hear Christ's sayings and heavenly doctrine believingly; "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa. liii. 1). 5. To hear with understanding; many hear but remain ignorant of their state, do not understand the purport of the word, which is to convince them of the evil of sin, and of their woful and undone condition thereby, and of the necessity of a Mediator, or of a Saviour; as also of the excellency of that blessed Saviour, together with that mighty power and ability that He is clothed with to save. 6. The wise hearer hears Christ's sayings and retains them, he is not a forgetful hearer; he sees the excellency of the word; likes and approves of the sayings and doctrine of Jesus Christ; he is like to Mary who pondered, "And kept all these sayings in her heart." These persons, with holy David, love God's Word above gold, yea, above fine gold; "therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and hate every false way" (Psa. cxix. 127, 128). 7. It is a hearing of Christ's word and sayings subjectively; such hear and come to Christ. "Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings," &c., (Luke vi. 47). In coming to Christ they hear, and in hearing, come, that is, then believe, and receive Jesus Christ. III. WHAT IS MEANT BY DOING CHRIST'S SAYINGS. 1. It is to believe whatsoever is matter of faith; and to do and practise whatsoever is matter of practice and duty. 2. He may be said to do what Christ saith that hath his whole trust and dependence upon Him, or that resteth wholly upon Christ's merits and righteousness for justification and eternal life. 3. To do Christ's sayings is to yield ready and hearty obedience to the precepts He hath given forth in the gospel: some will not hear what Christ says; others will hear, but they hear carelessly; others hear but do not. "If I am your Lord and Master, why do ye not what I say? Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21). 4. They that uprightly do Christ's sayings, do them sincerely, in truth, not out of by-ends and aims; neither for loaves, not for self and carnal profit, nor for self-applause. 5. They do Christ's sayings from right principles, from a principle of life, from faith in, and love to Christ: if ye love Me, keep My commandments; that obedience which proceeds not from faith and love, is not regarded, nor accepted of by Jesus Christ. 6. They are such that do all Christ's sayings; "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I say" (John xv. 14). 7. Such continue in doing Christ's sayings; they abide in their obedience, they obey always, or continue in well doing. IV. WHAT IS MEANT BY HIS HOUSE. 1. By this house is, doubtless, meant his hope of salvation; "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as the spider's web" (Job

viii. 14). 1. A house is that which we rest in, and where we take our repose; a true believer resteth on Christ, he builds his house, *i.e.*, his hope, his soul, and all he doth, on Christ; he that hath a right hope, a true faith, he hath a firm and well-built house, where he reposeth himself, or resteth continually. 2. A house is a place of shelter to us, in a tempestuous or stormy season, when rain, hail, snow, thunder, &c., are like to annoy us; so this man that builds his hope in Christ is secured and safe, when Satan raises storms of temptations upon him; he is safe also from the thunderings of mount Sinai, or the thunderbolts of the law and of the wrath of God, which all unbelievers lie open to. 3. A house is often assaulted by thieves, and if not firm and strong, may be broke up, and all that dwell in it may be robbed, nay murdered; so is the hope of a Christian often attacked by Satan, and if his faith and hope was not built upon Christ, he was certainly in danger of losing all he hath; nay, his precious soul for ever. V. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE ROCK. By the rock is no doubt meant Jesus Christ; He is often called a rock; "The Lord is my rock and my fortress" (Psa. xviii. 2). "Who is a rock save our God?" (Psa. xviii. 13.) "O Lord, my rock, be not silent" (Psa. xxviii. 1). "Upon this rock will I build My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18; 1 Cor. x. 4). Jesus Christ may be fitly compared to a rock. 1. A rock is a firm and immovable thing, therefore good for a foundation; that which is built on a rock, stands sure; so Christ is a firm and sure foundation—"Upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). 2. Christ may be compared to a rock, in regard that in ancient times people built their houses in rocks, as well as built upon them; "they hewed out houses, or habitations in rocks" (Isa. xxii. 16). Christ is a believer's spiritual habitation; "they, like the dove, make their dwelling in the clefts of the rock." "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God." 3. Rocks are strong, and were made use of for places of defence; no fortifications like some rocks, they are impregnable: David for security fled into a rock; in this respect Christ may also be compared to a rock, because He is our refuge from the wrath and vengeance of God, the curse of the law, and rage of wicked men, sin, and devils; a believer in Christ is safe, his dwelling place is impregnable. 4. Rocks are durable, permanent, and lasting; Jesus Christ hath the stability of a rock, He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; hence He is called the Rock of Ages. VI. WHY A GODLY MAN IS CALLED A WISE MAN. 1. A godly man ponders well all future dangers. 2. All future safety and security; how he may avoid and escape the one, and enjoy the other. If he builds not with wisdom, he foresees the danger that will follow, for his soul will fall into hell. 3. A godly man may be looked upon to be wise, because he so consults matters, that he may not suffer the loss of all his labour and cost; such who hear Christ's sayings and do them not, that do not believe in Him, nor obey His precepts; though they may make a visible profession, and do many things, and give to the poor, and suffer much external loss, yet all their labour, pains, and costs, and future hopes, will be utterly lost; but a true Christian is so wise as to close savingly with Christ, and obey His precepts, by which he knows his labour will not be in vain in the Lord. 4. A godly man is a wise man, because he complies with, and approves of that great and glorious design and purpose of God in Jesus Christ; it being the contrivance of His infinite wisdom, this way only to restore and save lost man: Now seeing a true Christian accepteth of Christ alone, and builds upon Him as the only foundation, it shows he is a wise man. 5. Because he seeks the honour of his blessed Lord and Master, and thereby keeps in His love and favour; it is not his own good only, but Christ's glory which he seeks, and this is a great point of wisdom. Because nothing but God, and an interest in Him, and the eternal enjoyment of this God, will satisfy his soul; if God be the chief good, then to place all our hope and happiness in Him, and to enjoy Him, must needs be a part of highest wisdom. "He that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John iii. 24). This man hath God to be his God; O what man is wise, save this man only? Others have the shell, but this man hath the kernel: others have the cabinet, and that contents them, but this man hath also the jewel. 7. Because these men are the declared friends of Jesus Christ, and only favourites of heaven: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John xv. 14). 8. He is a wise man, because he is resolved to keep a good conscience: brethren, conscience is a tender thing, and to offend it is a piece of greatest folly; it is for a man to arm himself to murder his own soul, or kill himself; better to have all men in the world against us, and to reproach us, than to have our own conscience to accuse and reproach us. VII. WHEREIN HIS WISDOM CONSISTS.

1. In his thoughtfulness of soul. 2. In his care to provide a house for his soul. 3. In building his house upon a good and safe foundation. 4. In digging deep. If it be a great and famous building, some magnificent fabric which a man designs to build, he will dig deep to lay a firm and sure foundation, he digs until he comes to a rock, or sound bottom: now it is a great and glorious fabric that a Christian is to build, a building that is to stand for ever, and endure all storms and assaults of Satan, and all other enemies of the soul. Besides, pardon of sin, justification, and eternal life, are great things; and the soul being so excellent, so precious, the house that is to be built for it, ought to bear some proportion unto it; also Jesus Christ the prince of kings of the earth, designs to dwell with the soul, so that it may be truly said to be a house for the great king; therefore, on all these respects, it behoveth us to dig deep, and to lay a safe and sure foundation. 5. In building his house of proper and fit materials. 6. In building by rule. 7. In building in the proper time. 8. In sitting down to count the cost. (1) What the digging up the old foundation will cost him. (2) What old habits must be changed, and what right-eye sins must be pulled out, and what right-hand sins must be cut off. (3) What old companions must be forsaken, and what enticements must be withstood and resisted. (4) What reproaches for Christ's sake must be borne, and what external losses and persecutions must be endured. (5) He counts his own weakness and inability to do any of these things, and so consults the power, faithfulness, and promises of Christ, on which he solely and wholly depends, and thereby knows and is sure he cannot fail; he doth not begin nor go on in his own strength, but sees his riches and strength is in Jesus Christ, and therefore strengtheneth himself in that grace that is in him, which is sufficient for him, as Paul was told after he had begun to build, when assaulted by the messenger of Satan. (6) He accounts what temptations must be withstood, from Satan, from his carnal relations, and from the corruptions of his own heart. (7) And what reproaches and persecutions must be endured. VIII. EXHORTATION TO FOOLISH BUILDERS. 1. Tremble, all ye foolish builders, who hear Christ's sayings, but do them not, that hear His word, but do not believe; who are reformed perhaps in your lives, but not changed in your hearts. 2. Be exhorted to try yourselves, examine your hearts, see with what materials you have built your house, I mean your hope for heaven; if it be not upon Jesus Christ, if it be on the sands of your own works, or inherent righteousness, or on your duties, or upon your external privileges, or on gifts, parts, or knowledge, or traditions; pull down your house and new build it, build it on the only and sure foundation. 3. Let all professors prepare for a storm; the winds will blow, the rain will fall, and the floods will come; you shall all be tried; God will try every man's work. If temptations of Satan, if tribulation and persecution from men, do not beat down your house and hope, yet death will. 4. We infer from hence, that the state of false professors, or all such who are no more than bare hearers of the word, is very sad and deplorable, their hope will be as the spider's web. 5. Sinners, doubtless you have got some house, or hope, or another; but any hope will not serve your turn. O how near may you be to a storm, death may be at the door, and then your hope will perish, and your souls be lost. 6. What comfort is here for believers, they are safe! (*Benjamin Keach*).

The wise and the foolish hearers:—The contrast intended is not that between two men deliberately selecting different foundations on which to build, but that between two men, one of whom makes the foundation a matter of deliberate consideration, while the other never takes a moment's thought about a foundation, but proceeds to build at hap-hazard, on the surface, anywhere, just where he happens to be—on the loose sands on the banks, or even in the bed of a river dried up by severe drought and scorching heat of summer, as rivers are so apt to be in the East. 1. In the light of the true distinction between the two builders, as above stated, we can see the special appropriateness of the emblem employed by our Lord to represent two different types of men in reference to religion. The characteristics of the one builder are considerateness and thoroughness, as those of the other are inconsiderateness and superficiality. 2. But the difference between the two classes of men is too important to be disposed of in a sentence. Our Lord Himself distinguishes the two classes by representing a man of the one class as one who heareth His sayings and doeth them, and a man of the other class as one who heareth His sayings and doeth them not. No man who is thoroughly in sympathy with the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is in danger of making any serious mistake as to the footing on which he stands before God. Thoroughgoing moral earnestness is the sure road to faith in Divine grace as the source of salvation, as

the history of Paul and of Luther shows. A little earnestness may make a man a Pharisee, but a great consuming earnestness will make him a Christian, after the Pauline type. Two points of difference in character are clearly hinted at. (1) The wise builder has a prudent regard to the future. (2) The wise builder does not look merely to appearance. 3. We have thus ascertained the distinctive characteristics of the two classes of hearers. But it is one thing to discriminate between these two classes on paper, another thing to discern and judge between them as existing in real life. Who, then, is to decide as to the merits of the two builders? The Divine preacher, with true insight into the state of the case, replies, "The elements." The rain, the winds, and the floods, are the infallible judges of the builders and their work. The elements in the metaphor represent generally times of severe trial, the judgment-days which overtake men even in this world occasionally, and in which many fair edifices of religious profession go down. The forms in which the trial may come are very diverse. (1) The great thing to be laid to heart is that trial, in one form or another, is to be expected. (2) And another thing should be remembered: the crisis that is to try us may come suddenly, leaving no time for preparation, no time for saving one's household furniture, barely time to save one's own life. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *Foundations*:—1. All men are building. 2. All builders have a choice of foundations. 3. All foundations will be tried. 4. Only one foundation will stand. (*W. W. Wythe.*) *My sayings*:—We may claim for Christ's sayings an originality, a compass, and loving energy, such as have not been rivalled by any speaker. "Never man spake like this man," was the testimony of His enemies. After reading the doctrines of Plato, Socrates, or Aristotle, we feel that the specific difference between their words and Christ's is the difference between an inquiry and a revelation. 1. The sayings of Christ may be said to be Divine because they are so human. 2. The sayings of Christ determined the destiny of all who heard them. To have heard these sayings is to have incurred the gravest responsibility. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Hearers and doers*:—I. First then, THE DISTINCTION OF CHARACTER. II. Now, observe next, THE CONTRAST IN THE HOPES OF THESE TWO CHARACTERS. The man who builds his house on the rock is said to dig deep before he begins to build; but the man who is likened to the foolish man takes no trouble about digging deep. He is "like a man that without a foundation builds his house upon the earth." 1. Here, then, is the first contrast between a real believer in Christ, and a mere professor of religion. The believer's safety is preceded by anxiety. The mere professor's hope of heaven it has cost him no trouble to attain; he has formed it without any previous anxiety. Now, it is just so with a real believer in Jesus Christ—one who has any anxiety about his soul's salvation. He dares not take it for granted that he is all right. A man who does take for granted that he is right for heaven, is like a man who builds on the surface. One who is really anxious about his soul digs to see whether his foundation is good before he begins to build. 2. Observe, next, that the Christian's hope rests thus upon a solid foundation. Until the sinner finds that salvation which God has laid, of course he cannot rest upon a solid foundation. 3. The real believer finds that his house stands in the time of trial. There may be affliction, there may be persecution, there may be peculiar temptations; or if he escape these, there is the great trial of death and the prospect of judgment; but he who finds that he is resting on Christ—that he has been trying to know what Christ would have him do, and then to do it—finds himself secure. The promise of his Saviour, the oath of his covenant God, omnipotence itself secures his safety. He may be shaken in his mind in consequence of trouble and adversity, but he cannot be moved off from the rock on which he rests. Storms come very suddenly sometimes and very unexpectedly. Men may be in the enjoyment of health and strength and vigour, and may be lawfully pursuing their worldly duties, when some unexpected sickness reaches them, and after a few days, it may be, of pain and anguish, their medical attendants signify that there is no hope of their recovery; and now comes a time to test whether we have been building on a foundation or not. (*W. Cadman, M.A.*) *The two builders*:—Much as all men resemble one another, there is yet between us a most affecting difference. Our form and nature are the same; our conditions, and wants, and troubles are alike; but beneath this outward resemblance there lies unseen, and perhaps unthought of, a dissimilarity of the very utmost importance. Some of us are the friends of the living God, while others are His enemies. I. AS TO THE SIMILARITY of the two men mentioned in the text. 1. They were both builders. Both are described as actually at work. Not the openly profane or careless, but professing Christians. 2. They

were building a house. A dwelling-place, refuge, home. A shelter for support under the cares of life, for consolation in its troubles, and a protection from the wrath of God throughout eternity. 3. The house of each of these builders has its strength severely tried. We must expect our religion to be brought to the test, and its real character to be disclosed. Till this trial comes, we can know but little of ourselves. Almost any religion will stand in a calm. It is temptation—trifling, worldly, and sensual companions; it is affliction—disappointment, poverty, sickness, mental oppression; it is a change of scene, or circumstances, or society; these are the things which show us what manner of men we are, and often surprise and confound us by the discovery which we make. II. THEIR DISSIMILARITIES. 1. One of these men built his house with foresight; the other heedlessly. A Christian must look forward, and labour for something that will stand a storm; a faith that will support him when everything else gives way: a hope that will bear him up when conscience stings, and Satan accuses, and death strikes; a refuge for his soul amidst all the convulsions and terrors of a departing world. 2. One of these men is a painstaking builder; the other is comparatively indolent. True religion is a laborious work, and the most important parts of it are those which require the most labour and make the least appearance. The foundations must be dug deep, and built on the solid rock. 3. One of these builders looks well to the foundation of his house; the other is indifferent about it. 4. Mark the difference in the end of these men. Conclusion: This parable may teach us—1. The object of true religion. Salvation. 2. The nature of true religion. A building, a work, a progressive labour. An earnest and unceasing effort for the working out of salvation. 3. The wisdom of true religion. The pursuing of a good end by the best means. Simple obedience to the commands of Christ; earnest labouring after salvation in God's way and manner. 4. The folly of that religion which trusts for salvation in itself. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *He only is a Christian who does what Christ bids him*:—This closing lesson is rendered impressive and memorable, not only by the vivid double simile under which it is conveyed, but still more even by the full round roll of the style: the intentional repetition of the same phrases in both halves of the parable; the continuous solemn sweep of the long, redoubled sentence which seems to dwell upon the ear, and afterwards to haunt the memory. The materials of the picture were familiar to His audience. Syrian houses of the poorer class were then probably (as they still are) very slight—built of mud or a few unhewn stones, roughly daubed with "untempered mortar," and roofed in by no stouter materials than brushwood, with a layer of grass-grown earth over it. Two such houses have been erected in one of the precipitous wadys which everywhere seam the limestone ranges of Palestine, and swiftly drain off its superfluous rainfall. So long as summer lasts and the bed of the watercourse is dry, both of them stand equally well, and appear to be equally secure. But a day of testing comes. One of those terrific storms of rain and hail which the treacherous winds of the Levant bring up suddenly from the sea, swells the brook in a few hours into a torrent; and when the flood sweeps down its narrow channel like a tide, turbid and white with foam from one rocky bank to the other, while the fierce rain-storm drives up the ravine before the western gale, and lashes on roof and sides; then is put to proof the stability of both dwellings; then everything depends on the character of their foundation. The one has been built, with careless want of foresight, upon nothing better than the layer of loose sand or gravel brought down by former floods. Of course, the waters which eddy now about its base fret away from beneath it the very soil on which it stands, till the force of the storm, beating down upon its undermined and unsupported walls, crushes it into ruin. It was a "refuge of lies," for it pretended to a foundation which it had not; and "the overflowing scourge" rolls it indignantly to the sea. The other builder, on the contrary, when he began to build, took the precaution to clear away that drift sand, deep though it was, and, digging down to the rock beneath, laid his foundation there. Now he finds the reward of his prudent pains and thoroughness. The flood may wash away, no doubt, whatever is movable from about the base of his house, even as from his neighbour's; but when its walls are laid bare to the very rock, the secret strength of his "hiding-place" is only discovered to view; and though roof and sides may suffer here and there in their weaker portions (see 1 Cor. iii. 14, 15,) from the searching of wind or rain, yet his house at least, as a place to shelter him, is secure from demolition: it falls not, for it is founded on the rock. So Jesus leaves His parable to interpret itself. The contrast betwixt a superficial profession of discipleship, in which self-deceived Christians confide as sufficient, and that thoroughgoing,

profound moral earnestness which is concerned to make sure work of it, and to be all that it seems to be: this lies on the surface on the parable. But it seems not unreasonable to find in our Lord's words something more than this. That moral thoroughness in the Christian life which aims at consistent obedience to Christ, succeeds in doing His word only by coming into close and trustful contact with Himself. He who would be practically a Christian, must have nothing betwixt his naked soul and the eternal Rock, Christ; for it is only as based on Him, fastened to Him, that any disciple learns to love His word, or gets strength to do it. Let us look each one to his foundation. There are so many who seem to be taking their stand for eternity on Jesus Christ; there are possibly so few whose lives are built into the Rock. So many of us hear, so few are manifestly doing, His words (James i. 22). (*J. Oswald Dykes, D.D.*) *A solid foundation*:—Yon lighthouse tower, that stands among the tumbling waves, seems to have nothing but them to rest on; yet there stately and stable it stands, beautiful in the calm, and calm in the wintry tempest, guiding the sailor on to his desired haven, past the rolling reef, through the gloom of the darkest night, and the waters of the stormiest sea. Blessed tower that with its light, piercing the gloom, shines and rises on many an eye as a star of hope. Why is it stable? You see nothing but the waves, but beneath the waves, down below the rolling, foaming, tumbling billows, its foundation is the solid rock. And what that tower is to the house on yon sand-bank, which the last storm threw up, and the next shall sweep back into the sea, Christ's righteousness is to mine—Christ's works to my best ones. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Safe on the rock*:—Mr. Moody, in his Christian Convention at Northfield, said, "We want more Christians like the Irishman who, when asked if he didn't tremble during a certain storm when he was standing out upon a rocky eminence, said, 'Yes, my legs trembled, but the rock didn't, and because my feet were on the rock I felt safe.'" *Laying hold on the rock*:—The wind had been blowing—it was a dreadful hurricane, and Gotthold walked into a forest and saw many trees torn up by the roots; he marvelled much at one tree which stood alone and yet had been unmoved in the tempest. He said, "How is this? The trees that were together have fallen, and this alone stands fast!" He observed that when the trees grow too closely they cannot send their roots into the earth; they lean too much upon each other; but this tree, standing alone, had space to thrust its roots into the earth, and lay hold on the rock and stones, and so when the wind came, it fell not. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The only firm foundation*:—Men who stand on any other foundation than the rock Christ Jesus, are like birds that build in trees by the side of rivers. The bird sings in the branches, and the river sings below, but all the while the waters are undermining the soil about the roots, till, in some unsuspected hour, the tree falls with a crash into the stream; and then its nest is sunk, its home is gone, and the bird is a wanderer. But birds that hide their young in the clefts of the rock are undisturbed, and, after every winter, coming again, they find their nest awaiting them, and all their life long brood the summer in the same places, impregnable to time or storm. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Sandy foundations*:—Recollect that all religion which is not the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart will have to be unravelled, let it be woven ever so cunningly. We may build, as our little children do on the sea-shore, our sand houses, and we may pile them up very quickly too, and be very pleased with them, but they will all come down as the tide of time advances; only that which God the Holy Ghost builds upon the foundation of Christ's finished work will stand the test of time and eternity. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *On laying foundations*:—All hearers are builders of houses for their souls: they are each one doing something to set up a spiritual habitation. Some of these go a considerable distance in this house-building, and even crown the structure by publicly confessing Christ. They say unto Him, "Lord, Lord": they meet with His followers, and join with them in reverence to the Master's name; but they do not obey the Lord; they hear Him, but they fail to do the things which He says. I. Our first subject will be A COMMON TEMPTATION WITH SPIRITUAL BUILDERS. A common temptation with hearers of the Word is to neglect foundation work, to get hurriedly over the first part of the business, and run up the building quickly. 1. This temptation is all the more dangerous, first, because these young beginners have no experience. Even the most experienced child of God is often deceived; how much more the pilgrim who has but just entered the wicket-gate! The tried saint sometimes mistakes that for a virtue which is only a gilded fault, and he fancies that to be genuine which is mere counterfeit; how, then, without any experience whatever, can the new babe in grace escape deception unless he be

graciously preserved? Newly awakened, and rendered serious, earnest hearts get to work in the Divine life with much hurry, seizing upon that which first comes to hand, building in heedless haste, without due care and examination. Something must be done, and they do it without asking whether it is according to the teaching of the Lord. They call Jesus "Lord"; but they do what others say rather than what Jesus says. 2. There is this to help the temptation, too, that this plan for the present saves a great deal of trouble. Your mind is distressed, and you want comfort; well, it will comfort you to say, "Lord, Lord," though you do not the things that Christ says. 3. This kind of building without foundation has this advantage to back up the temptation—it enables a man to run up a religion very quickly. He makes splendid progress. He takes every good thing for granted, and votes that all is gold which glitters. See how fast he goes! The fog is dense, but he steams through it, heedless of danger? He has joined the Church; he has commenced work for God; he is boasting of his own attainments; he hints that he is perfect. But is this mushroom building safe? Will it pass muster in the last great survey? When a man travels upon a wrong road, the faster he runs the further he will go astray. If you build quickly because you build without a foundation, your time and toil are thrown away. 4. How common, how deceptive, is this temptation! For the young beginner, the man who is just aroused to seek the Lord, will find a great many to help him in his mistake, should he neglect the foundation. Kind, good, Christian friends often, without a thought of doing so, help to mislead seeking souls. Let us beware lest we cry "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. 5. No doubt many are encouraged in slight building by the fact that so many professors are making a fair show, and yet their building is without foundation. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that in all Churches there are persons who have no depth of spiritual root, and we are afraid no real spiritual life. Beware of loose professors, who are as wreckers' lights that lure men upon the rocks. Make sure work for eternity, and bid triflers begone. 6. Again, there is always at the back of all this an inducement to build without a foundation because it will not be known, and possibly may not be found out for years. Foundation-work is quite out of sight, and the house can be got up and be very useful in a great many ways, and it may stand a good while without the underground work; for houses without foundations do not tumble down at once; they will stand for years; nobody knows how long they may keep up; perhaps they may even be inhabited with comfort till the last great flood. Death alone will discover some impostures. II. So I advance to the second step, and there we will consider A WISE PRECAUTION WHICH SAFE BUILDERS NEVER FORGET. They dig deep, and never rest till they get a good substantial foundation; they are glad to get to the bottom of all the loose earth and to build on the rock. Let me commend this wise precaution to all of you. 1. Follow the text, and learn to see to your sincerity. The Lord Jesus says, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" May the Holy Ghost make you true to the core. Be afraid to say a word more than you feel. 2. The next thing is thoroughness. For observe, according to our Lord, the wise builder digged deep. You cannot do a right thing too well. Dig deep if you do dig a foundation. 3. Next to that add self-renunciation; for that is in the parable. When a man digs a deep foundation he has much earth to throw out. So he that builds for eternity has a great deal to get rid of. Self-trust must go at the beginning; love of sin must follow; worldliness, pride, self-seeking, all sorts of iniquity—these must be cast aside. There is very much rubbish, and the rubbish must go. 4. Then must come solid principle. The man who is determined that if he does build he will build securely, digs down to the rock. What God has said is a rock; what man teaches is mere shifting sand. 5. These truthful principles must be firmly adhered to. Remember the huge shaft at Bradford, and how many were slain by its fall, and let it teach you to hold hard to foundation truths, and never depart from them. III. Gather from the text A SET OF ARGUMENTS, URGING US TO TAKE CARE OF THE FOUNDATION. 1. We ought to build with a good foundation at the beginning, because otherwise we shall not build well in any other part of the house. Bad work in the foundation influences all the rest of the courses. In the Revised Version, at the end of the forty-eighth verse, instead of "For it was founded upon a rock," we read, "Because it had been well builded." The house was built well at the bottom, and that led the workman to put in good work all the way up, so that all through "it had been well builded." The other man built badly underground, and did the same up to the roof. When you get into the habit of slovenly work in secret, the tendency is

to be slovenly in public too. If the underground part of our religion is not firmly laid upon Christ, then in the upper part there will be rotten work, half-baked bricks, mud instead of mortar, and a general scamping of everything. When a great Grecian artist was fashioning an image for the temple, he was diligently carving the back part of the goddess, and one said to him, "You need not finish that part of the statue, because it is to be built into the wall." He replied, "The gods can see in the wall." He had a right idea of what is due to God. That part of my religion which no man can see should be as perfect as if it were to be observed by all. The day shall declare it. When Christ shall come everything shall be made known, and published before the universe. Therefore see to it that it be fit to be thus made known. 2. See, again, that we ought to have good foundations when we look at the situation whereon the house is to be built. It is clear from this parable that both these houses were built in places not far from a river, or where streams might be expected to come. Certain parts of the South of France are marvellously like Palestine, and perhaps at the present moment they are more like what the Holy Land was in Christ's day than the Holy Land now is. When I reached Cannes last year I found that there had been a flood in the town. This flood did not come by reason of a river being swollen, but through a deluge of rain. A waterspout seems to have burst upon the hill-side, tearing up earth, and rocks, and stones, and then hurrying down to the sea. It rushed across the railway station, and poured down the street which led to it, drowning several persons in its progress. When I was there a large hotel—I should think five stories high—was shored up with timber, and was evidently doomed; for when this stream rushed down the narrow street it undermined the lower courses of the building, and as there were no foundations at all able to bear such a test, the whole erection was rendered unsafe. The Saviour had some such case in His mind's eye. A torrent of water would come tearing down the side of the mountain, and if a house was built on the mere earth, it would be carried away directly, but if it were fastened into the rock so that it became part and parcel of it, then the flood might rush all around it, but it would not shake the walls. Beloved builder of a house for your soul, your house is so situated that one of these days there must come great pressure upon it. "How do you know?" Well, I know that the house wherein my soul lives is pitched just where winds blow, and waves rise, and storms beat. Where is yours? Do you live in a snug corner? Yes, but one of these times you will find that the snug corner will be no more shielded than the open riverside; for God so orders providence that every man has his test sooner or later. 3. The next argument is, build deep, because of the ruin which will result from a bad foundation. What happened to this house without a foundation? The stream beat vehemently on it. The river's bed had long been dry, but suddenly it was flooded, and the torrent rolled with tremendous power. Perhaps it was persecution, perhaps prosperity, perhaps trouble, perhaps temptation, perhaps prevalent scepticism, perhaps death; but, anyhow, the flood beat vehemently upon that house—"and immediately it fell"! It did not stand a prolonged assault, it was captured at once. Then it is added, "And the ruin of that house was great." The house came down with a crash, and it was the man's all. The man was an eminent professor, and hence his ruin was all the more notable. For, lastly, and perhaps this will be the best argument, observe the effect of this good, sure building, this deep building. We read that when the flood beat upon the wise man's house "it could not shake it." That is very beautiful. Not only could it not carry it away, but "it could not shake it." I see the man; he lost his money and became poor, but he did not give up his faith—"It could not shake it." He was ridiculed and slandered, and many of his former friends gave him the cold shoulder, but "It could not shake it." He went to Jesus under his great trial, and he was sustained—"It could not shake it." He was very sick, and his spirit was depressed within him, but still he held his confidence in Christ—"It could not shake it." He was near to die; he knew that he must soon depart out of this world, but all the pains of death and the certainty of dissolution could not shake him. He died as he lived, firm as a rock, rejoicing as much as ever, nay, rejoicing more, because he was nearer to the kingdom and to the fruition of all his hopes. "It could not shake it." It is a grand thing to have a faith which cannot be shaken. I saw one day a number of beech trees which had formed a wood; they had all fallen to the ground through a storm. The fact was they leaned upon one another to a great extent, and the thickness of the wood prevented each tree from getting a firm hold of the soil. They kept each other up, and also constrained

each other to grow up tall and thin, to the neglect of root-growth. When the tempest forced down the first few trees the others readily followed one after the other. Close to that same spot I saw another tree in the open, bravely defying the blast, in solitary strength. The hurricane had beaten upon it, but it had endured all its force unsheltered. That lone, brave tree seemed to be better rooted than before the storm. I thought, "Is it not so with professors?" They often hold together, and help each other to grow up, but if they have not firm personal roothold, when a storm arises they fall in rows. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The two builders*:—1. We are here admonished of the duty, and vast importance, of what has been called "building for eternity"; that is, attending to the salvation of our souls. Every one is building, labouring corporeally and materially, or speculating mentally, in one way or another. Some are engaged with great schemes; and some, who have neither substance nor strength to expend on great works, are nevertheless as deeply engaged as those who have. How many, however, are building, as we may say, only for this world! Their schemes terminate here. But "he builds too low, who builds beneath the skies." To have a hope for heaven ought to be the great object with us all. This is the one thing needful. 2. Every wise man will be careful to found well—"on the rock." Some even proceed on religion so much at random that they have never thought of any determinate principles; they cannot tell what their foundation is; in fact, they have no foundation at all—they are, spiritually, building castles in the air. It is not so, however, with the wise builder; he is not so easily satisfied. And, as in the literal case of a building, so in the spiritual case under consideration, two things are necessary to be attended to in laying the foundation—the one is, that the builder know what is a sufficient foundation; and the other is, that he do actually cause his building to rest upon it. An error with respect to either of these things is fatal. God has laid the foundation, and we must build upon it. A Saviour is offered, and we must accept Him. 3. The wise do not neglect the superstructure because they have a good foundation. Rather, the knowledge that he has begun well is an encouragement for him to go on well—with confidence and with care. 4. In the time of trial, the hope of the true Christian, like the house of the wise builder, will stand; while the hope of the hypocrite and the formalist, like the house of the foolish builder, will be overthrown. When the great day of wrath is come, then it will be seen who shall be able to stand. God will set His own people's feet on a rock, and will establish their goings. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *The rock and the sand*:—Last April, on the same morning I set my eyes on the island of Corsica where Napoleon I. was born, and on the island of Elba on which he was confined as a discomfited prisoner—the coming shadows of Waterloo hung over his bleak exile. The next day I saw the spot where another famous prisoner landed on his way to Rome, and where he "thanked God and took courage." Napoleon's boasted "rock" of imperial power proved to be but a fog-bank. What a contrast between the defeated and disappointed exile of Elba, and the glorious old prisoner of Cæsar who sang triumphantly in his cell: "I have fought a good fight! Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day!" The French Emperor's crown was a lost bauble; the apostle's diadem will blaze with stars through all eternity. There is no sharper contrast in all history between the wisdom of building on the rock and the fatal folly of building on the quicksand. Yet, on a smaller scale, tens of thousands among us are constantly repeating this folly. One man rears his expectations upon wealth. This is his foundation on which he will build up solid happiness for himself and his family. He means to be happy in making money, happy in holding it, and happy in all the social *éclat* and luxuries which it will purchase for him. "Other men don't know how to keep money or to enjoy it; but I mean to enjoy mine." He calls it *mine*—not the Lord's; and he does not mean that the Lord shall have it. Ere long the coveted riches take wing, like a swallow, and fly away. Even if he holds on to them, they do not give the happiness he dreamed of; they do not fill up the gnawing emptiness of his soul. They do not bring quiet sleep or a contented conscience; his Government bonds cannot stop the heartache. Gold, unless used for God, makes a hard dying pillow. When the richest American of his day was in his last fatal sickness, a Christian friend proposed to sing for him; and the hymn he named was "Come, ye sinners, poor and needy." "Yes, yes," replied the dying millionaire, "sing that for me, I feel poor and needy." Yet at that moment the stock-markets of the globe were watching and waiting for the demise of the man who could shake them with a nod of

his head. "Poor and needy!" How the sand sweeps from under a man's soul in such an hour as that! Literary fame is no solider a footing for an immortal being's happiness than wealth. There is hardly a sadder verse in the English language than that which the brilliant Byron addressed to his own weary and wretched soul—

"Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen;
Count o'er thy days from anguish free;
And know—whatever thou hast been,
'Tis something better—not to be!"

What a fearful thought that a human soul, in the very height of its coveted intellectual renown, should seek a refuge for its misery in utter annihilation! Last year a poverty-stricken invalid in Brooklyn, who sustained her helpless husband and only child by her needle, made her little dingy home bright as sunshine by her brave, cheerful trust in God. Her daily song was, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock." In many a hut of poverty, where faith eats its scanty loaf and gives thanks for it; from many a room of sickness, where Jesus has cheered the long wakeful nights; over many a casket in which a darling child was sleeping in its last slumber, has the believer's testimony come forth clear and strong: "I know whom I have believed; He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day." God never intended that we should have more than one rock. All else is quicksand. When we take His inspired Word for our guide, embrace Christ as our Saviour, rest on His atonement for pardon and His grace for support, then are we "founded on a rock." A solid character for this life and a solid hope for eternity can be built on this sure foundation. Christ really underlies a genuine Christian as the everlasting mass of Moriah's rock-bed underlay the ancient temple of Jerusalem. Those only are the solid, reliable, and enduring members in our various Churches, who have Christ embedded in the very depths of their hearts. Such never fall away under the stress of strong temptations. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *Deep life:*—I. THE LIFE WHICH IS SIMPLY A SURFACE LIFE. Not exactly what we call a wicked life, but a vain, thoughtless, shallow life. An animal life, finding pleasure only in the senses; a childish life, occupied only with trifles; a life in which there is no deep thought, feeling, conviction, purpose. One would think it almost impossible to lead such a life. The Spirit of God within us is ever seeking to awaken solemn and holy thoughts. And this is truly a thought-provoking world. Many will scarcely suffer a large thought, a serious thought. They dwell on the most exterior surfaces, and their little-mindedness is seen in everything, felt in everything. Mark their pleasures. Consider their reading—the emptiest, silliest trash. Listen to their conversation—chaff which the wind driveth away. And all their aims in life are unspeakably contemptible. Better be the desolate tree on the naked heath bowed by the storm, stripped by the storm, if it only give us depth of life, than the green bay-tree rooted only in the sod. We may be thankful for anything that knocks the toys out of our hands, that stops our idiot joy, and drives us inward, downward, to the reality of things and the grand purpose of existence. Notice again—II. THE LIFE WHICH DIPS BELOW THE SURFACE AND YET DOES NOT REACH THE DEPTHS. Many men consider themselves as serious, deep-souled men who are not really so. There is an iron pillar at Delhi, a very ancient column, and the Hindus believed that its roots were in the centre of the earth, but the profane European took to digging and found its foundation only twenty inches below the surface. And so many among us fancy their life rooted in the centre of things when a little examination would show them they have only dipped below the surface. There is an intellectual life which goes beneath the surface, but not to the depths. Thinking men, full of intellectual power and penetration, but who concern themselves only with the universe that passes away, are of this order. One would think the scientific men who sound the depths of the ocean or the star-depths of the heaven, had gone deep, but in truth, with all their parade of dredges, telescopes, spectroscopes, they have gone but twenty inches below the surface who miss the Almighty Spirit, of whom are all things, by whom are all things, to whom are all things. There is a moral life which goes below the surface, and yet fails to grasp the depths. A morality which finds its origin, its reasons, its sanctions, its inspirations, its compensations altogether within human society and temporal interests, is but rooted in the sand. There is a religious life which sinks below the surface without sounding the depths. The Pharisees failed

here—they thought the pillar on which they leaned had its roots in the centre of the world, but Christ made them understand that proud ancient pillar of theirs was only twenty inches in the sand. III. THE LIFE WHICH DIGS DEEP AND RESTS ON A ROCK. The Word of God assures us that there is rock. The universe is not a theatre of dissolving views, itself a dissolving view. There is an Eternal Being. There is an Eternal World. "A city that hath foundations"—a realm of infinite endless perfection and blessedness. There is an Eternal Righteousness. There is an Eternal Life. He only digs deep who gets down to these central realities. 1. Only in this deeper life do we find true satisfaction. Men think sometimes, I know, that a deeper life means much of strife, of sorrow, of sadness; and so it does. But, you must remember, out of those depths breaks forth the sunshine, out of those depths breaks forth the music. You will never find true light, harmony, joy, until you reach the depths of self-despair, until you live the life of thought, contrition, prayer, humility, reverence. 2. Only as we live this deeper life does our character acquire strength and fulness. The superficial Pharisee was ever working at the outside of character; Christ showed them more radical work was wanted; they must go to the depths of life. And this is the teaching of the Epistles. Our modern gardeners think far less of pruning the branches of trees than the old husbandmen used to think; the gardeners of to-day are persuaded that the tree must be treated in its roots. 3. Only as we live this deeper life is our joy assured for ever. The teaching of our Lord in this parable is that, whatever in character, joy, hope, is not based on the deepest life, life in Himself, must be overthrown. As most of you know, in connection with the principal palace at Babylon was the remarkable construction known to the Greeks as "the Hanging Garden." Several tiers of arches formed an artificial imitation of a mountain, and on the top of this structure was a mass of earth on which grew flowers, and shrubs, and trees. Where are these artificial elevations now? Gone, gone long ago, shaken to the earth, buried in the ditch. Now all around us you see the glory, the joy, the hope of men resting like the "Hanging Gardens" of Babylon on quite an artificial basis, and any slight accident brings the whole fabric to the ground. A sickness, a death, any one of a thousand changes wrecks the treasure and pride of life. But the natural gardens of Babylon which rested on the granite pillars of the earth bloom to-day as they ever did—the grass as green, the blossoms as sweet, the trees as magnificent. So it is when we build on Christ, and find our strength and felicity and hope in Him.

> "What can our foundations shock?
> Though the shattered earth remove,
> Stands our city on a rock,
> On the rock of heavenly Love."

Live below the senses, live above society, live beyond time, get to the root-truths that are in Christ, nay, get to Christ Himself, the root-truth, and your life shall be full of energy, freedom, brightness, fruitfulness, blessing, and you shall bloom for ever in the paradise of God. (*W. L. Watkinson.*) *The two principles of life*:—It is here indicated by our Lord that every one must live his life on some principle or plan; and He plainly states the utter ruin of any life which hears the Word of God, and does not act accordingly. I. Apply it first TO THE CONSCIOUS ACTION OF MEN UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT. To build without foundation is to put off, make only some slight resolution for good, go on the old way, only with a little more earnestness, or choosing the easiest way of religion as a salve to the conscience. II. THE WARNINGS THAT COME GENERALLY LATER IN LIFE. III. THE WAY OF DEALING WITH SORROW FOR SIN. Two kinds. 1. The sorrow of the world—mere regret: hopes to do better; time will bring relief. 2. Godly sorrow, real repentance—going to the very root of the matter; content with nothing but laying bare the whole heart to God; probing to the very centre the wounds of nature, in spite of pain and discomfort; determined at any cost to get rid of all corruption and its cause. The result of this is true healing and benefit. Conclusion: The great lesson is one of thoroughness and heartiness in all our life; no more trifling; no resting satisfied with partial relief—the pleasant weather for the present, without any thought of the storms that may be coming. (*George Low, M.A.*) *Doing and dreaming*:—Now, in the course of my travels, I have met with three distinct dreamers. I. There is the rationalistic dreamer. He beholds his face in a glass, and stands before it, admiring it. To him religion is a system of ideas, and no idea represents reality. His religion is "a face in the glass," or an unsubstantial "house

on the sand." II. There is the sentimental dreamer. He will talk to you for hours of the presence of God in nature. A house of sentiment is the last place I should fly to, to shelter me from the storm. III. There is the pietistic dreamer. There is a form of church-going piety which does not influence daily conduct; people whose religion is an impersonated sigh. 1. The religion of the dreamer is a religion of theory. The religion of the doer is one of experience. 2. The religion of the dreamer will always be one of doubt. The religion of the doer will always be a religion of evidence. This follows the last remark, because doing leads to knowing. 3. Hence, let me say, the dreamer confines his religion to solitude; the doer finds a vent for his in society. Religion comforts solitude, and consoles it; it does not encourage the spirit of it. If we are to enter the solitude, it is that we may collect the moral forces of our nature, and come forth, inspired by the Divine Spirit, to cry aloud, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." 4. The religion of the dreamer is a religion without love. But the life of the doer is love. Our love, in fact, is proportioned to our labours—our labour proportions our love. Love is the fountain of all true knowledge. Every man understands more by his affections than by his reason. 5. And there is, finally, no salvation for the dreamer. Come, let us walk along the sands, and see the houses they build there; these are the buildings of which the apostle spoke, "wood, hay, and stubble"; these are the buildings which will not stand either the flood or the fire; these are the buildings reared by the religious dreamers, whose houses are unsubstantial as the palaces in the clouds. Here is the house of wood—the building reared out of notions of natural amiability and goodness, a religion of politeness and native grace: in this house the inhabitants will talk to you of God, and of worshipping God, but you will hear nothing of God in Christ, nothing of the love of the Father for a lost world. The Unitarian builds his edifice from such material, and thus all those buildings rise which leave out of view the supernatural in the ruin and recovery of man. How unsubstantial! there is not one brick of all the building made from "these sayings of Mine," and here "the flood will come and sweep them all away." Let us walk further along the sands. Here is a house, strangely built of hay; of rhetoric, and philosophy, and superstitious notions; and sometimes, when the ice hangs its pendulets on the absurd, grotesque building, and the sun shines in its cold wintry ray, it seems an uncouth but glittering cave upon the sand: within, the inhabitants have so many pretty sentiments about religion, and so many brilliant sayings, and so many deep and philosophical views, and strange pretences glide to and fro through the heavy chambers, and even the neighbourhood to the awful sea makes the building sometimes seem so safe for shelter; but in the incongruous building nothing is reared from "these sayings of Mine," and the "flood will come and sweep them all away." Now, come, I will carry you to two death-beds; for they die in the castle on the rock and in the palace on the sand. Ah! how fine it looks! By the two death-beds you may hear the two confessions. I draw the curtain in the palace: let us hear. "How are you; are you happy?" "Well, I am easy." "What are your foundations?" "Well, Lord, Thou knowest I have had some very pretty notions in religion. I have usually gone to church once a day. I was certainly away frequently on account of our dinner-parties; but I am sure God won't be strict. On the whole, I am happy! I have ever tried to pay everybody their own, twenty shillings in the pound—and God is love." Now step into the poor room on the Rock. "How do you feel?" "I feel happy, but only by taking hold on Christ. Lord, I feel I am a poor creature, but I come to Thee through Christ; and I can only cry, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy, Mercy." Hark! the rain is on the roof; what a tempest. Oh that cry—The Flood! the Flood! the Flood! Yes; the rain descends, and the flood comes, and the winds blow and beat; behold yonder the advancing floods; and see yonder the drifting soul on the broken spar. What is the hope of the hypocrite, when God shall take away his soul? Yonder they drift away. Hark! it is a voice of singing from the eternal Rock, a strain from the heights of the strong foundations. (*E. P. Hood.*) *Designing the house not enough*:—It is not enough to have gotten an abstracted mathematical scheme, or diagram, of this spiritual building in our brain; it is the mechanical labouring part of religion, that must make up the edifice, the work, and toil, and sweat of the soul, the business not of the designer, but the carpenter; that, which takes the rough unpolished, though excellent, materials, and trims and fits them for use; which cuts and polishes the rich but, as yet, deformed jewels of the soul, and makes them shine indeed, and sparkle, like stars in the firmament. . . . The divinity and learning of these times floats and hovers too much in the brain, hath not either weight or sobriety enough

in it, to sink down and settle in the heart. (*Dr. Hammond.*) *Digging deep*:—Inasmuch as it is said that the wise builder "digged deep," let us remember that God is not to be found on the surface. (*Gregory.*) *Insecure foundations*:—There is a twice-told tale about Julian the apostate: how in youth he essayed to raise a memorial shrine to the holy Mamas; but as he built, the earth at the foundations crumbled; for God and His holy martyr deigned not to accept the labour and offering of his hands. It is an allegory of men who toil and build on rotten and insecure foundations. *Neglecting the foundation*:—On the corner of one of the busiest streets of a certain town, there is a large brick building with stone finishings and no little display of fancy work, both on cornice and corners. It looks well at a distance. Closer inspection, however, shows that this building is sadly disfigured with ugly cracks and misshapen walls, and the whole structure is in danger of tumbling down. On investigation it was discovered that the cause of all this was the bad foundation put under the building by an inefficient and dishonest contractor. He had employed cheap workmen and put in cheap material, because the foundation being out of sight, he thought no one would ever see it, and it would make no difference. *Two kinds of foundations*:—Two young fishermen came to the water-side to live, and to try their luck in a new home. Now, here they were very successful, and soon had a ready sale for all they caught in the village beyond the hill. "Now, we will each build a hut for ourselves, for this is a good place, and here we will each bring a wife, and have a home." "That is a good thought," replied Simplex; "here is a fine stretch of beach, and we shall have no trouble in drawing stones and timber, and making comfortable dwellings at small cost and labour." "Oh, no," answered Prudens; the storms and winds and waves will come and sweep away our houses. Look yonder among that grass there; up beyond are some rocks. They will make a fine foundation, and we need fear nothing." "Oh, you foolish Prudens, to give yourself so much trouble! The season of storms is past; the beautiful days are coming; and how will you climb up among those rocks when you are worn out and tired? See how easy it will be to run up a house here, and then to sit, after our day's work is over, and gaze out upon the water, and see that no one molests our boats or nets." "Well, brother, storms may come even during the beautiful days, and I shall build up yonder on the rocks." So each man built during the next few weeks each a neat little hut, and I must confess that Prudens' was not nearly so pretty as Simplex's, because it was much harder for Prudens to draw his materials away up the rocks, and to plan so that the foundations should be firm, and the windows protected. But in time both houses were complete, and in each a pretty little wife kept the home in good order, and the men were well content with their plans. But one night there were signs of a change of weather. The waters sighed and moaned and groaned and muttered as if they were angry, and the men hastened to make all secure, for, said they, "the waves are coming and the tide is rising." Prudens went to Simplex to beg that he and his wife would come up to his house, lest haply the waters should come over the beach. Simplex laughed at the fears of his friend; but the wife was timid, and she persuaded her husband just for one night to accept the invitation. "You will smile at your fears in the morning, Gretchen dear, but for your sake I will go—what can harm our home except a few dashes of salt water? You are not much of a sailor's wife." Then they went, and the fearful storm came, and the wind rose and beat away the nets and the boats. The women could not sleep, and, when the morning broke, they hastened to see what had happened in the night. They looked first towards the cottage of Simplex. There was no cottage there, but timbers and a heap of stones and a low wall, and the beach strewn with the wreck of the house. Gretchen began to cry, but Simplex dared not look at Prudens. Safe on the rocks, his house had stood out the storm. "Alas, my brother, why did I not heed your advice? I built on the sand, and my house has fallen. Yours stood because founded on a rock." This story is a parable. Who will tell what it means, and from what part of Scripture it is taken?

CHAPTER VII.

VERS. 1–10. **And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.**—*The centurion and his servant* :—A Roman soldier, a stern, unbending man, accustomed to be obeyed absolutely; accustomed to oppress a downtrodden, conquered race, no one daring to raise a murmur; a heathen, too, a man whose religion was odious and contemptible, a man, therefore, without real power over his actions, the creature of caprice: such, at least by instinct and education, must the good centurion have been. Yet the grace of God is well-nigh irresistible, it triumphs against desperate odds. At first he has nothing but contempt for a religion which, good in itself, was made almost insufferable by its priests and professors. As he looks deeper down; as he begins to think; takes the trouble to examine this old creed, at first it may be with a sort of antiquarian interest, then with growing curiosity, then with an honest desire to learn; God teaches him, the Holy Spirit enlightens his heart, and he begins to love the nation whom he had been sent to trample upon rather than to rule. So between this rough soldier and his neighbour there sprang up mutual confidence, even love; at last, so drawn was he towards the people of God, that with boundless generosity he built the men of Capernaum a synagogue. Nor was this soldier's love only to the inhabitants of Capernaum; his servant, a poor slave, a youth stolen from home and friends, expecting only cruelty and stripes, "was dear unto him," and he lay at home sick and ready to die. 1. The wisdom of accepting God's plan of life as the one by which we can most glorify Him. Who does not often wish that his place in life had been quite differently cast? If we only had had more money, leisure, scope for talents, friends, what could we not have done for God, what might not God have accomplished in us? See the correction of this foolishness in the saintly centurion's history. A heathen soldier mixing with men whose actions, however brave they might be, were always cruel and hard, living amongst companions coarse and low, where passion was unbridled, pity unknown; a man sent to serve in despised Galilee, amongst a nation utterly degraded, hopelessly vile; his headquarters one of the most corrupt cities of that land of darkness; how could circumstances be *apparently* more against him? Yet what seemed hindrances, he turned into helps. If he had not been in the Roman army he had never seen Capernaum; if he had not been quartered near Capernaum, he had never built a synagogue; but for his sorrow he would never have had personal intercourse with the Lord of Life; but for his great need he would never have won so gracious a benediction from God's Son. So is it with every one born of woman. Where our lot is cast, what our circumstances may be—all this is God's plan. Therefore it follows, they are the best circumstances conceivable, by which we may mount to Him. Shun discontent. Ourselves, not our circumstances, are our hindrances. 2. There is another line of thought suggested by the relationship which existed between this master and those whom God had placed in his home—"his servant was dear unto him." It is difficult for us to realize the strangeness of the situation. Christianity has taught men pity, tenderness, sympathy for weakness and suffering, yet this centurion was not even a Jew. Somehow the tender heart of this valiant soldier, illuminated by the light of conscience, taught him that his slave lad was brought into his home, in order that he might lift him out of the lower depths of degradation, succour and help him in his need. How clear the lesson to a Christian, to a soldier of the cross. Are we not taught the strange responsibility which is placed on each as, in turn, he becomes a master or a messenger, as parents or teachers—immediately, that is, God gives us any authority? Home, the centre of Christian influence, home, the place where servants, children, guests, are all brought together for this end alone, that by love those in authority may win those over whom they are set, and so God may win them too; this, indeed, is the lesson of the good centurion's action. (*T. B. Dover, M.A.*) *The centurion's faith* :—Notice some of the lessons, naturally lessons touching faith, which this passage is designed to teach. I. We learn that GREAT SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGES ARE NOT ALWAYS NECESSARY TO GREAT FAITH. Let us never despair of truth-sowing, in waste and unlikely places. The so-called rose of Jericho drops its dried-up germ on the parched desert sand. But God's mind does not leave it to perish. Swept hither and thither, it finds at last its oasis, some hidden spot of moisture, and there it abides and sprouts, and becomes again a thing of life and beauty. A drifting cocoa-nut, cast by the surf ashore upon some barren limestone reef, seems in itself

the very image of failure and utter loss. But see! this apparent waif, under the watchful eye of Providence, becomes the beginning of an earthly paradise. It is faith in sowing that brings the harvest of faith (Eccles. xi. 6). II. It is more than hinted, further, that GREAT FAITH IS MOST LIKELY TO BE FOUND IN CONNECTION WITH A NOBLE NATURE. Equity, generosity, sympathy, humility, such traits were prominent here, and they made room for the working of great faith in Christ. Faith is something that has to do with ideas, and hence holds mere things cheap. It is not so much what they achieve as what they believe in and strive for that makes men noble and great. "What I admire," said Turgot, "in Christopher Columbus, is not that he discovered the New World, but that he went to look for it on the faith of an idea." III. Again, GREAT FAITH HERE, AS ALWAYS, IS ACCOMPANIED BY A SENSE OF GREAT NEED. IV. Further, it follows also from what has just been said, that GREAT FAITH IS ACCOMPANIED ALSO BY GREAT HUMILITY. Its sublimest flights, like those of the birds, are always preceded by a settling low down. There are some beautiful plants whose leaves grow even smaller as the plant grows higher. V. Still again, THE GREAT FAITH OF THE CENTURION WAS NO UNREASONING FAITH. A great deal is said about believing blindly. And there are times when a simple trust is all that is left us; but generally speaking, we may reason from the seen to the unseen, from ourselves and our finite circumstances to God and His unlimited might. Faith is not blind, except to trifles. It sees! It sees more, not less. It sees with new light and new powers. This earth of ours is but a simple birthplace, a nest of sticks and mud on the swinging bough. It is the point of departure, not the place of rest, and the man of faith has realized this in some degree. He has looked over its borders into the unsounded depths. He has gazed on the immeasurable vault. He has the evidence of things unseen. He knows that though "the steps of faith fall on a seeming void, they find the Rock beneath." VI. It is interesting to notice, in the next place, THE KIND OF MORAL TRAINING THAT SEEMS TO FIT ONE FOR THE EXERCISE OF GREAT FAITH. 1. Obedience. Our centurion, as a soldier, had learned to submit his will, to obey. But it is still better to learn obedience in the family than in the army. A loving, filial obedience towards Christian parents is of all earthly things the nearest to that service which our heavenly Father claims from us. 2. Liberality. Our centurion was a generous giver, too. There is a really potent moral discipline in giving. Just as the largest ships only venture into the deepest harbours, so it is safe to expect that the Divine blessing—especially an all-conquering faith, one of the greatest—will only there come richest and fullest where the sluices are held widest open, through a noble, perpetual outgush of kindly feeling and generous doing towards one's fellow-men. VII. GREAT FAITH DOES NOT LIFT ONE OUT OF THE REACH OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER ON THE PART OF THOSE HAVING LESS. VIII. GREAT FAITH IS ABLE TO BEAR WITHOUT PERIL GREAT BLESSINGS. Ships that are well ballasted you may load high, and they will not careen or refuse to mind the rudder. IX. WHETHER FAITH BE GREAT OR SMALL, IT IS THE SAME THING IN ESSENCE, AND INEXPRESSIBLY WELL-PLEASING TO OUR LORD. The principal thing is to have some faith, though it be little. It is that which brings us into the blessed circle of the beneficiaries of Jesus, while the want of it shuts us wholly out. Men have had it who had little else that was good, who had, in fact, much else that was bad, and yet, because they had it, were enrolled among the heroes of God's shining host. (*Edwin C. Bissell.*) *Kindness to inferiors:*—Xenocrates, though a heathen, was pitiful to a poor sparrow, which, being pursued by a hawk, fled to him for succour. He sheltered her until the enemy had flown off, and then, letting her go, said that he had not betrayed his poor suppliant. A Christian should have more pity for a distressed Christian than a heathen has for a bird. A master should be a physician to his servants; as careful to preserve their health and prevent their death, as to provide them work. Another heathen told his wife that it was part of her office, and the most grateful part of it, in case a servant fell sick, to tend him and promote his recovery. This centurion, though a soldier (and their hearts usually are more obdurate and less compassionate than others), was earnest and diligent for the help of his sick servant. (*G. Swinnock.*) *The increase of faith:*—I. FAITH IS THE CONDITION OF THE EXERCISE OF GOD'S POWER UPON US—a condition, let it ever be borne in mind, of God's own making, and springing wholly out of God's own wisdom and love to us. For, I ask, What is faith? and I reply that, speaking generally, faith is sympathy with God—it is the receptive attitude of the soul—it is the laying open of the whole being to the influence of God. If I would keep the tender flower from the frost, I must cover it up and wrap it round to shut out the icy touch that would freeze

up its life. But would I quicken it with the sun I must take away all barriers and let its blessed rays stream in. Unbelief covers up and closes the soul: faith opens it to the sunshine. II. FAITH IS THE MEASURE OF GOD'S GIFTS TO US. The gifts are proportioned to our fitness and our power to receive them. There are partial gifts for partial faith; fuller gifts for fuller faith. To recur to my former illustration, the measure in which the sun streams into a chamber depends on the degree in which all impediments are removed from its entrance. The limit is not in the glorious orb, but in that which receives it. It will enter wherever it can, though it be but through a broken link. Throw wide open the broad shutters, and how it will stream in, till every object becomes beautiful in its rays! If we would have more faith, we must cultivate it; and I will tell you how. 1. There must be conscious desire in your minds for more faith—not a general wish for more grace in a vague and unmeaning way, but a deep sense of your need of a fuller trust in God and an earnest desire for it. 2. Try to exercise faith. The gift, indeed, is all of God; but He works through the human effort. Not the listless idle soul, that folds its hands and takes its ease in Zion, will ever get close to God, but the soul that presses on and up, and, in our Lord's vivid language, "takes heaven by violence." 3. To assist you in this effort, endeavour to watch and study the dealings of God with you, like one who expects to see God everywhere. Be not like the man who saunters along the road, not caring or thinking whom he shall meet; but like one who is looking out for a friend, and watches on every side to see him. Think of God as a real being, and both in the answers to your prayers and in the details of your life, try to trace His providence. 4. Let us dwell much upon the promises; let us live in them and on them, making them the habitual atmosphere of our religious life. (*E. Garbett, M.A.*) *The centurion of Capernaum*:—I. There are three aspects in which this "centurion of Capernaum" commands our attention; as a MAN, as an OFFICIAL, and as a PROSELYTE. His attraction is thus PERSONAL, POLITICAL, and RELIGIOUS. 1. The personal interest that attaches to him. 2. His political interest, or official significance. As an officer of Rome, the representative of Roman power at a Jewish Court, he draws our notice to himself. The Jew is the world's representative Religionist; the Greek its representative Thinker; but the Roman its representative Ruler. He is the typical warrior and administrator. Her own greatest poet put into the prophetic mouth of Anchises in the nether world this description of her mission:—"Others, I grant, shall with more delicacy mould the breathing brass; from marble draw the features to the life; describe with the rod the courses of the rising stars. To rule the nations with imperial sway, be your care, O Romans; these shall be thine arts—to impose terms of peace, to spare the humble, and to crush the proud." When the Word of God became Incarnate He entered into a world politically prepared for His Advent after a fashion not less perfect for the purpose designed than strange because of the means by which it had been wrought. Of this preparation Rome was the instrument; and of Rome her officer at Capernaum is a representative. Is there not, then, about him, as an official, a deep political significance and interest? 3. His interest as a Proselyte, This term, "Proselyte," leads me to call attention to a function of the Jewish Prophets in Messianic preparation, not always adequately measured by us in our estimate of them as divinely ordained to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Joel thrills him; Jeremiah melts him; Ezekiel elevates him; Isaiah entrances him. The Greek Philosophy, which formed the polite study of every educated Roman, had taught him to look beneath the surface and to gather the truths unseen by the vulgar eye, to see substance under shadow, reality under form, and the truth typified under the typifying symbol. He is thus prepared to pierce beneath the rites and sacrifices to that to which they pointed and which they forecasted. II. His action, in circumstances which to many men in his station would have been trivial, reveals a new beauty in his character, and demands from us a new admiration. His servant—"dear to him" in a personal way, as one bound to him by personal links, and not merely, as were his soldiers, by official relations—"was sick and ready to die." The manifestation of a noble nature was grateful to the Son of Man. His Divine Humanity rejoiced as the flower of faith blossomed in the hearts of those He loved. (*G. M. Grout, B.D.*) *The centurion; or, an exhortation to the virtuous*:—This centurion certainly had a high reputation. Two features of character blend in him which do not often meet in such graceful harmony. He won the high opinion of others, and yet he held a low estimation of himself. 1. To begin, then, here is a HIGH CHARACTER; let us thoroughly appreciate it, and give it a full measure of commendation. This

centurion must have been a man of sterling worth. He was not merely quiet and inoffensive like some men who are as insipid as they are harmless. It would appear, too, that his private temperament, as well as his public spirit, contributed to the estimation in which he was held. Next to this, you will observe his generosity. It is not by occasional deeds of showy lustre, but by the habitual practice of comely virtues, that a worthy character is built up. A thousand kindnesses may be nestling beneath the soil, like the many-fibred root of a gigantic tree, when it is said, "He loveth our nation"; and then the conspicuous fruit appears in its season—"He hath built us a synagogue." But, remember, and here I close this point, however good your character, or however excellent your repute, not one word of this is ever to be mentioned before the throne of the Most High. II. Secondly, in the centurion we see coupled with this high and noble repute, DEEP HUMILIATION OF SOUL—"I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof." Humility, then, it appears, may exist in any condition. There are some men who are too mean to be humble. They are too crouching, crawling, sneakish, and abject to be humble. It certainly is not for the least vermin that creep the earth to talk about humility. But a man to be humble, needs to have a soul; to stoop, you must have some elevation to stoop from; you must have some real excellence within you before you can really understand what it is to renounce merit. We have heard of a certain monk, who, professing to be humble, said "he had broken all God's commandments; he was the greatest sinner in the world; he was as bad as Judas." Somebody said, "Why tell us that? we have all of us thought that a long time!" Straightway the holy man grew red in the face, and smote the accuser, and asked him what he had ever done to deserve such a speech. III. The main thing I am aiming at, because, after all, the most practical, lies in my third point. However deep our humility, however conscious we may be of our own undeservingness, WE SHOULD NEVER DIMINISH OUR FAITH IN GOD. Observe the confession—"I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof." What then will be the inference?—"I fear, therefore, my servant will not be healed"? No, no; but—"Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." It is all a mistake that great faith implies pride. Beloved, the greater faith, the deeper humility. The more the glories of God strike your eyes, the humbler you will lie in conscious abasement, but yet the higher you will rise in importunate prayer. But now just imagine what your own case is, and the case of others, and let us apply this principle to it: we are utterly unworthy to obtain the temporal or spiritual mercy which, it may be, we are now seeking: we may feel this, but in asking anything for ourselves, we must still ask in faith in God, in His promise, and in His grace; and we shall prevail. Whatever thy desire may be, only believe, and it shall be granted unto thee if it be a desire in accordance with His will, and in accordance with the promises of His Word; or else God's Word is not true. Be humble about it, but do not be doubtful about it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The centurion's faith and humility*:—The greatest light may enter into the darkest places. We may find the choicest flowers blooming where we least expected them. Here was a Gentile, a Roman, a soldier—a soldier clothed with absolute power—and yet a tender master, a considerate citizen, a lover of God! The best of pearls have been found in the darkest caves of ocean. Let no man think that because of his position in society he cannot excel in virtue. It is not the place which is to blame, but the man. I. THE HUMILITY OF THE CENTURION WAS NOT AT ALL INJURIOUS TO THE STRENGTH OF HIS FAITH. You may have noticed in the biography of some eminent men how badly they speak of themselves. Southey, in his "Life of Bunyan," seems at a difficulty to understand how Bunyan could have used such depreciating language concerning his own character. For it is true, according to all we know of his biography, that he was not, except in the case of profane swearing, at all so bad as the most of the villagers. Indeed, there were some virtues in the man which were worthy of all commendation. Southey attributes it to a morbid state of mind, but we rather ascribe it to a return of spiritual health. Had the excellent poet seen himself in the same heavenly light as that in which Bunyan saw himself, he would have discovered that Bunyan did not exaggerate, but was simply stating as far as he could a truth which utterly surpassed his powers of utterance. The great light which shone around Saul of Tarsus was the outward type of that inner light above the brightness of the sun which flashes into a regenerate soul, and reveals the horrible character of the sin which dwells within. Believe me, when you hear Christians making abject confessions, it is not that they are worse than others, but that they see themselves in a clearer light than others; and this centurion's unworthiness was not because

he had been more vicious than other men—on the contrary, he had evidently been much more virtuous than the common run of mankind—but because he saw what others did not see, and felt what others had not felt. Deep as was this man's contrition, overwhelming as was his sense of utter worthlessness, he did not doubt for a moment either the power or the willingness of Christ. II. I shall want you for a moment to attend while we shift the text to the other quarter. THE CENTURION'S GREAT FAITH WAS NOT AT ALL HOSTILE TO HIS HUMILITY. His faith was extraordinary. It ought not to be extraordinary. We ought all of us to believe as well in Christ as this soldier did. In his heart he enthroned the Lord Jesus as a Captain over all the forces of the world, as the generalissimo of heaven and earth; as, in fact, the Cæsar, the imperial Governor of all the forces of the universe. 'Twas graciously thought, 'twas poetically embodied, 'twas nobly spoken, 'twas gloriously believed; but it was the truth and nothing more than the truth, for universal dominion is really in the power of Jesus to-day. Here is one point to which I recall you; this man's faith did not for a moment interfere with his thorough personal humiliation. Because Christ was so great, he felt himself to be unworthy either to meet Him or entertain Him. The application shall be to three sorts of people. 1. First, we speak to distressed minds deeply conscious of their unworthiness. You feel that you cannot repent, but cannot Jesus make thee repent by His Spirit? Do you hesitate about that question? See the world a few months ago hard bound with frost, but how daffodil, and crocus, and snowdrop, have come up above that once frozen soil, how snow and ice have gone, and the genial sun shines out? God does it readily, with the soft breath of the south wind and the kind sunbeams, and he can do the same in the spiritual world for thee. But, perhaps, it is some bad habit which gives you trouble. You cannot get rid of it. Ah! I know your dreads and despairs; but, man, I ask thee, cannot Jesus deliver? He whose every act is wonderful, can surely do what He will within this little world of thy soul, since in the great world outside He rules as He pleases. Believe in His power, and ask Him to prove it. He has but to say in a word, and this matter of present distress shall be taken away. 2. A second application of our subject shall be made to the patient workers who are ready to faint. The last application I shall make is the same as the second, only on a wider scale. 3. There are many who are like watchers who have grown weary. When He saith, "Do" it shall be done, and His name shall be praised. O for more faith and more self-abasement. (*Ibid.*) *Motives of humility*:—I. THE FRUITS OF HUMILITY. 1. Humility keeps us from many sins. 2. Humility preserves the other virtues. 3. Humility attracts Divine grace (James iv. 6). 4. Humility inflames the heart with Divine charity. 5. Humility exalts us to the height of heaven (Luke i. 52, xviii. 14; 1 Peter v. 6). II. THE TEACHING AND EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST. Jesus has enjoined on us this duty—1. By words (Matt. xi. 29). 2. By example. (1) In His birth. (2) In His circumcision. (3) In washing the disciples' feet. (4) In His death on the cross. III. OUR OWN MISERY. 1. We find motives in the outer world. (1) If you look at the earth, you behold your grave. (2) Beneath the earth, you find hell. (3) In heaven is God, and the gate of heaven is low. 2. Motives within ourselves. (1) Concerning our body. (2) Concerning our soul. (*Laselve.*) *Of humility*:—He that would build lastingly must lay his foundation low. The proud man, like the early shoots of a new-felled coppice, thrusts out full of sap, green in leaves, and fresh in colour; but bruises and breaks with every wind, is nipped with every little cold, and being top-heavy, is wholly unfit for use. Whereas the humble man retains it in the root, can abide the winter's killing blast, the ruffling concussions of the wind, and can endure far more than that which appears so flourishing. Like the pyramid, he has a large foundation, whereby his height may be more eminent; and the higher he is, the less does he draw at the top; as if the nearer heaven, the smaller he must appear. And indeed, the nigher man approaches to celestials, and the more he considers God, the more he sees to make himself vile in his own esteem. He who values himself least shall by others be prized most. Nature swells when she meets a check; but submission in us to others begets submission in others to us. Give me the man that is humble out of judgment, and I shall find him full of parts. Charles V. appears as great in holding the candle to his departing visitors, as when he was surrounded by his victorious officers. Moses, who was the first and greatest divine, statesman, historian, philosopher, and poet; who as a valiant general led Israel out of Egypt; who was renowned for his miracles, and could roll up the waves to pass his men, and tumble them down again upon his enemies; who was a type of Christ, and styled a friend of God; was nevertheless meek above all that were upon the face of the earth;

and lest our proud dust should think it a disparagement to be humble, we are assured by our Saviour Himself, that to be so will be rest to our souls. No man ever lost the esteem of a wise man by stooping to an honest lowness when there was occasion for it. I have known a great duke to fetch in wood to his inferior's fire; and a general of nations descend to a footman's office in lifting up the boot of a coach; yet neither thought it a degradation to their dignity. (*Owen Felltham.*) *A full sail*:—The full sail oversets the vessel, which drawn in, may make the voyage prosperous. (*Ibid.*) *To children*:—If I had seen this centurion only when he was dressed for battle I should not have thought of him as gentle. I should have seen him carrying a sword to kill men with, and a shield to defend himself from being killed by others. And as he had other soldiers under him, I might have heard him speaking to them in a loud commanding way, and telling them to do hard and cruel things. But, as we see him in the Gospels, his sword and shield are hanging on the wall, and he is sitting beside a little bed in his room in the soldiers' barracks. After one of his dreadful battles he had got for his share of the spoil a little boy who had been taken captive—a poor little boy, torn away from father and mother, and forced to be a slave. He was the slave of this soldier; he cooked his food, he tidied his room, he polished his armour, he went his errands. Then the rough soldier was as tender as a mother could be. He sat by his bed; he watched over him day and night. One day, as the big soldier was sitting by the little bed, somebody came in and said, "A great prophet has come to the town. Jesus of Nazareth has come." "Jesus of Nazareth?" the soldier said; "the Healer of sickness? Oh that He would heal my boy!" But then this thought came into his mind, "I am a soldier of the nation that is ill-treating the Jews. I am not worthy that a Jew so good as He should do anything for me." Then other thoughts came, and in his great love for the boy, and knowing that Jesus could heal him, he at last ventured to send this humble message: "Oh, my Lord, my servant is near to die, and Thou art able to save from dying. I am not worthy that Thou shouldest visit my house. But only speak the word, and he shall live." Now when Jesus received that message, a great joy came into His heart; and He said to health, "Go to that soldier's little servant, and make him well, for I have not found a heart so gentle as his master's—no, not in all Israel." And He had no sooner spoken, out on the street, than the thing He commanded was done. Health came back to the sick boy in the soldier's house. And the gentle heart of the master swelled up in thankful joy, as he stooped down and kissed the child whom Jesus had made well again. (*A. Macleod, D.D.*) *Cues to character*:—There are three separate spectators of every man's life—himself, his neighbours, and his God. Let us consider concerning this man—I. WHAT HIS NEIGHBOURS THOUGHT OF HIM—that he was worthy. 1. They formed their opinion of his character from his conduct—"He loveth," &c. They judged of his worth, not by his words but by his works. 2. Their estimate of his character was singularly just. II. WHAT HE THOUGHT OF HIMSELF—"I am not worthy." Doubtless this feeling of unworthiness which prompted him to procure the services of the Jewish elders, instead of going direct to Christ himself. 1. A truly good man has a higher standard of moral excellence than other men. 2. A truly good man is conscious of numerous imperfections which other men do not perceive. III. WHAT THE SAVIOUR THOUGHT OF HIM—"I have not found so great faith," &c. 1. Christ estimates a man's character according to the amount of his faith. 2. All true faith prompts to corresponding activity in doing good. Morality without faith is heathenism, and faith without morality is antinomianism. (*W. Kirkman.*) *The threefold influence of faith*:—I. THE INFLUENCE OF FAITH UPON SOCIETY—"He is worthy." 1. Faith influencing society through the lowest natural means. Stones and mortar. "He hath built us a synagogue." 2. Faith influencing society through the highest human means. Philanthropy. "He loveth our nation." 3. Faith continuing to influence society independently of the means by which it manifested itself. Every heart says till this day, "He is worthy." II. THE INFLUENCE OF FAITH UPON THE MAN HIMSELF. 1. It gives man a right estimate of himself—"I am not worthy." 2. It gives him the right estimate of what he has—"Under my roof." 3. It gives man right ideas of God—"Speak the word only." He believed (*a*) that Christ has authority to speak; (*b*) in His willingness to speak; (*c*) in His power to accomplish—"And my servant shall be healed." 4. It gives to the soul the right idea of duty. Loving the nation and caring for the welfare of his domestics. 5. It gives to the soul the right religious impulse—"He hath built us a synagogue." 6. It converts the soul into a most Christ-like aspect. Disinterestedness pervades all the centurion's acts. All for

others. III. THE INFLUENCE OF FAITH UPON THE SAVIOUR—"I have not found so great faith," &c. 1. The uniqueness of the faith. It took the Saviour by surprise. 2. The clear conception which his faith had of the person of the Saviour. 3. The estimate which his faith had formed of the Saviour's feelings. Believed there were sympathy and tenderness in the Saviour's heart. 4. The estimate which he had formed of the resources at the Saviour's command. 5. His implicit confidence in the Saviour in His absence. 6. The Saviour's unreserved compliance with the centurion's request, and the desired blessing bestowed. (*W. A. Edwards.*) *The lessons of the narrative*:—1. The true Church in the world in all ages is wider than the visible Church. 2. There are in all ages lost characters within the pale of the visible Church. "They are not all Israel which are of Israel." 3. True piety always insures membership of the invisible Church. 4. We are led into circumstances at times in which our religious sympathies ought to transcend all the narrow sectional lines of our creeds. 5. True faith presents itself to Christ and the world in very different aspects. 6. True faith never fails to enlist Christ's sympathy and help. 7. Devotion to the welfare of others is a safe path to personal happiness and heaven's approval. (*Ibid.*) *Another treatment*:—1. Truth may prosper when the Church is not aware of it. 2. Truth prospers at times beyond the expectation of the Church. 3. Truth prospers often where we least expect it. 4. Contact with Christ reveals the true condition of the soul: (*a*) Faith in the heart of the centurion; (*b*) Unbelief in that of the Jews. 5. The noble influence of religion, conquering the bigotry of the Jew, and inspiring the heart of a Gentile to build synagogues to the service of the living God. 6. Privileges enhance responsibility, and neglect of them involves the saddest consequences. 7. Man's work is ever in proportion to his faith. 8. Man's influence upon society is ever in proportion to the amount of his faith. 9. Man's influence with Heaven is ever in proportion to the strength of his faith. (*Ibid.*) *A soldier's training*:—This centurion was a Roman, a captain in the army, who had risen from the ranks by good conduct. Before he got his vine-stock, which was the mark of his authority over a hundred men, he had, no doubt, marched many a weary mile under a heavy load, and fought, probably, many a bloody battle in foreign parts. That had been his education—discipline and hard work. And because he had learned to obey, he was fit to rule. He was helping now to keep in order those treacherous, unruly Jews, and their worthless puppet-kings like Herod; much as our soldiers in India are keeping in order the Hindoos, and their worthless puppet-kings. This was the great and true thought which had filled this good man's mind—duty, order, and obedience. The message which he sent to Jesus means this: "There is a word of command among us soldiers. Has God no word of command likewise? The word of my superiors is enough for me. I say to those under me, 'Go,' and they go. And if I can work by a word, cannot this Jesus work by a word likewise?" By some such thoughts as these, I suppose, had this good soldier gained his great faith; his faith that all God's creatures were in a divine and wonderful order obedient to the will of God who made them; and that Jesus Christ was God's viceroy and lieutenant (I speak so, because I suppose that is what he, as a soldier, would have thought), to carry out God's commands on earth. This is the character which makes a good soldier, and a good Christian likewise. (*Charles Kingsley.*) *Paradoxes in the character of the centurion*:—He was—1. A soldier accustomed to scenes of bloodshed, yet preserving, amid all the hardening tendencies of his profession, a tender heart. 2. A slave-owner, yet solicitous for the welfare of his slave. 3. A representative of the usurping power, yet one who had secured the respect and affection of the leaders of the subjugated people among whom he lived. 4. A proselyte to the religion of Israel, yet more truly religious than the people whose religion he had adopted. 5. A Pagan by birth, a Jew by conversion, a Christian by faith. "The first heathen man of whom we read, that he acknowledged Christ." Learn that a true religious faith is able to overcome in the man who possesses it the untoward influences of (*a*) birth; (*b*) training: (*c*) calling; (*d*) circumstances. (*J. R. Bailey.*) *Faith of the centurion*:—I. THE FAITH WHICH WAS COMMENDED. 1. First evidence of its existence—His tenderness to his servants. Of course this good act might have existed separate from religion. But we are forbidden to view it so, when we remember that he was a proselyte. 2. Second proof: His humility. 3. Third: His belief in an invisible living will. II. THE CAUSES OF CHRIST'S ASTONISHMENT. 1. The centurion was a Gentile, and therefore unlikely to know revealed truth. 2. A soldier, and therefore exposed to a recklessness, and idleness, and sensuality, which are the temptations of that profession. But he turned his loss to glorious gain. III. THE SAVIOUR'S COMMENT

CONTAINED THE ADVANTAGE OF DISADVANTAGES, AND THE DISADVANTAGE OF ADVANTAGES. The former, "Many shall come from the east and the west," &c. The latter, "The children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness" (Matt. viii. 11–12). IV. THIS INCIDENT TESTIFIES TO THE PERFECT HUMANITY OF CHRIST. The Saviour marvelled. It was a real genuine wonder. (*F. W. Robertson.*) I. THIS FAITH IN ITS AWAKENING IN THE MAN'S LIFE. II. THIS FAITH IN ITS EXPRESSION IN THE MAN'S LIFE. (*J. Ogmore Davies.*) *Marvellous faith*:—The faith of the centurion reveals itself. I. AS A POWER OF CONCEIVING GREAT THOUGHTS. His idea is, that just as the hundred men under his command are at his beck to come and go, and do as he pleases, so all the powers of nature are ready to do the bidding of Christ. Was it not a great original idea? Observe, it was an idea, the credit of which belonged to the centurion's faith. To conceive it required more than a clever brain, even the daring spirit of which faith alone is capable. Unbelief cannot entertain such grand ideas of Divine power. II. AS A POWER OF DWARFING INTO INSIGNIFICANCE MOUNTAINS OF DIFFICULTY. Weak faith makes difficulties, but strong faith annihilates them. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *Masters and servants*:—The centurion was (1) a man of faith. (2) He was also a man of liberality. (2) His charity began at home. There are many faults noticeable in rulers of families. 1. Injustice in the assignment of duties. 2. Unreasonableness in the expectation of perfection. 3. Negligence in the consideration of religious interests. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *He loveth our nation*:—I. THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH THE CENTURION ACTED. II. THE ACTION ITSELF. "He hath built us," &c. We estimate love by the service that it renders, and the cost that service occasions. (*J. C. Galloway.*) *The candour and liberality of the centurion recommended*:—I. THE SUPERIORITY TO PREJUDICE WHICH HIS LOVE FOR THE JEWISH NATION IMPLIES. II. THE SOLID GROUNDS ON WHICH HIS ATTACHMENT TO THE JEWISH NATION RESTED. It was such an attachment as it was next to impossible for a good man not to feel. To love the Jewish nation is still a natural dictate of piety. III. THE MANNER IN WHICH HIS ATTACHMENTS TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD WAS EVINCED. It was not an empty profession, productive of no fruit. IV. THE HIGHLY PRAISEWORTHY AND EXEMPLARY CHARACTER OF HIS CONDUCT. To assist in the erection of places of worship, providing it proceeds from right motives, is unquestionably an acceptable service to the Most High. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *Christ marvelling*:—I do not know that we ever feel the immense interval between ourselves and the Son of Man more keenly than when we compare that which astonishes us with that which astonishes Him. To us, as a rule, the word "miracles" denotes mere physical wonders; and these are so wonderful to us as to be well-nigh incredible. But in Him they awake no astonishment. He never speaks of them with the faintest accent of surprise. He set so little store by them that He often seemed reluctant to work them, and openly expressed His wish that those on or for whom they had been wrought would tell no man of them. What *does* astonish Him is not these outward wonders so surprising to us, but that inward wonder, the mystery of man's soul, the miraculous power which we often exercise without a thought of surprise, the power of opening and shutting that door or window of the soul which looks heavenward, and through which alone the glories of the spiritual world can stream in upon us. Only twice are we told that *He* marvelled to whom all the secrets of Nature and Life lay open; once at the unbelief of men, and once at their faith. When He came to His own, and they received Him not, He was driven from His wonted calm by an immeasurable surprise: He marvelled at their unbelief (Mark vi. 6); and, again, when He came to those to whom He was a Stranger, and they took Him in, He was beyond all measure astonished; He marvelled at their prompt and vigorous faith. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Faith and reason*:—We are told that this man's faith excited the wonder of the Son of God, and, therefore, everything that belongs to that faith must be interesting to us. 1. Already, then, this man was recognized for his devotedness of character. 2. Since our Lord knew that the character of this centurion was that of a devout, unselfish believer in God, we can easily understand that His expectations must have been large. 3. And yet we are told that His expectations were exceeded. Expecting much, He found more. 4. Some people have thought that the humility of this centurion was so extreme as to be exaggerated, and even unnatural. Yet remember (1) that he had been taught that the position of a Gentile was that of a profane and unclean person; (2) that his humility was founded, doubtless, upon moral as well as ceremonial reasons. He realized the greatness of the Lord Jesus. 5. How did he reason with himself? In a way which shows that the basis of true faith is always humility. (*Bishop Moor-*

house.) *The centurion's faith* :—Faith and humility, my brethren, may be described as two sister virtues, so closely are they connected together, that the one cannot flourish without the other. We are taught that we may possibly have something like a vague hope that, through God's mercy, our sin may, ultimately, be forgiven, and our souls rescued from ruin: but for a man to say that he knows that salvation is his, that he is in a state of acceptance, that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has been applied to his soul, and that now he is the child of God, is presumption, and that no real, humble-minded Christian will speak in this way. Thus we find, that while, on the one hand, faith is, by one class of persons represented as presumption, on the other hand, it is exaggerated into presumption just because people fail to exercise the virtue of humility. There is no humility in my doubting the Word of God. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Let us take the narrative as it stands, and learn a few practical lessons from it. I. The first thing I notice about this centurion is, that although he was a man in a considerable social position, HE WAS ALTOGETHER FREE FROM THAT PETTY FORM OF CONVENTIONAL PRIDE, WHICH IS IN TOO MANY INSTANCES THE CURSE OF MODERN SOCIETY. Here is a very practical lesson with respect to humility. My friends, I do not believe much in the humility of man towards his God where his conduct is characterized by pride towards his fellow men. Yet, again, the centurion was free from that miserable form of pride which exhibits itself in national prejudice. The man that really wants to get a blessing from the Lord Jesus Christ must be content to take the lowest place, to think everybody better than himself, to see himself as God sees him, and to be willing to accept from any man whatever reasonable help that man seems likely to offer to him. II. Well, listen to THE WORDS OF COMMENDATION OF THE MASTER. "When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith: no, not in Israel." I want to ask you, before concluding my sermon this morning, Are you prepared to receive a blessing, dear friends, on those terms? If the Lord Jesus Christ were to stand in this pulpit, looking every one of you in the face, and were to say, "Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it unto thee," would you reply by a fervent exclamation of grateful joy? Should we be able to say so? or should we not, in common honesty, have to look up, and say, "Not so, Lord; I have not believed, or trusted my case into Thy hand; on the contrary, I feel in my own heart, that I have been constantly taking it out of Thy hand, and transferring it from Thee to myself? I have had my own feelings and thoughts; I have been reasoning about possibilities; and, so far as I have been taking it out of Thy hand, I cannot claim Thy blessing." Oh, dear friends, remember that God cannot alter His conditions. They are fixed in the very nature of things. (*W. H. Aitken, M.A.*) *The centurion at Capernaum* :—I. HIS PIETY WAS MARKED BY ZEAL AND LIBERALITY. The true secret of this soldier's "love" for the Jewish "nation" is thus explained. It was a "love" founded upon religion, and it expressed itself in religious acts. The conversion of this Roman soldier gives an interesting and instructive view of the power of Divine truth. In scarcely any period of its history was there a more sad declension of genuine piety in the Jewish Church, than in the age to which the text refers. Scepticism, formality, hypocrisy, and sin, seemed to pervade all ranks. Yet, amidst all this degeneracy, the truth remained embodied in the sacred Scriptures, the purity of which was most sedulously guarded; and by means of that truth, however it might be dishonoured by its professors, this heathen soldier was effectually "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." How wonderful are the dispensations of Providence! The Roman army conquered the Jews in battle, and rendered their nation tributary; but the Jews, in their turn, armed with the power of revealed truth, effected a greater victory. They overcame the understandings and the hearts of many of their conquerors, and laid the hardy soldiers of heathen Rome prostrate in prayer before the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. In connection with this part of our subject I wish particularly to invite your attention to the liberal and generous character of true religion. A good man cannot live to himself. His property, his influence, his person, are freely placed upon God's altar, and offered in sacrifice to the Lord of all. But the piety of the centurion mentioned in our text was not only characterized by zeal and liberality; it was equally marked—II. BY KINDNESS AND HUMANITY. He had a "servant that was dear to him"; and when that servant "was sick, and ready to die," the tenderest sympathies of the master were awakened. We are here reminded of that diversity of rank which has prevailed in the world from the earliest ages. While poverty remains, servitude

must also continue. This diversity of rank, in consequence of the depravity of human nature, has often given birth to feelings and acts alike dishonourable to God and man. True religion effectually corrects all these evils. It produces a spirit of justice, equity, and love; and it inspires the mind with the fear of God, and a supreme regard for His authority. It renders the rich man the guardian and benefactor of the poor; and it makes the poor cheerful, contented, and honest. And let no one suppose that this spiritual equality and affection is subversive of order and of just authority. The most perfect of all government is the government of holy love. This remark will apply both to families and the Church. His piety and kindness, so far from impairing his authority, seem to have even increased it; and the probability is, that a master more respected, or an officer more efficient, did not then exist. The obedience which he received was remarkable for its promptitude and cheerfulness; so far was his pious kindness from rendering his domestic servants insolent, or his soldiers careless and remiss. III. THE CENTURION'S DEEP AND UNAFFECTED HUMILITY. Humility consists in lowliness of mind. It is a disposition which becomes creatures of even the highest order. Angels never affect independence. Humility especially becomes fallen man. Humility so profound as this is rarely met with, and argues an extraordinary degree of self-knowledge. The centurion was now converted from the error of his way; but his conversion was effected by the grace of God, and therefore conferred upon him no proper merit, or worthiness, before the Lord. It was not self-righteous pride, but the want of better knowledge, that led him, under the mingled influence of shame and fear, to shun the presence of his Saviour. Increasing light would discover to him that his own unworthiness constituted the grand reason why he should come to Christ, and entrust all his concerns with Him. The simplicity and ingenuousness with which the centurion had already received the truth would prepare him for those further discoveries of the Divine mind and plan which the doctrine of Christ and His apostles was about to present to the world. The spiritual benefits resulting from humility are numerous and great. This temper is especially pleasing in the sight of the Lord. The piety of the centurion was particularly marked—IV. BY STRONG FAITH. The faith of the centurion was not a blind and presumptuous confidence. 1. The subjects which I have brought before you on this occasion, I fear suggest to many of us matter of shame and humiliation before God. What an example of practical godliness have we in this centurion! and yet how great were the disadvantages under which he laboured! 2. But there is another view to be taken of this subject; and it is one which is full of encouragement. The argument which we have just urged may be changed, and proposed thus: If this heathen soldier, in whose mind there was so much error and prejudice to be overcome, and whose means of instruction and spiritual improvement were so vastly inferior to those which we enjoy, attained to all this religious eminence; what may not we attain to, with all our helps and advantages? (*T. Jackson.*) *The centurion's faith*:—Now, that we may profit by this example, let us consider these three things—1. What was his faith, and wherein the greatness of it lay. 2. How this faith was bred and begotten in him. 3. The effects and fruits of it, or how it discovered itself. I. THE NATURE OF HIS FAITH. It was a firm persuasion that all power and authority was eminently in Christ, and that He could do what He pleased. 1. You must distinguish of the times. In that age there was no human reason to believe this truth. Antiquity was against it, and therefore, when Paul preached Jesus, they said, "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods" (Acts xvii. 18). Authority was against it: "Which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8). The universal consent of the habitable world was against it; only a small handful of contemptible people owned Him: "Fear not, little flock" (Luke xii. 32). At that time it was the critical point, the hated truth, that the carpenter's Son should be owned as the Son of God. Those bleak winds that blow in our backs, and thrust us onward to believe, blew in their faces, and drove them from it; those very reasons which move us to own Christ moved them to reject Him. For many ages the name of Christ hath been in request and honour, but then it was a despised way. At His first appearance a certain persuasion, impressed upon the soul by the Spirit of God, of the Divine power and all-sufficiency of Christ, so as to repair to Him for help, was faith and great faith; when the veil of His human nature and infirmities did not keep the eye of faith from seeing Him to have a Divine power, though they could not unriddle all the mysteries about His Person and office, this

was accepted for saving faith. 2. The speculative belief of this truth was not sufficient then, no more than it is now, but the practical improvement. Grant that truth, that Jesus is the Son of God, and other things will follow, as that we must obey His laws, and depend upon His promises, and make use of His power, and trust ourselves in His hands; otherwise the bare acknowledgment was not sufficient. II. How was this faith wrought and bred in him? I answer—The groundwork was laid in his knowledge of the omnipotency and power of God, and his acquaintance with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, though he were not a professed Jew. This prepared for his faith in Christ; the report or hearing was the ground of faith: "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa. liii. 1.) He had heard by fame of His excellent doctrine: "That He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. vii. 29). And he had heard the rumour of His miracles, more particularly the late instance of curing the leper, which was notorious and public: for Christ biddeth him "show himself to the priests" (Matt. viii. 4); and also the miracle in recovering the ruler's son, an instance near, which was done in time before this: "And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum; and he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, and he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death" (John iv. 46, 47). By all which he was moved to ascribe the omnipotency of God, which he knew before, to Jesus Christ. Thus the Spirit of God blessed the knowledge of this centurion, and the rumours that were brought to him of Christ's doctrine and miracles. III. The effects or fruits of it, or how it discovered itself. 1. In that he applieth himself to Christ. They that believe in Christ will come to Him, and put Him upon work, whilst others prize His name but neglect His office. A gracious heart will find occasions and opportunities of acquaintance with Christ, if not for themselves yet for others; for when they have heard of Him, they cannot keep from Him. 2. That He accounteth misery an object proper enough for mercy to work upon. The centurion came to Him, saying, "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented" (verse 6), that is, grievously affected with the disease. Alas! what can we bring to Christ but sins and sicknesses? 3. When Christ offereth to come and heal him, "I will come and heal him" (verse 7), (which was the great condescension of the Son of God to a poor servant), see how the centurion taketh it, "He answered, and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof" (verse 8). Humility is a fruit of faith. Why are true and sound believers so ready to profess their unworthiness? They have a deeper sense of God's majesty and greatness than others have, and also a more broken-hearted sense of their own vileness by reason of sin. They have a more affective light and sight of things; God is another thing to them than before, so is sin and self. 4. He is content with Christ's word without His bodily presence: "Speak but the word, and my servant shall be healed." God's word is enough to a believer. 5. Here is Christ's power and dominion over all events, and events that concern us and ours, fully acknowledged, and that is a great point gained: "He is Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom. xiv. 9). Health and sickness are at His command. "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things" (Isa. xlv. 7). 6. He reasoneth from the strict discipline observed in the Roman armies, where there was no disputing of commands or questioning why and wherefore: "I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth." Reasoning for God and His promises is a great advantage. We are naturally acute in reasoning against faith, but when the understanding is quick and ready to invent arguments to encourage faith, it is a good sign. Use. Go you and do likewise. From the example of the centurion let me encourage you—(1) To readiness of believing (James iii. 17). (2) To represent our necessity to Christ, and refer the event to Him, to commit and submit all to Him. (3) To be humble. In all our commerce with Christ, faith must produce a real humility. Faith is most high when the heart is most low (Luke xviii. 11–14). (4) To meditate often on the sovereign dominion of Christ, and His power over all things that fall out in the world. (*T. Manton.*) *Sickness the servant of the Saviour*:—I. Let us look at the proofs of the statement. 1. In Christ's world-wide love we have the proof of it. Christ's love to men is the assurance that He reserves to Himself the entire control of whatever makes them suffer. 2. Then the fact that suffering is the servant of the Saviour is shown in Christ's universal sovereignty. He is "Lord of all"; "all authority is given unto Me in heaven and earth." He is therefore Lord of Providence. 3. And we may add that in His miraculous works we have a token of

this. When He stood before sickness on earth He could do with it what He liked, it recognized His voice and bowed submissive to His Word. II. If then, this suggestion of the centurion is an established Scripture truth, let us pass on to see WHAT IT INVOLVES WITH REGARD TO SICKNESS. Our Lord is to sickness what the Roman captain was to the soldiers under him. 1. Then we may say that sickness only comes at His bidding. Compact, motionless in their ranks, stand all possible pains and sicknesses before Him, until He singles one out and bids it hasten here or there. 2. And this truth implies also that sickness is restrained by His will. Like the centurion to his servant, so says Christ to sickness, "Do this," and it doeth it. It can only do what Christ permits. 3. And if sickness is Christ's servant, then sickness is sent to do His work. His servant! Then it has some message to bring, some gift to leave behind, some mission to fulfil for its Master; there is a distinct purpose in it. And the sooner that purpose is fulfilled by our discovery and acceptance of it the sooner will the sickness be withdrawn. That invests sickness with great solemnity. III. These are THREE CLOSING LESSONS. 1. This should teach us the sacred blessedness of sickness. 2. And this should call us to reverential service for the sick. 3. And this should show us the possibility of redemption to those who are sick. (*C. New.*) *An endeared servant*:—"She was a special Providence to me," wrote the late Earl of Shaftesbury concerning his father's housekeeper, Maria Millas. He explains his meaning by stating that this good woman had almost the entire care of him until he was seven years old, when she died. Yet such was the impression she made upon him in those few years, that towards the close of his truly noble life this good man said: "I must trace, under God, very much, perhaps all, of the duties of my later life to her precepts and her prayers." What a striking testimony is this confession to the fidelity of an obscure Christian woman! And what a grand result it wrought! Lord Shaftesbury's nobility of birth, represented by his earl's coronet, when placed beside the moral grandeur of his character, was but as a glowworm to a star. Through his long life his supreme devotion to works of benevolence gave him an undisputed right to say—

"Write me as one that loves his fellow-men."

His deeds gave light, hope, comfort, and elevation to many thousands who were born heirs to an inheritance of poverty and woe. And those deeds were the precious fruit of the influence of a servant in his father's household. *Importance of servants in a household*:—A worldly man began to taunt a celebrated preacher, and, among other things, told him it was true his congregation was large, but it was chiefly made up of servants and low people. "I know it is," said the sagacious divine. "My Church is composed of such converts as Jesus Christ and His apostles gained; and as for servants, I had rather be instrumental in converting them than their employers." "Why so?" inquired the man. "Because," observed the minister, "they have the care of all the children." (*Baxendale.*) *Humility always seasonable*:—I think it was Bernard, or one of the preachers of the Middle Ages, who said, "There is one thing to be said for humility, that it never can by any possibility do one harm." For if a man goes through a door, and he has the habit of stooping his head, it may be the door is so high there is no need for stooping, but the stooping is no injury to him; whereas if the door should happen to be a low one, and he has the habit of holding up his head, he may come into sharp contact with the top of the door. True humility is a flower which will adorn any garden. This is a sauce with which you may season every dish of life, and you will find an improvement in every case. Whether it be prayer or praise, whether it be work or suffering, the salt of humility cannot be used in excess. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Humility does not lessen dignity*:—A person of great sanctity once paid a visit to the Caliph Haroun. The Caliph rose to receive him, and with every mark of reverence conducted him to his own seat; and when he took his leave the Caliph rose again, and accompanied him a little way. Some of the nobles afterwards observed that such condescension would lessen his dignity, and diminish the awe that belongs to a prince. The Caliph replied, "The dignity that is lessened by humility is not worth maintaining; and the awe that is diminished by paying reverence to piety should be got rid of as soon as possible." *Military obedience*:—The story is told of a young general in the ninth century who, with five hundred men, came against a king with twenty thousand. The king sent word that it was the height of folly in so small an army to resist his legions. In reply the general called one of his men and said, "Take that sword and drive it to your heart." The man did so, and

fell dead. To another he said, "Leap into yon chasm," and the man instantly obeyed. "Go," he said to the messenger, "and tell your king we have five hundred such men. We will die, but never surrender." The messenger returned with his message—a message that struck terror into the heart of the whole army of the king. (*Baxendale.*) *Ready to obey:*—The Duke of Wellington was an eminently magnanimous man, bribes could not buy him, threats could not annoy him. When a lower place was offered him, he said, "Give me your orders, and you shall be obeyed." *Great faith:*—The discovery of the New World, as the continent of America and its islands are called, was not, like many discoveries, an accident; it was the reward of faith—the reward of Christopher Columbus's faith. He found fruits on the shores of Western Europe, cast up by the Atlantic waves, and brought there, as we now know, by the Gulf Stream, perfectly diverse from any that the temperate, fiery, or frozen zones of the Old World produced. So one day, let me say, strolling by the sea-shore, he saw a nut. He takes it in his hand, and looks at it; he takes it into his capacious mind, and out of that little seed springs his faith in another world beyond that watery horizon, where, as he believed, and events proved, the sea had pearls, and the veins of the earth were filled with silver, and the rivers that flowed through spicy groves ran over sands of gold. They thought him mad to leave his sweet bays, and his land, and his pleasant home, to launch on a sea which keel had never ploughed, in search of a land man had never seen. I tell that infidel that I know in whom I have believed; I can give a reason for the faith that is in me; and so he could. And so he launched his bark on the deep, and with strange stars above him and strange seas around him, storms without and mutinies within, no man of all the crew hoping but himself, with a courage nothing could daunt, and a perseverance nothing could exhaust, that remarkable man stood by the helm, and kept the prow of his bark onward and westward till lights gleamed on San Salvador's shore, and as the day broke, the joyful cry "Land!" rang from the mast-head; and faith was crowned with success, and patience had her perfect work. Now I look on that man, and the world has looked on him, as one of the finest types of a believer; but I cannot read his story without feeling that it puts our faith to the blush, and, as it were, hearing the echo from heaven of that voice that said, "I have not found such great faith; no, not in Israel." (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) **For he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue.**—*The usefulness of good men:*—I. LET US CONSIDER WHAT IT IS TO SEEK THE GENERAL GOOD OF SOCIETY. 1. That to seek the general good of society, men must sincerely desire that good as an ultimate object. The worst member of society may desire the general good of society, when he apprehends it will have a favourable aspect upon himself; and he may seek the general good in that view of it. 2. Men's seeking the general good of society, implies their seeking that good in preference to their own. 3. That men's seeking the general good of society farther implies their actually using all the proper means in their power to promote it. II. THAT IT BECOMES ALL MEN TO SEEK THE GENERAL GOOD OF SOCIETY. This will appear from a variety of considerations. 1. Men were formed for society. It is one important end for which they were created rational beings. No man was made solely for himself; and no man is capable of living in the world totally independent of society. 2. It becomes men to seek the general good of society, because this is the great and valuable end of entering into society. Every body of men, which deserves the name of society, unite together for some valuable and desirable purpose. 3. It becomes men to seek the general good of society, by obeying the general laws of society. Societies are not formed by mere accident. 4. Every society needs the assistance or co-operation of all its members, to promote its general prosperity and happiness. 5. It becomes all men to seek the general good of society, in return for the benefits they receive from it. 6. There is something so amiable and beautiful in seeking the general good, that it commands universal approbation and esteem. For this the Roman centurion was so highly esteemed and applauded by the Jewish nation. 7. It becomes all men to obey the will of their Creator; and it is expressly His will that they should seek the general good. He says to every man, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The apostle requires the same things under different forms of expression. "By love serve one another." IMPROVEMENT: 1. If it becomes men to seek the general good of society, then it becomes them to be truly religious. There is a natural, and even necessary connection between their being religious, and being good members of society. 2. In the view of this subject, parents may learn how much it becomes and concerns them to educate their children in the best manner to qualify them to promote not only their own good, but the general good of society.

3. It appears, in view of this discourse, that all men are morally bound to promote the general good of society, in proportion to the various abilities they possess. Knowledge gives men ability to promote their own good, and the general good. Wealth gives men ability to do good. Men in authority have peculiar ability to promote the general good of society. 4. Since it becomes all men to promote the general good of society, it is unbecoming men to pursue any courses which are either directly or indirectly injurious to the public good. Not only idlers, but all profane swearers, Sabbath-breakers, neglecters and despisers of all religion, act a part highly detrimental to human society. 5. It appears from what has been said, that those who are truly pious are the best men in the world. They are the only men who have true love to God and man. 6. We learn the goodness of God in prolonging the lives of His pious and faithful servants. He is good to His cordial friends in carrying them in His arms, and guiding and guarding their lives, even to old age. He has promised this as a mark of His favour to the godly man. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

The centurion's love for God's house; an example of Christian duty:—I. THE POWERFUL FAITH DISPLAYED BY THIS CENTURION. II. THIS CENTURION'S EXAMPLE OF GREAT LOVE FOR THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD. We here find his true piety shown in his liberality in building a house of God for public worship. When he knew Divine truth, he loved the people among whom it shone, and he then erected a synagogue for God's honour. III. IS IT NOT, THEREFORE, OUR PLAIN DUTY AS CHRISTIANS TO SUPPORT PUBLIC WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH OF GOD AMONG US? IV. THE WANTS OF THE PEOPLE, WITH THE WISHES OF OUR CHURCH BUILDING SOCIETIES, SHOULD WARMLY EXCITE OUR CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY. (*J. G. Angley, M.A.*)

Religion essentially included in the love of our country:—These remarks may be sufficient to illustrate the general principle. We will now attend to its operations. 1. If we love our country, we shall be affected with her dangers and calamities. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," says the Psalmist; "let my right hand forget her cunning." 2. This principle will restrain us from injuring, and prompt us to serve our country. "Love works no ill." "By love we serve one another." 3. A lover of his country has an affection for the Church of God, and a concern to promote its credit and interest. 4. Love to our country will express itself in prayers for her prosperity. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," says the Psalmist, "they prosper that love thee." I have illustrated the nature and operations of love to our country. I now ask your attention to some reflections which result from the subject. 1. True patriotism is a nobler attainment than some seem to imagine. It includes compassion for the unhappy, hatred of sin, love of virtue, disinterestedness, self-denial, industry, prudence, piety and devotion; yea, everything that is excellent and amiable. 2. There is a great difference between talking warmly in our country's favour, and really loving it. A man may say much in the praise of his country, its constitution, trade, soil, and climate, and give it the preference to all other countries; he may plead for its rights with great earnestness, and do much to support its credit and respectability; and yet not be a real lover of it—not have any pure benevolence, any piety to God, or regard to virtue; but be influenced wholly by ambition and avarice. 3. It appears from our subject, that a people who enjoy, who profess to believe, Divine revelation, ought to make some stated provision for maintaining and preserving the social worship of the Deity. This is a plain dictate of reason, as well as Scripture. 4. If we ought to regard the interest of our country at large, we ought, for the same reasons, to consult the peace and happiness of the smaller societies of which we are members. 5. We see how careful we should be, that no selfish or unworthy motive influence our social or religious conduct. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*)

Vers. 11–17. **And it came to pass the day after that He went into a city called Nain.**—*The funeral of a youth*:—The miracle requires a few REMARKS and a few REFLECTIONS. I. The first thing we behold is a FUNERAL PROCESSION. But let us draw near, and contemplate this funeral solemnity. It was the funeral of a *young man*. We are not informed whether he died by disease or accident, slowly or suddenly; but he was carried off in the prime of life. He was the "only son of his mother." There is an ocean of love in the hearts of parents towards their children. But what closes the melancholy tale of this woman is—that she was a *widow!* A widow is always an affecting character, and she is liable to injustice and oppression from those fiends who take advantage of weakness and distress; as she is deprived of the companion of her journey, and compelled to travel alone; as her anxieties are doubled, and there is none to share them with her. II. OBSERVE OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR. First, He knew all the particulars of the case. Those who were

with Him could only see, as they were passing by, a funeral—but He knew the corpse stretched upon the bier; He knew that it was a young man; that it was the only son of his mother; and that she was a widow! Secondly, He did not wait to be implored. "I am found of them that sought Me not." Sometimes, before we call He answers: such a very present help is He in trouble. Thirdly, When He saw her, He had "compassion on her." By nothing was our Saviour more distinguished than by pity and tenderness. Fourthly, He "said unto her, Weep not." How unavailing, not to say impertinent, would this have been from any other lips! Fifthly, Jesus, without any ostentatious ceremony, "went and touched the bier—and they that bare it stood still"; all amazement and expectation! Every eye is fixed upon Him. Finally, observe the application, the delicacy—what shall I call it?—of the miracle; and "He delivered him to his mother!" III. Let us conclude by three GENERAL REFLECTIONS. I. WHAT A VALE OF TEARS IS THIS WORLD! How various and numerous are the evils to which human life is exposed! "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble!" II. LET THE AFFLICTED REMEMBER THAT THEY ARE NOT LEFT WITHOUT RESOURCE. Let them learn where to flee in the day of trouble. It is to the Friend of sinners. III. WHAT THINK YOU OF CHRIST? Does not His character combine every excellency and attraction? (*W. Jay.*) *Young man, arise:*—I. I notice first THAT THIS YOUNG MAN IS FOLLOWED BY A BROKEN-HEARTED MOTHER, A POOR SORROWFUL CREATURE. He was her only son, and she was a widow. Do you know I cannot help thinking that one often sees the same sort of thing now. How many a young man there is who is being borne along towards that fearful interment to which I have already referred, who is followed, as it were, by the tears and expostulations—I may say the anguish, the heart-breaking anguish—of one who loves him as her own soul, and who would readily offer a thousand times over her own life, if only his soul might be saved. Young man, there are a good many fellows who think it a manly thing to slight a mother's love, to go far to break a mother's heart. Believe me, there is scarcely a more unmanly sin possible for anybody to commit. Amongst the saddest incidents in my experience as a mission preacher are cases of this character, where I am addressed by mournful-looking women, who come to me with a terrible burden on their hearts. I ask what it is. It is not about themselves. No! no! so far as they themselves are concerned, they have a good hope through grace. "Well, what is the matter?" "Oh, it is my boy," says the poor stricken creature, "my boy." How many are ready to say, as David said about Absalom, "Would God I had died for thee." Some little time ago, I had a conversation after one of my services with a minister of the gospel, in the North of England, who said to me, "I want to tell you about my son, who is just going to offer himself for the Christian ministry. He had a remarkable conversion, and I should like to tell you about it. Two years ago my dear wife died, and as she was dying, she called her children around her. As they approached her bed one by one, she stretched out her hand and took theirs in hers, and very solemnly, for she was on the brink of eternity, she said to them, 'I charge ye before God, meet me at God's right hand.' When it came to the turn of my eldest son, I saw that she was greatly moved, for up to that time he had shown no disposition to give his heart to God. She grasped his hand in hers and said, with tears in her eyes, 'My boy, ere I die, I want you to make me a promise; I want you solemnly to promise me that you will seek for the salvation of your soul.' He hesitated, and stood silent for a few moments, hanging down his head. When he lifted up his eyes he met his mother's gaze. That deep, tender, earnest gaze seemed to plead with his inmost heart. 'I charge you,' she said, 'meet me at God's right hand.' 'Mother,' he said, 'I will; I will.' Her face brightened up; a heavenly smile stole over her features; she lifted up her hands and said, 'Thank God, I am ready to go now.' Well, she died. My son remembered his promise. He began to read his Bible and to pray, and the Lord was pleased to send him a very deep conviction of sin. He became intensely wretched. Weeks passed away. Still he could get no comfort. Weeks became months. He could not shake the subject from his mind. The weight of his sin was continually resting upon his soul, and seemed almost to drive him wild, till on one occasion he found himself in such a state of frenzied agony, that he felt 'I really can stand this no longer," and suddenly grasping his hat, he dashed out with a determination to drown his sorrows in drink at the nearest gin-house. Down the street he went, and up to the door of the public-house. Just as he stood at the door and was stretching out his hand to open it, it seemed to him as though his mother stood before him. There was the same look upon her countenance that it wore when she

took leave of him on her dying bed, and he seemed to see those tears glistening in her eyes. It was no vision, but the thing was so powerfully brought before his imagination, that it was like a vision, and he seemed to hear her saying, 'My son, your promise!' 'I turned,' he said, 'and fled from the public-house as though I were pursued: I dashed into my own room. 'Great God!' I cried, 'Thou hast saved me by my mother's prayer; Thou hast saved me from the depths of hell! There and then I cast myself in utter weariness and helplessness and self-despair at Jesus' feet, and there and then the pardoning love of Christ reached my heart.'" II. Well, there was something more that the eye of Christ rested upon besides this poor broken-hearted woman to whom He said, "Weep not." THERE WERE THE BEARERS. Now this also, as it seems to me, is wonderfully true to life. Wherever I go I find that young men are mostly under the influence of bearers. I know what your strong points are, young men, yes, and I know your weak points too. You are wonderfully gregarious animals. One man goes in one particular direction, and the rest must follow if he happens to be a leader. There is a strange fatuous influence which man exercises over his fellow-man. Ah, my brother, how many a man is as it were held spell-bound by the influence of false friendship. Get him away from his friends and you can do something with him; but so long as he is in their society he is a helpless slave to adverse influences. Yes, I may be speaking to some to-night who, although only young, are already saying, "I have gone too far; the chains are bound too tightly round me." I tell you no, in God's name, *No!* One touch of almighty power from the finger of Christ, and those chains shall break; one glance from those eyes so full of beneficence, and the shadows of death shall flee away. I remember, some time ago, hearing a remarkable circumstance related by a public speaker to whom I was listening. It happened that a ship was being towed across the Niagara River, in America, some little distance above the well-known falls. Just as she got into the middle of the stream the hawser parted, and the unfortunate ship began to drift down the river stern foremost. Efforts were made to save her from impending ruin, but every effort failed, and the unfortunate ship kept drifting farther and farther down the stream towards the terrible abyss below. The news of the disaster spread along the banks of the river, and in a very short time there were hundreds of people, and they soon swelled to thousands, looking on in breathless anxiety to see what was to become of this unfortunate ship and crew. There is a point that stretches into the river which bears the name of *Past Redemption Point*, and it is believed in the neighbourhood that nothing that passes that point can escape destruction. The current there becomes so strong, the influence so fatal, that whatever goes by *Past Redemption Point* is inevitably lost. The excited multitude upon the banks of the river watched the helpless ship drifting down farther and farther till she was within a few hundred yards of the fatal point. One effort after another was made, one effort after another failed; still she drifted. Only a few moments, and she passed the point. There was a kind of sigh of horror from the vast multitude as they saw her swing round, for they knew she was lost. But just as she rounded the point the captain felt a strong breeze smite upon his cheek. Quick as thought he shouted at the top of his voice, "*All sails set!*" and in almost less time than it takes me to tell it every stitch of canvas on board the ship was stretched to catch the favouring gale. A cheer broke from the multitude on the shore as they witnessed this last effort for salvation. But would it succeed? The ship was still drifting, though the wind was blowing against it, and she was still moving downwards, stern foremost, though the wind was bellying out all her sails. It was a battle between the wind and the current. With breathless anxiety they watched the result. She slacks! Another moment—they scarcely dare whisper it—she stands! Yes, that terrible downward course was actually stopped. There she was, still as a log upon the water. Another moment, and inch by inch she began to forge her way up the stream until the motion was perceptible to those on shore, and one great shout of victory burst forth from a thousand voices: "Thank God, she is saved! Thank God, she is saved!" In a few moments more, with considerable headway upon her, she swept right up the stream, by *Past Redemption Point*, right into the still water, saved from what appeared to be inevitable destruction, just because, in the very moment of moments, she caught the favouring breeze. Young man, in that ship behold a picture of yourself. There is many a young man who, like that ship, has been drifting. You know it; ah! and your friends know it; your mother, praying for you to-night, knows it; your Christian friend that brought you here knows it. You are drifting, drifting, and you know what the end must be. It may

lie far on in your life's voyage, or it may be very near at hand, but before you lies the terrible fall, and the abyss and depth of doom. If you say, "How shall I arise?" I reply, there is only one way of arising. Fix your gaze to-night upon Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. When I was a young man of eighteen, I was preaching in the open air in the streets of Inverness, when there happened to pass by a young medical student—I think, from Glasgow University. He was like many of you, and had been living an aimless, self-pleasing sort of life. As he passed by in the crowd he heard a young man's voice, and caught the words of Christ, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." The message went home like an arrow to the man's heart; he got away into his own chamber, and there he cast himself by his bedside and exclaimed, "O God, that is what I want. Up to this moment my life has been a wasted life; I have nothing to show for it; I have lived for myself; I have lived in vain. I see it all now. There is one power, and only one, that can raise me up and make me really what I ought to be." There and then he gave himself to Christ, and he went forth from that room a new man. He had just received a commission as a surgeon in the army, and soon afterwards he went to India, where, for five or six years, he was a burning and a shining light. Many a poor heathen native heard the truth of the gospel first from his lips; many a godless English soldier was led to the Cross of Christ by that young man's influence; many a brother officer first heard from him the glad tidings of great joy, or, at any rate, first had them pressed home upon his mind. After five or six years' service, the Lord called him home. I never met him, never shook his hand. I hope to meet him up yonder, some day. (*W. Hay Aitken.*) *Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity*:—I. WHAT ARE WE HERE CERTIFIED CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST? 1. This miracle attests that He was an authorized messenger of God. This was the direct and immediate conviction that it wrought upon those who witnessed it. "There came great fear upon all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us, and, That God hath visited His people." Nor were they mistaken in their conclusion from the premises. No one can recall the dead but by the great power of God. Only He who originally gave life can restore it after it is gone. 2. The same forcibly attests the compassionate sympathy of Jesus for human sorrow. 3. And He is as mighty as He is good—as able to help as He is ready to pity. It is no easy thing to console and heal a broken heart. But Jesus not only relieved it, but entirely removed it. In a mere moment of time He dislodged it, and set a light in that darkened mother's soul, brighter than had ever shone there before. This miracle accordingly shows Him possessed of redeeming power, as well as sympathy. II. WHAT IS PICTURED TO US IN THIS MIRACLE OF THE WORKINGS OF GRACE? 1. Jesus found this young man dead, and being borne to burial. And herein is shown the sad and hopeless condition of every one apart from Christ's gracious interposition for our rescue. The help of man in such a case is utterly powerless. If it were a case of mere physical disorder, the great storehouses of nature might perhaps furnish a remedy. If it were a case of mere functional lethargy or error, some stimulant or alterative might chance to be found out by the physician to correct the ailment. Or if it were a case of mere mental aberration, science and a better philosophy might serve to set the matter right. But the case is one of *death;* and no power of man has ever been able to bring the dead to life again. 2. "He came." There was no going or bearing of the dead man to Christ; but a coming of Jesus to him. The first approaches of grace and salvation are all from the side of a Divine movement toward us. From first to last, He is ever the coming One, who comes to us, approaches us, and brings to us whatever of salvation is ever experienced. "Lo! I come!" 3. "And touched the bier." Not without veritable contact with the polluted things of earth could spiritual quickening be imparted to its fallen inhabitants. 4. Yet it was by the *Word* that the resuscitation was imparted. "He *said*, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." All the potency of creatorship and resurrection resides in it, and goes forth through it. People often have a very poor appreciation of the Word. They care not to hear it. Many only despise it. Christ's words are spirit, and they are life. 5. When Christ's word of command reached the consciousness of this dead man, it then devolved upon him to obey it. Human agency and volition must, after all, co-operate with Divine grace. III. WHAT, NOW, AS TO THE PROPHECIES AND FORE-PLEDGES CONTAINED IN THIS MIRACLE? 1. It was a raising of a dead man to life, and so an exhibition of resurrection power. To raise *one* requires the power of God; to raise *all* requires no more. He *has* raised the dead, and He can raise all. 2. It was the making glad of a very sorrowing heart and a very desolate home. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Jesus and the widow of Nain:—I. SORROW. II. SYMPATHY. III. SUCCOUR. (*R. V. Pryce, M.A., LL.B.*) *Weep not*:—What, then, is the comfort which even now the gospel of our Saviour mingles with the mourning of His people? What advantage has the Christian under bereavement, and wherein does he sorrow not as others? I. In the first place, THE GOSPEL HAS ENTIRELY CHANGED THE CHARACTER OF DEATH TO THE DEPARTED THEMSELVES. Thank God, the Christian's is a stingless death. Since the guilt of those we mourn was cleansed in the blood of Christ, and their pardon sealed by the Holy Ghost, death did not come to them as an officer of justice, but as an angel of peace. He came to loose the prison-bands of clay and set them free to go home to their Father's house. O selfish heart, bear silently thy burden and rejoice in secret at the lost one's joy. Why should I not? Love is more gladdened by another's gladness than grieved for its own trouble. God did two kindnesses at one stroke when He bereft you of your beloved: one kindness to him; another kindness to you. To him, the perfecting of character and bestowal of bliss; to you, ripening of character and preparation for bliss. II. As Christ teaches us to expect a "better resurrection" for our dead, so also for ourselves to look for better reunion. Not by their coming back to be for a little while longer with us, is the craving heart to be appeased, but by our going to be for ever with them. This is best. (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*) *The miracle at the gate of Nain*:—I. I learn two or three things from this subject; and first, that Christ WAS A MAN. You see how that sorrow played upon all the chords of His heart. II. But I must also draw from this subject that HE WAS GOD. If Christ had been a mere mortal, would He have had a right to come in upon such a procession? Would He have succeeded in His interruption? III. Again, I learn from this subject that Christ WAS A SYMPATHISER. IV. I learn again from all this that Christ is THE MASTER OF THE GRAVE. Just outside the gate of the city Death and Christ measured lances, and when the young man rose, Death dropped. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Young man, is this for you?*—I. I shall ask you first, dear friends, to reflect that THE SPIRITUALLY DEAD CAUSE GREAT GRIEF TO THEIR GRACIOUS FRIENDS. If an ungodly man is favoured to have Christian relatives, he causes them much anxiety. Many young persons who are in some respects amiable and hopeful, nevertheless, being spiritually dead, are causing great sorrow to those who love them best. 1. The cause of grief lies here: we mourn that they should be in such a case. In the story before us the mother wept because her son was dead; and we sorrow because our young friends are spiritually dead. 2. We also mourn because we lose the help and comfort which they ought to bring us. She must have regarded him as the staff of her age, and the comfort of her loneliness. With regard to you that are dead in sin, we feel that we miss the aid and comfort which we ought to receive from you in our service of the living God. 3. A further grief is that we can have no fellowship with them. The mother at Nain could have no communion with her dear son now that he was dead, for the dead know not anything. Alas! in many a household the mother cannot have communion with her own son or daughter on that point which is most vital and enduring, because they are spiritually dead, while she has been quickened into newness of life by the Holy Spirit. 4. Moreover, spiritual death soon produces manifest causes for sorrow. 5. We also mourn because of the future of men dead in sin. II. Now let me cheer you while I introduce the second head of my discourse, which is this: FOR SUCH GRIEF THERE IS ONLY ONE HELPER: BUT THERE IS A HELPER. This young man is taken out to be buried; but our Lord Jesus Christ met the funeral procession. Carefully note the "coincidences," as sceptics call them, but as we call them "providences" of Scripture. He meets the dead man before the place of sepulture is reached. A little later and he would have been buried; a little earlier and he would have been at home lying in the darkened room, and no one might have called the Lord's attention to him. The Lord knows how to arrange all things; his forecasts are true to the tick of the clock. III. That hush was not long, for speedily the Great Quickener entered upon his gracious work. This is our third point: JESUS IS ABLE TO WORK THE MIRACLE OF LIFE-GIVING. Jesus Christ has life in Himself, and He quickeneth whom He will (John v. 21). He could derive no aid from that lifeless form. The spectators were sure that he was dead, for they were carrying him out to bury him. Even so, you, O sinner, cannot save yourself, neither can any of us, or all of us, save you. Your help must come from above. 2. While the bier stood still, Jesus spoke to the dead young man, spoke to him personally: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Lord Jesus, art Thou not here? What is wanted is Thy personal call. Speak, Lord, we beseech Thee! 3. "Young man," said He, "arise"; and

He spake as if the man had been alive. This is the gospel way. Our faith enables us in God's name to command dead men to live, and they do live. 4. But the Saviour, you observe, spoke with His own authority—"Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Neither Elijah nor Elisha could thus have spoken; but He who spoke thus was very God of very God. 5. The miracle was wrought straightway: for this young man, to the astonishment of all about him, sat up. It did not take a month, nor a week, nor an hour, nay, not even five minutes. IV. Our time has gone, and although we have a wide subject we may not linger. I must close by noticing that THIS WILL PRODUCE VERY GREAT RESULTS. To give life to the dead is no little matter. 1. The great result was manifest, first, in the young man. 2. A new life also had begun in reference to his mother. What a great result for her was the raising of her dead son! 3. What was the next result? Well, all the neighbours feared and glorified God. These prodigies of power in the moral world are quite as remarkable as prodigies in the material world. We want conversion, so practical, so real, so Divine, that those who doubt will not be able to doubt, because they see in them the hand of God. 4. Finally, note that it not only surprised the neighbours and impressed them, but the rumour of it went everywhere. Who can tell? If a convert is made this morning, the result of that conversion may be felt for thousands of years, if the world stands so long; aye, it shall be felt when a thousand thousand years have passed away, even throughout eternity. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The widow and her dead son*:—1. The mystery of God's providence is encircling our daily lives. God had planned that meeting from eternity. Nothing happens by chance. Every event in the dullest day has a purpose. 2. And a further consideration must of course be our dear Lord's tender sympathy with mourners, and His hatred of our last enemy, death. (*T. B. Dover, M. A.*) *The widow of Nain*:—Such were the works of our Saviour's earthly ministry; and it is of no little moment that we enter fully into their significance. By them, then (1), He manifested forth His glory; they were the countersigns and credentials of His mission. By them (2), again, He showed the infinite compassion wherewith His heart was full. By them (3) He lightened the burden of human suffering. Further (4), they are the abiding witness to the Church of the truth of His Divinity. These mighty works bring before us the true glory of our redeemed state. They show us, in the person of our Lord, for what each one of us is training who of His mercy have been baptized into Him, and are daily seeking to grow up into Him in all things. They show us why and how we should strive after a closer union with Him; that we, too, may triumph with Him over these rebellious powers, under which our race has so long groaned. For He is the healer of our spirits as He is of our bodies. Here, too, His words are "spirit and are life"; for with them goeth forth the mighty Spirit of life. He meets us bearing forth our dead hopes through the city's gate; He meets us when our hearts are faint and weary; when we feel the emptiness of all with which this world has sought to cheat our earnest longings for the great, the real, and the true. He stands beside the bier, He bids us weep no more, He stops our mourning steps; the dead hear Him; hopes of youth, aspirations of heart, dreams of purity, of reality, of high service, with which once our spirits kept glad company, but which had withered, and sunk, and died, as the hot and scorching sun of common life arose upon us—these revive; they sit up; they begin to speak; they find a voice; they turn to Him; and He gives them back to us, and bids us cherish them for Him. On Him, then, may our affections fix. On Him, the Healer, the Restorer of humanity, may our hearts learn to lean the secret burden of their being. 1. If earthly trouble is upon us, let us fly to Him; let us beware of all those who would cheer us without Him; let us be always sure that the poison of the asp is hidden under their softest and most enticing words. 2. Or, is it the heavier burden of spiritual trouble under which we groan? Let us see here that His purpose is the same. For why does God suffer this to harass oftentimes His faithful servants, but to teach them to lean more simply upon Him? (*Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.*) *Young man, Arise!*—There is something specially touching and impressive in a village funeral. In a small population every family is known; and death, when it enters, throws a general sadness and gloom around. There were several things that combined to make this funeral peculiarly affecting. 1. Raise up for a moment the sheet that is spread over the corpse (for the coffin is borne on an open bier), and look on that pale countenance—it is the face of a young man. Perhaps it was consumption that laid its withering hand upon him, or fever may have snapped the thread of life; but there he is, cold, motionless, and still. I think death never seems so utterly cruel, as when it cuts one off in the bloom of

opening manhood. And yet, mysterious as is the event, and deeply affecting, it is no uncommon one. It occurs every week in London. Even in this church I have seen some of the most bright and promising lives suddenly brought to a close. Your youthful strength gives you no guarantee that death is far away. Nobody steps out of the world when he expects to do so. Though for twenty years you have never had an ache or a pain, you can make no safe calculation about the future. A fine, amiable, robust fellow of twenty, who used to worship here, was sitting in his office one day, when a fellow-clerk came up merrily, and slapping him upon the back, said, "Well, how are you this morning?" That good-humoured blow injured the spine, and after some weeks of almost total paralysis, the young man was borne to his last resting-place. 2. There is another thing that adds much to the impressiveness of this funeral: the young man is an only son. Well, I imagine that, let a family circle be ever so large, the parents feel there is not one of them that can be spared. Every one is dear, every one is precious. A rich and benevolent gentleman, who had no children of his own, was entering a steamboat one day, when he noticed a poor man with a group of little ones around him, all in a state of pitiful destitution. Stepping up to him, he proposed to take one of the children, and adopt it as his own. "I think," said he, "it will be a great relief to you." "A what!" exclaimed the other. "A relief to you, I said." "Such a relief to me, sir," rejoined the poor man, "as to have my right arm cut off; it may be necessary, but only a parent can know the trial." But, an only son, in whom all the hopes and the joys of the parents centre: ah! it is long since the extreme bitterness of such a bereavement passed into a proverb (Zech. xii. 10). 3. I have not yet finished the picture. You will not wonder that this funeral created exceptional sympathy, and that "much people" of Nain joined the procession, when I remind you that this young man's mother was a widow. The light of her dwelling was now put out; the comfort and support of her advancing years taken away. No doubt he had been a good son, or his death would not have created so profound a feeling in the place. 4. With Dr. Trench, I believe that this majestic voice was something more than a summons back to this mortal life—that it included also an awakening of the young man to a higher and a spiritual life; with nothing short of which would the Saviour have "delivered him to his mother." He gave him back to her who bare him, not merely to be for a few years longer her earthly companion, but, as now a saved and regenerate man, to be to her a joy both for time and for eternity. (1) Arise from the death of unbelief. Conversion is a passing from death unto life. When you become a saved man, it is as though a corpse were quickened into life. (2) Arise from the bondage of sin. You cannot afford to be lost. The interests at stake are too tremendous to be imperilled by delay. Won't you yield, and say, "Yes, Lord, at Thy bidding I arise, to live from this day for Thee"? But some young man will say, "I feel the force of all you say; I know I ought to be a Christian, and shall never be happy till I am one; but it is no use trying; sin has got the upper hand of me, and when certain temptations meet me, I fall, and must fall, and will fall." I remember of a young man talking to me in that style, and saying, "I believe the gospel to be true: that Christ is an omnipotent Saviour, I have not a doubt. I can fully trust Him, so far as that is concerned; and yet I dare not profess Him, because I know that a particular sin has complete mastery over me, and I am not going to be a hypocrite." But I took him by the buttonhole, and said, "Let me read a verse to you," and then I turned to John i. 12—"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God"; and I showed him that, when one accepts Christ, he accepts Him, not merely as a Saviour from guilt and from hell, but as a Saviour from lust, and from vile passions, and from evil thoughts; and that He must be trusted for this just as for the other. (3) Arise from the apathy of indolence. The great mass of nominal Christians are asleep. The only thing they want religion for is its comfort; it gives them a pillow to lay their heads on. Is that the purpose for which *you* have enlisted? When the stern Scottish chief was walking round his encampment one night, he saw his own son lying on a pillow of snow which he had carefully gathered and packed together before he lay down; the father kicked the pillow from under his son's head and said, "Come, I will have no effeminacy here. I want robust men in my army." Oh, how many in Christ's army are fast asleep, not on a bolster of snow, but on a pillow of down. "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Arise from the slumber of lethargy and come and grapple with the foe. (*J. Thain Davidson. D.D.*)

The raising of the widow's son:—Some places have been made famous by a single incident. Nain is the village of the widow's son whom Jesus raised from the dead.

By no other event is Nain known. For a moment the light of heaven fell upon it, and haloed it with a glory which has attracted the eyes of all the Christian ages, and then it disappeared into its former obscurity. The site of the ancient village is well authenticated; it is occupied by the modern Nein, a squalid, miserable collection of huts, situated on the north-western edge of Jebel el Duhy, or the "Little Hermon," where the hill slopes down into the plain of Esdraelon. Our Lord came to Nain on His way south to keep the Passover. The day before He had healed the centurion's servant at Capernaum; and now, after having walked eighteen miles since the cool hours of early morning, He toiled slowly in the afternoon up the steep slope leading to the village. He was tired and footsore. But there was work for the Father awaiting Him, in the doing of which He would find His meat and drink. They were carrying a dead man to his burial on the east side of the village, where the rough rock was full of sepulchral caves. 1. It would be difficult to make the picture of desolation more complete than the evangelist has done by a few simple words. Notice that the three recorded miracles of restoration from the dead were performed upon young persons. 2. We are apt to look upon the fact of Jesus meeting the funeral procession at the precise moment when it was issuing out of the gate of the city as a mere chance or fortunate coincidence. But nothing really occurs by chance; there is no such divinity in the universe. 3. "And when the Lord saw her He had compassion on her." It is not said that the bereaved mother addressed Jesus. But He knew all the circumstances of the case. Never was there a human heart so feeling as His. The very word employed in our version to express His sympathy denotes His exquisite tenderness. It signifies the unutterable pity which a mother has for her offspring. Jesus Himself was, strictly speaking, the only son of His mother; and, as Joseph was in all probability dead by this time, she, too, was a widow, worn down by the duties amd cares of a humble home. We cannot wonder, then, that the woman who came before Him in agonizing circumstances, similar to those in which He would soon have to leave His own mother, drew from His heart a peculiar compassion, and induced Him, unsolicited, to perform for her one of His rarest and supremest acts of mercy. 4. "And said unto her, Weep not." This "weep not" different from that addressed to the hired mourners of Jairus's household. There it was uttered in indignation, for the purpose of restoring quiet; here it is said in deepest sympathy, for the purpose of cheering and soothing. How often do these words proceed from the lips of earthly comforters! No argument here for stoicism under sorrow. No one need be ashamed of tears, since our Saviour's eyes were filled with them. The very existence of tears shows that God has designed them and has a use for them. When Christ then, says, "Weep not," He does not mean to forbid tears, or to make us ashamed of them; but to give us a reason, a sufficieut cause for drying our tears. 5. "He came and touched the bier." Not necessary for Him to do this, so far as the exercise of His Divine power was concerned. But there was deep significance in what He did. He violated the letter of the law that He might keep its spirit. 6. "And they that bare him stood still." They were struck by a sudden consciousness that they were in the presence of One who had a right to stop them even in their progress to the tomb; and they waited silently and reverently for what He might say or do. What a scene for the genius of a great painter does the imagination picture at this sublime expectant moment, when the power of God is about to be visibly displayed. The mother bowed down with grief, and yet lifting up to the face of Jesus eager eyes, in which a new-born hope struggles with the tears of despair; the bearers of the bier standing still with looks of awe and astonishment; the motley groups of the funeral procession, and the multitude who followed Jesus in their picturesque Oriental dresses, turning to one another as if asking the meaning of this strange proceeding; the calm, holy form of Jesus touching the bier, and the last red level rays of the sun setting behind the green hills on the western horizon, haloing with a sacred glow the head of the Redeemer, and the shrouded figure that lies motionless and unconscious on the bier, speaking touchingly of that sun that shall no more go down! 7. The stillness is broken by words such as human ears had never heard before—"Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." How suggestive of omnipotence is that "I." 8. "And he that was dead sat up and began to speak." What did he speak about? His lips were sealed upon those things which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Our Lord Himself, after His resurrection, said not a single word regarding what He had seen and heard during the three days when His body was in Joseph's tomb and His soul in Hades. How opposed is all this to the so-called revelations of spirits, given to those who call themselves spiritualists.

9. "And He delivered him to his mother." Who can describe the unutterable gladness of that restoration? The revulsion of feeling must have been painful in its very intensity. But the evangelist has left a veil over it, for there are feelings with which a stranger may not intermeddle. Truly the promise was literally fulfilled to her, "Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning." 10. Upon the spectators the effect of the wonderful miracle was overwhelming. A great fear fell upon them, that strange instinctive fear produced by sudden contact with the invisible world, which we feel even in the presence of our beloved dead, on account of the awful mystery in which they are shrouded. They glorified God that the long period during which there had been no prophet, no supernatural sign, no communication between heaven and earth, nothing but the continuous motion of the wheels of providence along the same beaten track, and the uniform action of the dull unchanging signals of nature that carried the general despatches of the universe, had come to an end at last. They had open vision once more, and a sense of the nearness of heaven. But far short were their impressions and conceptions, however vivid at the moment, of the glorious truth. (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*) *The story of Nain*:—I. THE WORDS OF CHRIST'S CONSOLATION WERE SIMPLE, AS ALL CONSOLATION OUGHT TO BE. Too much talking spoils comfort. Give few words, but let them be crowded with the infinite of feeling. II. CHRIST PUT THIS COMPASSION OF HIS AT ONCE INTO ACTION. No sooner had the feelings of pity arisen within Him than He came forward and touched the bier, did what He could to help the woman. That is a deep lesson to us, though a commonplace one. What an absurd self-deception it is to call ourselves Christians if we never, like Christ, come forward and touch the bier. III. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF DIVINE POWER IN THE MIND OF CHRIST. Contrast His consciousness of Divine power with His lovely, sad, and hidden life. IV. IT WAS ALWAYS FOR PROFOUND MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ENDS THAT CHRIST USED THE POWER HE WAS CONSCIOUS OF POSSESSING. V. THE SPIRITUAL LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THE MIRACLE. 1. Often in the midst of death that we meet the true life. 2. Every miracle has a two-fold object, to meet some physical want or distress, and to point to Christ Himself as the one alone who could relieve the higher wants of the spirit of man. It is with us spiritually as it was with the widow's son. Upon the path of life comes Christ, and touches the bier, and that which was dead arises. (*Stopford Brooke, M.A.*) *The widow's son of Nain*:—This miracle has much in common with Christ's other two miracles of raising from the dead. The same calm authority, the same Divine self-confidence is evident in them all. I. CHRIST'S IMPULSE OF COMPASSION. We are not satisfied with our knowledge of any man until we have seen something of his *impulses*. 1. See how this illustrates the greatness of Christ. His air was not distraught. His sympathies were as prompt, His considerateness as full and tender, as though not a care was on His spirit. 2. Remember, too, how Christ subordinated family affection to the call of the gospel. How hard and irresponsive, how cold and unsympathetic, are men who have sacrificed affection to obedience. 3. This gives us a view of God which we sorely need. Nature reveals one whom the strong may adore; a God for the happy. Christ reveals God as coming down to us in compassion and tender personal sympathy. II. THE SIMPLICITY OF CHRIST'S COMPASSION. For simple unmingled grief, simple unmingled comfort is the only balm. He could afford often to dispense with speech, because His life was unmistakably a witness for God. Simplicity is the great want of modern Christian life. If it were deeper it would be less fussy. (*A. Mackennal, D.D.*) *The widow of Nain*:—I. THE BEREAVED MOTHER. Painter, as well as physician, we can believe St. Luke to have been. Desolation was never more graphically and pathetically summed up than in the words, "The only son," &c. Then, too, it is hard for the young and strong to leave the world. Cut off prematurely, sayest thou? What if it be that the corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, and thus bear much fruit. Bereaved mother, a word to thee! If thy son is dear to thee, think him as much so to thy Saviour. II. OUR LORD'S ATTITUDE ON THIS OCCASION. 1. In the associations of the miracle there is much of deepest interest: (*a*) Our Lord's power to grapple with sudden emergencies. (*b*) His sensitive compassion. (*c*) The paucity of His words. 2. The miracle itself: All its details are commonplace, entirely divested of any clothing of the would-be wonderful. (*a*) In the mercy there were the elements of fresh trials. Again there were all the anxieties to undergo, all the battle again to fight, the prospect again of severance. (*b*) Why are miracles of resurrection no longer possible? Because there is no longer the same end to be served. (*c*) Such miracle typical. Death a type of sin. Renewal of human

nature a resurrection with Christ. III. THE PEOPLE WHO ACCOMPANIED THE MOURNER. 1. Gratifying as their sympathy would be, the very crowds would cause her to feel more solitary. 2. In the feelings excited by the performance of the miracle, we trace no thought for those of the mother. We find only superstitious fear, which, in its turn, gives place to wild enthusiasm. The words of the people seem to denote that the miracle recalled those of Elijah and Elisha, and the prophet's vision (Ezek. xxxvii). They indulged in sentimental Messianic dreams; they built themselves up afresh in national pride; they gave themselves over to self-important babbling. We have only here a fresh illustration of that false spirit to which it was our Lord's sad destiny to minister. With all their enthusiasm He knew that there was no real life, no deep apprehension of the character of the truths He had come to teach. (*W. J. Gordon.*) *Gospel for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity*:—I. SOME MIRACLES OF THIS KIND WERE NEEDED, IN ORDER TO GIVE A FULL VIEW OF THE WORK AND POWER OF CHRIST. II. Of this most striking class of miracles ONLY THREE ARE RECORDED, AND WE MUST SUPPOSE ONLY THREE WERE WROUGHT. For this infrequency there may have been many reasons. 1. A desire to make the miracle more striking by its isolation. 2. The unbelief of the people. Christ is never asked to raise the dead. Even Martha just hints and no more, that God will grant whatever He asks. III. THERE IS A GRADATION IN THE MIRACLES, LEADING UP, AS IT WERE, TO A CLIMAX. Just dead; twenty-four hours dead; four days dead. In all cases, the fact of the death well-ascertained, and abundance of witnesses secured. What must be the feelings of a man between one death and another? IV. A MIRACLE PRODUCES ITS EFFECT ACCORDING TO THE STATE OF MIND OF THOSE WHO WITNESS IT. It does not necessarily carry conviction. Here a fear comes on all, and they glorify God. In the second miracle they are astonished with a great astonishment. At the crowning miracle, the hatred against Jesus having become more intense, some went their way to the Pharisees and reported what Jesus had done. (*G. Calthrop, M.A.*) *The miracle of Nain*:—How splendid the career of Jesus! Observe here—I. WHAT THE REDEEMER BEHELD. II. WHAT CHRIST FELT—"Compassion." His eye affected His heart. 1. Agreeable to His nature. 2. Agreeable to all His works. III. WHAT CHRIST SAID—"Weep not." Was it not a very harsh and unreasonable demand? 1. Might she not have reminded Him that to weep was in accordance with the feelings of our nature? 2. Have not the best of men wept? 3. This was an extremely afflictive case. Still He insists that she must weep not. We shall soon perceive the reason: He was about to remove the cause of sorrow. IV. WHAT THE REDEEMER DID. 1. He touched the bier. Arrested it in its course; bearers felt it impossible to advance; finger of God was upon it. Hence they stood still—astonished, amazed. 2. He commanded the corpse to arise. Although dead, he heard the voice of the Son of God, and lived. His spirit heard it in Hades—the invisible state, and came back. 3. He delivered him to his mother. Christ might have insisted on the consecration of himself to His service, as a disciple, evangelist, or apostle. Compassion commenced, and compassion gave the finishing stroke to this splendid and Divine scene. 4. The people glorified God. The glory of God was the grand object and end of Christ's undertakings. Application: See in this young man—1. A striking picture of the natural state of man. 2. Learn the only means of restoration. 3. God is greatly glorified in the salvation of sinners. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Christian attendance at a funeral*:—What are the sentiments with which we attend a funeral? I. OUR CONDUCT IN RELATION TO THE DECEASED AND HIS SURVIVING FAMILY. 1. Let us attend the funeral not merely for the sake of politeness, but out of Christian charity. (1) Such attendance is in conformity with human nature. (2) It is beneficial to ourselves, reminding us that we are brethren, children of the same heavenly Father. 2. Let us succour the deceased, by remembering him in our prayers, &c. 3. Let us console the family of the deceased. (1) Let us weep with them that weep. Compassion is like balsam. (2) Let us speak comfort to the grief-stricken family. Remind them of the dispositions of Divine Providence, of immortality, and future reunion. (3) Let us perform consoling works. II. OUR CONDUCT WITH REGARD TO OURSELVES. A funeral is a warning to us. 1. Look at the corpse. (1) What has it been? What we are: full of life and health, full of hopes, prospects, and plans for the future. Was this person young or old, rich or poor, beautiful or deformed, learned or illiterate? It does not matter. No one is secured against death. The only important question is this: Was the dead person virtuous or wicked? (2) What is it now? What we all shall be: a hideous corpse, deprived of life and beauty, deprived of all advan-

tages of mind, form, and earthly conditions. Only one thing has been spared by death: the good and evil deeds done in life. (3) How has it come to this state? In the same way as that by which we must pass—death. Has death come unexpected, or after an early warning? When and where? (4) What will it be? Like every one of us, a prey to vermin, an inhabitant of the grave. So passes the glory of the world. But, at the same time, it is the seed of a future body—either glorious or ignominious. 2. Let us turn our eyes to Jesus, the Life-giver. (*Tschupik.*) *A bereaved mother*:—The mother of poor Touda, who heard that I wished to see him once more, led me to the house where the body was laid. The narrow space of the room was crowded; about two hundred women were sitting and standing around, singing mourning songs to doleful and monotonous airs. As I stood looking, filled with solemn thoughts, in spite of, or rather because of, perhaps, the somewhat ludicrous contrasts about me, the mother of Touda approached. She threw herself at the foot of her dead son, and begged him to speak to her once more. And then, when the corpse did not answer, she uttered a shriek, so long, so piercing, such a wail of love and grief, that tears came into my eyes. Poor African mother! she was literally as one sorrowing without hope; for these poor people count on nothing beyond the present life. For them there is no hope beyond the grave. "All is done," they say, with an inexpressible sadness of conviction that sometimes gave me a heartache. As I left the hut, thinking these things, the wailing recommenced. It would be kept up by the women, who are the official mourners on these occasions, till the corpse was buried. (*Du Chaillu.*) *The voice of a funeral*:—Every funeral is God's repetition of His anathema against sin. When our friends are carried to the silent sepulchre the Lord of all does in fact say to us, "See what a bitter thing sin is; it takes the light from the eye and the music from the ear; it silences the voice of song, and palsies the hand of skill; it quenches the fire of love upon the heart's altar, and removes the light of understanding from the brain's judgment seat, and gives over the creature once so lovely and beloved to become a putrid mass, a horror and a loathing, so that affection itself cries out, 'Bury my dead out of my sight.'" Thus every gravestone and every green hillock in the cemetery may be regarded as the still small voice of God solemnly condemning sin. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A visible sermon*:—Archbishop Leighton, returning home one morning, was asked by his sister, "Have you been hearing a sermon?" "I've met a sermon," was the answer. The sermon he had met was a corpse on its way to the grave. The preacher was Death. Greatest of street-preachers!—nor laws nor penalties can silence. No tramp of horses, nor rattling of carriages, nor rush and din of crowded streets can drown his voice. In heathen, pagan, and Protestant countries, in monarchies and free states, in town and country, the solemn pomp of discourse is going on. In some countries a man is imprisoned for even dropping a tract. But what prison will hold this awful preacher? What chains will bind him? He lifts up his voice in the very presence of tyrants, and laughs at their threats. He walks unobstructed through the midst of their guards, and delivers the messages which trouble their security and embitter their pleasures. If we do not meet his sermons, still we cannot escape them. He comes to our abode, and, taking the dearest object of our love as his text, what sermons does he deliver to us! His oft-repeated sermons still enforce the same doctrine, still press upon us the same exhortation, "Surely, every man walketh in a vain show. Surely they are disquieted in vain." "Here we have no continuing city." *Power of sympathy*:—Happy is the man who has that in his soul which acts upon the dejected as April airs upon violet roots. Gifts from the hand are silver and gold; but the heart gives that which neither silver nor gold can buy. To be full of goodness, full of cheerfulness, full of sympathy, full of helpful hope, causes a man to carry blessings of which he is himself as unconscious as a lamp of its own shining. Such a one moves on human life as stars move on dark seas to bewildered mariners; as the sun wheels, bringing all the seasons with him from the south. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Silent sympathy*:—Bishop Myrel had the art of sitting down, and holding his tongue for hours, by the side of a man who had lost the wife he loved, or of a mother bereaved of her child. (*Victor Hugo.*) *The compassion of mankind a sign of the compassion of mankind's Head and Lord*:—Contrast between the two compassions of which the bereaved mother was the object. Helpless compassion of multitude; mighty compassion of Christ. I. The Father sent His Son into the world to adopt and justify these common and daily human compassions, and to reveal what had all along been implied though hidden in them. II. Jesus Christ shared in the compassion of the Jewish mourners, and

shares now in such compassion everywhere because He is the Son of Man. III. The text, however, reminds us that He who comes to meet the funerals of our kind and unites His compassion with our compassion, is more even than the Son of Man, the Head of our race. "And when *the Lord* saw her." The Son of Man, who is the Lord, has compassion with humanity in its troubles. (*T. Hancock.*) *The power of Christ's voice* :—Only three such reprieves recorded in the Gospels. Not fewer, that there might be no doubt as to the fact; not more, that the fact might not be too common. 1. All whom our Lord called back to life were comparatively young. It was death as a blight that He checked and restrained. 2. In all three cases it was kindness to the living which chiefly moved Christ to raise the dead. In each act we see Jesus in a higher character than a worker of miracles; it showed Him as the binder of broken hearts. 3. The resurrection of the dead is the result of the Divine power of Christ. In the most stupendous of all His works of power He put away secondary means; the creative command went direct from the creative voice to the matter and the spirit which were bound to obey that voice. The mode of working is majestic, Divine. 4. The three risings which took place at the command of Christ were preludes and foreshadowings of His own. But they did but imperfectly resemble that one complete resurrection. Christ rose at no word of command, but because He had life in Himself. 5. Taking our stand upon the truth that Christ is risen from the dead, we may see in these revivals the foreshadowings of that universal revival, when all the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live. If you do not hear and obey the gentle, persuasive, loving voice of Christ now, it will be ill with you when that great voice sounds which will call all of us from our graves, and which we shall then be compelled to hear and obey. (*The late Dean of Ely.*) *Visit to Nain* :—We crossed Hermon, and found ourselves in a small decayed village on the edge of another bay of Esdraelon, which runs between the hills of Galilee and Hermon to the north. It was Nain. It is poor, confused and filthy, like every village in Palestine, but its situation is very fine, as commanding a good view of the plain, with the opposite hills, and especially of Tabor, that rises like a noble wooded island at the head of the green bay. And Nain, in the light of the Gospel-history, is another of those fountains of living water opened up by the Divine Saviour, which have flowed through all lands to refresh the thirsty. How many widows, for eighteen centuries, have been comforted; how many broken hearts soothed and healed; by the story of Nain—by the unsought and unexpected sympathy of Jesus, and by His power and majesty! What has Nineveh or Babylon been to the world in comparison with Nain? And this is the wonder constantly suggested by the insignificant villages of Palestine, that their names have become parts, as it were, of the deepest experiences of the noblest persons of every land and every age. (*Norman Macleod, D.D.*)

THE WIDOW OF NAIN.

Forth from the city gate the pitying crowd
Followed the stricken mourner. They came near
The place of burial, and, with straining hands,
Closer upon her breast she clasped the pall,
And with a gasping sob, quick as a child's,
And an inquiring wildness flashing through
The thin grey lashes of her fevered eyes,
She came where Jesus stood beside the way.
He looked upon her, and His heart was moved.
"Weep not!" He said; and as they stayed the bier,
And at His bidding laid it at His feet,
He gently drew the pall from out her grasp,
And laid it back in silence from the dead.
With troubled wonder the mute throng drew near,
And gazed on His calm looks. A minute's space
He stood and pray'd. Then taking the cold hand,
He said, "Arise!" And instantly the breast
Heaved in its cerements, and a sudden flush
Ran through the lines of the divided lips,
And with a murmur of his mother's name,
He trembled and sat upright in his shroud.
And while the mourner hung upon his neck,
Jesus went calmly on His way to Nain. (*N. P. Willis.*)

Vers. 19–22. **Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?**—*John's doubting message to Jesus*:—1. Much discussion has taken place concerning John's doubt, whether it was real or affected; and if real, what was its cause? We believe there was doubt in the mind of the Baptist—serious doubt—arising out of no personal or petty source, but caused by the way in which the Messianic career of Jesus was developing itself. 2. This doubt was not in regard to the identity of the worker of the works reported to John with Jesus, but in regard to the nature of the works viewed as Messianic. But why should John stumble at those works, so full of the spirit of love and mercy? Just because they were works of mercy. These were not the sort of works he had expected Messiah to busy Himself with; at all events, so exclusively. Cf. Jonah's zeal for righteousness. 3. The reply sent back by Jesus to John amounted to this, that the sure marks that He was the coming One, the Christ, were just the very works which had awakened John's surprise. 4. Having recounted rapidly His mighty works, Jesus appended the reflection, "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me." We are not to find in the words traces either of harshness towards John or of wounded feeling in the speaker. The tone of compassion rather than of severity is audible in the utterance. Jesus felt keenly how much John missed by being in such a state of mind that that in His own work which was most godlike was a stumbling-block to him. Translated into positive form the reflection means, "Blessed are they to whom the mercy and the grace of which I am full, and whereof My ministry is the manifestation and outflow, are no stumbling-block, but rather worthy of all acceptation." (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *The test of Christianity*:—1. Jesus deliberately declined to rest His claims upon any other grounds than the testimony of His Father, a testimony which shone in the truth of His words, and in the heavenly character of His mission. 2. If the Master Himself is willing, nay demands, to be judged by results, manifestly organizations and churches that claim to be called by His name must not shrink from the same test. 3. The only proof of your being in contact with the living Saviour, the only proof that you rightly apprehend and sincerely embrace Him, is the result in your own hearts and conduct. No religion is worth anything that is not a power. (*E. W. Shalders, B.A.*) *Looking for another Christ*:—There are times when, through the disappointments and failures of our personal religious lives, it may be necessary to look for another Christ than the Christ we have already known. 1. There are some who have been restless for months, perhaps for years, about their sin. They have appealed to Christ again and again, and the peace of Christ has not come to them. They are tempted to put this question. Christ may reply by pointing them to the great triumphs of His mercy by which they are surrounded. Go to Christ with all your trouble, and with a clear and vivid remembrance of His death, and you cannot put this question. 2. There are some who feel that their Christian life has not had the power and brightness they hoped for. This, also, often arises from a defective knowledge of Christ. Perhaps you have forgotten that He is not only a Saviour, but a Prince, and that you must accept His law as the rule of your life, and strive to get His will done on earth as the will of God is done in heaven. 3. This question may be suggested by the general condition and history of the world. A large part of the world is still unsaved: the misery Jesus came to console still largely unconsoled. Do you look for another Christ? Can the contents of His revelation be anyhow enriched? Can there be more careful warnings, more glorious promises, more compassion, more gentleness and beauty, than there are in Him and His gospel? 4. We do not look for the coming of another Christ, but the Christ whom we know will come in another form, to complete in power and majesty the work which He began in weakness and in shame. (*R. W. Dale, D.D.*) *The answer of Jesus to John*:—It seems to me that here the Lord prescribes to His Church the answer she should give in all days when men rise up and question whether He comes from God, when men rise up to say to His Church, "Are you the kingdom of God? are you the Divine society established upon earth to be the home of the new life, and the source of a wide-spreading influence? Are you the city set upon a hill that cannot be hid?" When such questions are asked, the Church must be ready, not merely to give proofs of her ancient origin, her orthodox title-deeds drawn from the dusty safes of her theology, but she must be able to say, "Look at my life, my work. See what I am doing for the poor, the destitute, the oppressed, and judge me as you find me." Can the Church of God, in these days, bear such an appeal as that? Can she say, "Look at the asylums I have founded and support for the poor, the lame, the halt, and the blind! Look at my children giving devoted labour in the

lowest dens of your cities; at my sons faithfully striving for the truth in the halls of your legislature; and see in juster laws and a purer life, and a more brotherly relation between man and man, proofs of the power of my spirit, and of the truth of my labours"? She must answer so, and so must you and I, when challenged to prove that we are of God. We hear a great deal in these days about answers to the infidel, about arguments philosophical, historical, and scientific, which shall have the power, in the hands of skilful men, of silencing the antagonist. But a better argument and a mightier that any of these, an argument that never fails, is that derived from the fruits and results of religion in the life. The man who reads your history with criticism, and meets your argument with argument, will bare his head and bow his neck before the spectacle of a holy and devoted life. *That* he sees is true, whatever else be false; *that* is of God, whatever becomes of books and institutions. (*Bishop Moorhouse.*) *The message of John the Baptist*:—I. THE MESSAGE. What did it mean? 1. To convince his disciples? Not suited to do it; suggesting doubtfulness in their master; impairing previous witness. 2. To reassure himself? At variance with (1) his character, testimony, Divine assurance. (2) Words of the Lord (ver. 24), aimed to prevent the supposition. (3) The occasion—"When he had heard the works of Christ"—the last work being the raising of the dead. 3. Message not of uncertainty, but of impatience. Things do not go as the Baptist expected. The world left in doubt. Opinion taking wrong turn for want of distinct assertion. Works of Christ, but no proclamation of Christ. It ought to be made. The time is come. He the proper person to obtain it. He will demand it in the interests of all. II. THE REPLY. 1. Answer. (1) To what was said. The facts are sufficient answer. (2) To what was meant. The method will not be changed. The Lord must choose His own course. Men must see and judge. Facts first, then assertions. 2. Warning. There is danger in this disposition—danger of questioning God's methods; restlessness, dissatisfaction, diminution of attachment, failure of faith. (*Canon T. D. Bernard.*) *Moral evidence of Christianity superior to miracles*:—1. It is evident John did not clearly apprehend the spirituality of the kingdom Christ was to introduce. Like the apostles, he expected the kingdom of God would come with observation, instead of its being of a slow, quiet, spiritual growth. He looked for something more visible. There were the remains of the old dispensation mixed up with his ideas of its nature; too much of the Old Testament theocracy. 2. The remarkable manner in which the idea of the coming of Christ had taken possession of the minds of men at the time John sent his disciples to inquire respecting it. The familiar designation of the Messiah was "the Comer." "Him that is to come" is but the common version of the world's designation of the Messiah. *The* Comer, as if with Him came everything else desirable. The coming of all future good depended upon *His* coming. 3. I might notice the world's slowness in recognizing Christ as the Messiah, and the circumstances which occasioned that slowness to admit His claim. 4. He proceeded to enforce His claim by evidence corresponding with His character, and their necessities, and by evidence alone, the result of which He is prepared to wait (Luke vii. 21-23). As if He had said, "Go and tell John My kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and the employment of other than spiritual means would be uncongenial and obstructive." 5. That our Lord not only employed evidence in contradistinction from worldly display and physical force, but that He presented to these inquirers and the multitude moral evidence as superior to miraculous. I. CHRIST'S PREACHING CONSISTED, IN A REMARKABLE DEGREE, OF DEEDS. 1. Thus on this occasion, the God-like reply to the inquiry, "Art Thou He that should come?" His deeds spoke. He entered into no argumentative defence of His claims—"Actions speak louder than words." "In the same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight." He left the stupendous miracles He had performed to speak for themselves (Psa. xix. 1-3). The heavens had done much, and now He is in the world to develop what the heavens could not declare. It was not to be expected that His more full manifestation would be verbal merely, or chiefly, for how can speech, which is but the symbol of thought, convey ideas of what thought cannot grasp respecting "God, who is a spirit," immaterial, infinite, invisible, incomprehensible. Speech fails to do justice to the finite, the visible, the material, and comprehensible; to convey the greatest and best conceptions of our own minds. 2. Christ's verbal teaching related especially to Himself. Each portion of it was either the vindication of acts He had performed, or an intimation of some purpose he was about to accomplish, or a development of the kingdom He was then establishing—relating to its

nature, origin, character, or growth. 3. This distinctive and important fact supplies a reply to the following objections. (1) The first objection we refer to, more frequently felt than expressed, relates to the greater fulness of evangelical doctrines in the Epistles than in the Gospels. Although the latter comprise the discourses and teaching of Christ Himself, we reply to this by saying, "Christ came not so much to preach the gospel as to procure it, to establish and confirm it, to perform the deeds, the record of which constitutes the gospel. (2) The second objection urged from the time of Celsus downwards is, that parallels to some of our Lord's sayings are to be found in the writings of Plato, Isocrates, and others. Hence it has been inferred, absurdly enough, that the gospel had been anticipated—that Christianity was not original. To which we reply, admitting the supposed resemblances, the wonder is that they are so extremely few—two or three mere maxims of morality, and these but the distant reverberations of Sinai's echoes of the ancient and moral law. What is Christianity? Nothing but a few maxims of morality? We triumphantly point inquirers for Christianity to her spirit and her works—her resemblance to her Lord. II. HIS WORKS WERE WONDERFUL. It is a frequent description given of God in the Old Testament, "He only doeth wonderful things." To achieve wonders is the prerogative of God. "He alone doeth wonders"; and this called forth the grateful praises of His people. Not only is God the wonder-worker, but strictly speaking, all that God does are wonders, only wonders. The atom is as an atom not less wonderful than a world. Both owe their origin to His creative power, and are impressed with the Divine signature. Was it strange then that when "God was manifested in the flesh," that when *He* appeared amongst us, who was predicted as "the wonderful," His works and deeds should be "mighty signs and wonders." There was a sense in which He could do nothing which was not wonderful; His constitution made it impossible that anything ordinary could emanate from Him. III. HIS WONDERS WERE MERCIES. 1. All His miracles were miracles of mercy. Nor was it necessary to alter His laws, imposed at the first on nature, they suffered no violence from His mercy; on the contrary, they harmonized with it. In giving sight to the blind, He was but restoring the eye to the use and exercise of its proper function. His power He used as a trust to be administered for man's good alone. 2. Besides the present happiness, His mercies conveyed in the physical and mental benefits, miraculously bestowed, they had a higher value, a symbolical meaning, pointing to spiritual necessities and supplies, to the things relating to our redemption. 3. His miracles demonstrated His power, and our interest in turning the elements of earth to account of spiritual uses, relating them to heaven. In opening the blind eye He denoted that He came to be the Light of the world, and that we need that the eye of the understanding should be open to receive that light. The greatest wonder was that of His incarnation. In comparison with this wonder, all mere acts of His power were less splendid. This was the long desired and promised wonder. The ancient tabernacle foreshadowed His tabernacling among men. The temple with its indwelling Shekinah symbolically predicted this. Every instance of union between God and man, and the union of soul and body, prefigured this infinitely more mysterious union of the Divine and human natures in His person. IV. HIS MERCIES, like His acts, by which He replied to John's disciples, WERE ANSWERS TO MAN'S NECESSITIES. This is only another mode of saying that the blessings of His redemption are fully adapted to man's exigencies. It might have been otherwise. His words might have been works; His works might have been wonders; His wonders might have been mercies; and yet, after all, there might have been a want of strict suitableness between our necessities and the mode of meeting them, but the text reminds us that His mercies and deeds are exactly suitable and fully answerable to the exigencies. 1. This correspondence admits of universal application. He comprehended the entire scheme of nature and Providence. No legitimate question on any natural subject can ever arise in the mind of man, which his Creator and Redeemer has not foreseen; to which He has not inserted an answer in the things which He has made. Ten thousand answers are silently awaiting the future questions which shall call them forth. At this moment, while we are assembled here, the Creator may be elsewhere exhibiting similar demonstrations of His perfections in reply to inquirers. In the amplitude of space, hosts of intelligent beings may be collected around the chaos of a world, wondering whether it will ever be restored to harmony and order; whether all creative acts are at an end, and while they are inquiring the fiat may go forth from the Creator again, as "in the beginning," "Let there be light," and the light of Divine power may kindle around them. 2. The lessons of the Old Testament are represented

as replies. God was graciously pleased to allow Himself to be inquired of. His replies were called responses or oracles. 3. But now Christ had come as the living oracle; from Him the questions which human guilt and misery had never ceased to agitate, were to receive a full practical satisfactory reply. V. A PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY ALONE, A CHRISTIANITY EMBODIED IN DEEDS OF MERCY, ADEQUATELY ILLUSTRATES THE WORKS OF REDEMPTION BY CHRIST. "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." Our Lord meant not that His wondrous works should end with Himself. All power was given to Him as Mediator and Head of the Church, as a centre of an ever-enlarging circle. From Him as the Head of all things to the Church all emanates. (*J. Harris, D.D.*) *The soul dependent on physical conditions:*—However good and great you may be in the Christian life, your soul will never be independent of physical conditions. I feel I am uttering a most practical, useful truth here, one that may give relief to a great many Christians who are worried and despondent at times. Doctor Rush, a monarch in medicine, after curing hundreds of cases of mental depression, himself fell sick and lost his religious hope, and he would not believe his pastor when the pastor told him that his spiritual depression was only a consequence of physical depression. Andrew Fuller, Thomes Scott, William Cowper, Thomas Boston, David Brainard, Philip Melancthon, were mighty men for God, but all of them illustrations of the fact that a man's soul is not independent of his physical health. An eminent physician gave as his opinion that no man ever died a greatly triumphant death whose disease was below the diaphragm. Stackhouse, the learned Christian writer, says he does not think Saul was insane when David played the harp before him, but it was a hypochondria coming from inflammation of the liver. The Dean of Carlisle, one of the best men that ever lived, and one of the most useful, sat down and wrote: "Though I have endeavoured to discharge my duty as well as I could, yet sadness and melancholy of heart stick close by and increase upon me. I tell nobody, but I am very much sunk indeed, and I wish I could have the relief of weeping as I used to. My days are exceedingly dark and distressing. In a word, Almighty God seems to hide His face, and I intrust the secret to hardly any earthly being. I know not what will become of me. There is, doubtless, a good deal of bodily affliction mingled with this, but it is not all so. I bless God, however, that I never lose sight of the Cross, and, though I should die without seeing any personal interest in the Redeemer's merits, I hope that I shall be found at His feet. I will thank you for a word at your leisure. My door is bolted at the time I am writing this, for I am full of tears." (*Dr. Talmage.*) *Inactivity a cause of doubt:*—Doubt often comes from inactivity. We cannot give the philosophy of it, but this is the fact, that Christians who have nothing to do but to sit thinking of themselves, meditating, sentimentalising, are almost sure to become the prey to dark, blank misgivings. John the Baptist, struggling in the desert, needs no proof that Jesus is the Christ. John shut up became morbid and doubtful immediately. We are mysteries, but here is the practical lesson of it all: for sadness, for suffering, for misgivings, there is no remedy but stirring and doing. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Christ is the dispeller of doubt:*—During his earlier life Dr. Merle D'Aubigné, the Swiss historian of the Reformation, was grievously vexed with depressing doubts. He went to his old teacher for help. The shrewd old man refused to answer the young man's perplexities, saying, "Were I to get you rid of these doubts, others would come. There is a shorter way of destroying them. Let Christ be really to you the Son of God the Saviour. Do His will. His light will dispel the clouds, and His Spirit will lead you into all truth." The old man was right, and the young D'Aubigné was wise enough to adopt his counsel. He hoisted anchor, and moved out of the region of fogs, and quietly anchored himself under the sunshine of Christ's countenance. (*Dr. Cuyler.*) *Devotion to Christ a cure for despondency:*—Active devotion to Christ's service is another cure for spiritual despondency. The faith-faculty gets numb by long inaction, just as a limb becomes numb and useless if it is not exercised. The love-power grows cold if it is not kept fired up. When faith and love both run low, the soul easily falls into an ague-fit. What you need is to get out of yourself into a sympathy with, and downright efforts for, the good of others. When a desponding Christian came to old Dr. Alexander for relief, the Doctor urged him to prayer. "I do pray continually." "What do you pray for?" The young student said, "I pray that the Lord would lift upon me the light of His countenance." "Then," replied the sagacious veteran, "go now and pray that He will use you for the conversion of souls." (*Ibid.*) **To the poor the gospel is preached.**—*The gospel preached to the poor:*—I. THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS LAW. A

new development of a heaven-laid plan to enlighten the poor; to raise them in the scale of being: to sweeten and adorn their lot by the honours of intellectual culture, the comforts of social life, and the hopes of immortality. The wisdom of our text, as a poor's law, excels all the contrivances of men. It does not so much provide for the poor as it prevents men from being poor. It cuts off the causes of poverty. II. THE OBLIGATION IT LAYS UPON US. Tho way to the most effective sense of duty is by discovering the need and the worth of the thing that is enjoined; and is this a thing to be countermanded or opposed? But if the argument from the goodness of precept seem too weak, let us view its peremptory demand. It is the will of our Saviour that none live in a Christian land without hearing the glad sound, that so all may walk in the light of His countenance. III. HOW IS THIS GOOD LAW OF OUR LORD TO BE FULFILLED? (*N. Paterson.*) *Christ's works*:—1. Our Saviour's works were words. 2. His works were wonders. 3. His wonders were wonders of mercy. 4. His wonders of mercy were suited to the necessities of man. 5. The suitableness of His wonders of mercy to the necessities of man is a satisfactory proof of His Messiahship. (*G. Brooks.*) *The suitability of the gospel to the poor*:—The gospel is especially adapted to the poor, in respect of—1. Their education. 2. Their resources. 3. Their opportunities. 4. Their prospects. (*Ibid.*) *A preacher to the poor*:—John Wesley always preferred the middling and lower classes to the wealthy. He said "If I might choose I should still, as I have done hitherto, preach the gospel to the poor." *Trophies of the work of Christ*:—Before many a Popish shrine on the Continent one sees exhibited a great variety of crutches, together with wax models of arms, legs, and other limbs. These are supposed to represent the cures wrought by devotion at that altar—the memorials of the healing power of the saint. Poor, miserable superstition, all of it, and yet what a reminder to the believer in Jesus as to his duty and his privilege? Having pleaded at the feet of Jesus, we have found salvation; have we remembered to record this wonder of His hand? If we hung up memorials of all His matchless grace, what crutches and bandages and trophies of every sort should we pile together! Temper subdued, pride humbled, unbelief slain, sin cast down, sloth ashamed, carelessness rebuked. The cross has healed all manner of diseases, and its honours should be proclaimed with every rising and setting sun. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christianity and the poor*:—A celebrated doctor of divinity in London, who is now in heaven I have no doubt—a very excellent and godly man—gave notice one Sunday that he intended to visit all his people, and said, that in order to be able to get round and visit them and their families once in the year, he should take all the seatholders in order. A person well known to me, who was then a poor man, was delighted with the idea that the minister was coming to his house to see him, and about a week or two before he conceived it would be his turn his wife was very careful to sweep the hearth and keep the house tidy, and the man ran home early from work, hoping each night to find the Doctor there. This went on for a considerable time. He either forgot his promise, or grew weary in performing it, or for some other reason never went to this poor man's house; and the result was this, the man lost confidence in all preachers, and said, "They care for the rich, but they do not care for us who are poor." That man never settled down to any one place of worship for many years, till at last he dropped into Exeter Hall and remained my hearer for years till Providence removed him. It was no small task to make him believe that any minister could be an honest man, and could impartially love both rich and poor. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 23. **And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.**—*Taking offence at Christ*:—1. Some are offended and stumble at Christ, on the pretence that there is not sufficient evidence of His Divine mission. 2. Some are offended in Christ because of circumstances connected with the Person and history of Christ Himself. (1) His dignity and Godhead. (2) His humiliation. 3. Some are offended in Christ because of His peculiar doctrines. They dislike mysteries, they say. But what is there which is not mysterious, when searched into very closely? 4. Some are offended at Christ because of His precepts, or the holy life which He requires them to lead. 5. Some are offended in Christ on account of the conduct of those who profess to be His followers. But, however lamentable such misconduct may be, it is unjust to impute it to Christ, or His gospel. We ought always to distinguish between the system and the inconsistencies of those who profess to hold it. 6. Many are offended in Christ because of the trials to which fidelity to Him would expose them. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *The blessedness of not being*

offended in Christ:—1. A fatal stumble in the way to happiness, which many of the hearers of the gospel make. They are offended in Christ. They stumble at Him. Observe here, the object of their offence, Jesus Christ. It is at Him the world is offended. The God that made and guides the world, the Saviour that redeemed them, does not please the world. What wonder then that others cannot do it. There is something in the mystery of Christ, with which the unbeliever will always be finding fault. The world is unholy, and takes offence at Him. He is the brightness of His Father's glory: and they, like owls and bats, are blinded at the shining Sun, and therefore carefully keep at a distance from Him. They are offended. In the Greek, *scandalized*. Now the blind world, by reason of their own corruption, are thus offended or scandalized in Christ. "And He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel: for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken." 2. In the text there is the happiness of those who escape this fatal stumble. I shall show—I. What it is to stumble at Christ and be offended in Him. II. That stumbling at Christ abounds very much in the world. III. That they are happy indeed who are kept from being offended in Him. And then add some improvement. I. To SHOW WHAT IT IS TO STUMBLE AT CHRIST, AND BE OFFENDED IN HIM. This is a very awful matter. For a man to die of his disease, when he might have been cured, is sad; but it is a double death for one to destroy himself by the abuse of a remedy prescribed that would have cured him infallibly. It has reference to four things in the general. 1. To the grand device of salvation through Jesus Christ, laid in the infinite wisdom of God, and fixed by the Divine counsel. And at this the unbelieving world ever stumbles, and their hearts can never fall in with it. 2. To the offer of Christ made in the gospel. To be the sinner's Head, Lord, and Husband. To be their Prophet, Priest, and King, their all and instead of all. But sinners love not the offer, they stumble at His offices. 3. To the making use of Christ for all the purposes for which the Father has given Him. 4. To the practical understanding of sinners. They ever form a wrong judgment of Christ, and nothing less than overpowering grace will rectify their apprehensions of Him. This stumbling at Christ lies in these four things. (1) The blind soul ever finds some fault in the mystery of Christ. There is always something in or about Christ that disgusts the sinner, is quite disagreeable and shocking to him. The Son of God is not a match suitable to those whose minds are not savingly enlightened. (2) That which disgusts them, is what they cannot get over. There is something not to be found in Him, which they cannot want, and something in Him which they cannot endure. And by no art can they reconcile their hearts to it. (3) Because they cannot get over that one thing, it keeps Christ and the soul asunder effectually. Could the Jews have got over the offence of the mean appearance of Christ, and reconciled it to their own notion of the Messiah, they would have been fond of Him, as they were while He was not come. (4) This keeping Christ and the soul asunder, the soul is at length thereby ruined, and brought into a worse case than if Christ had never come in the way. "If I had not come," says He, "and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." II. To SHOW THAT STUMBLING AT CHRIST ABOUNDS VERY MUCH IN THE WORLD. Let us view the heaps upon heaps that are lying broken, snared, and taken. 1. Let us take a view of those that are lying rotting above the ground in open profanity; they are kept away from Christ, even by the very far-off sight of Him and His way. There are many at this day who cry, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us. We will not have this Man to reign over us." 2. Let us take a view of those who are lying dead upon their murdered convictions. 3. Those that are lying broken and pining away, having stumbled over the Cross of Christ. 4. Those that are fallen away from the lusts of Christ's consolation, to the fulsome breasts of the world and their own lusts. In every age there are many like the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt, who for a time kept up in the wilderness, but afterwards lost hopes of Canaan, and fell a "lusting, and even the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?" Finally, Look at those whose soul exercises have issued in putting their case in the hands of a physician of no value. III. To SHOW THAT THEY ARE HAPPY INDEED WHO ARE KEPT FROM BEING OFFENDED IN HIM. 1. Their eyes are opened to see that superlative glory in Christ that all the unbelieving world cannot discover. 2. Their hearts are new formed, cast into a new mould, otherwise they could never be pleased with Him. "But as many as received Him, to

them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His name." 3. That soul cannot fail to embrace Christ, to receive Him by faith and unite with Him. For to be well pleased with Christ, is in effect to say amen to the great bargain. Uses for improvement: 1. Be convinced then of this bias of the heart, this disposition of the soul to stumble at Jesus Christ. 2. I exhort one and all of you, that have a mind for any share of eternal happiness, and particularly communicants, that you would try yourselves this night, whether you be well pleased with Christ or not. (*T. Boston.*)

Vers. 24–27. **What went ye out into the wilderness for to see?**—*Three questions:*—Why did our Lord select these figures rather than others? I. Our Lord's three questions RECALL THE VERY SCENE, THE PECULIAR FORM, AND THE ANIMATING SPIRIT OF THE BAPTIST'S MINISTRY. 1. The first would recall, to the listening crowd, Jordan, with its reedy, wind-swept banks—the strong rapid stream, by which they had listened to the prophet's call, and in which they had been plunged for the remission of their sins. 2. The second would recall the asceticism of the Baptist, the rude simplicity of his garb, the rustic fare with which he was content. 3. The third would recall the fervour and inspiration with which he spoke, whom "all men confessed to be a prophet indeed," and the profound impression he had made upon their light, fluctuating hearts. II. We may take these questions as SETTING FORTH THE BAPTIST'S RELATIONS TO MAN, TO SELF, TO GOD. 1. John was no reed to be shaken by the breath of popular applause. He delivered his rebukes with fearlessness. 2. Severe to others, he was also severe to himself. He might have dwelt in king's houses, yet he made the desert his home. A preacher of temperance, he carried his own temperance to asceticism. 3. Severe in the demands he made on men, still more severe in his demands on himself; he devoted himself wholly to the will and service of God. In his relation to God he proved himself a true prophet, yea, and very much more than a prophet, a man of God who was not disobedient to the word of the Lord. III. We may take these questions as ADDRESSED TO THE THOUGHTS AND INTENTS, THE WISHES AND HOPES, OF THE CROWD WHO LISTENED TO THEM. What did you want and expect to find? Did you not covertly hope that, as John became popular, he would bend before the popular currents of thought and aim? And yet, *could* this have been your expectation and your hope? Had you wanted a courtier who would speak smooth things to you, would you not have gone to the palace for him? But, whatever drew you into the wilderness, whatever you thought or hoped, did not you find a prophet? As you listened to him, did not you find that life grew large and solemn? (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Sight-seers:*—Thrice, in as many minutes, our Lord demands of the multitude, "What went ye out to *see*?" Here was their error: professing concern to know the will of God, to prepare themselves for His service and kingdom, they were bent on *sights*, on *spectacles*, on indulging their curiosity and love of the marvellous. They went out not to *hear* a prophet, but to *see* a prophet; not to imitate the temperance and abstinence of the Baptist, but to gaze on a man who could prefer camel's hair to soft clothing; not to feel the Divine regenerating mind of the Spirit, but to gape at the reed which shook and trembled in it. And this is the error against which we must guard. We are not to be over-much concerned with the spectacular, the external, the marvellous in religion, but to fix our thoughts and affections on its interior and eternal realities. (*Ibid.*) *The unshaken prophet:*—The form into which Christ in this passage throws His view of the character of John the Baptist illustrates more than the symbolic method of His teaching. One sees in the choice of a natural object like the reed shaking in the wind in order to form a contrast to the unshaken temper of the Baptist, the same love of symbolism which led Him in His parables to make the ordinary things of Nature and of human nature images of the relations and laws of the spiritual kingdom. In the case of the parables, symbolism is deliberately used for the purpose of instruction. In the case before us it is used, as it were, unconsciously, and it reveals the natural way in which His mind united the world of Nature to the world of Man. When the image of the Baptist rose before Him—stern, uncompromising, fixed in moral strength, and with it the Jordan bank where first He met him, and the baptismal hour when He stood in the flowing river—He remembered the reeds as they shook in impotent vacillation in the wind, clasped the two images together in vivid contrast, and said, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind in the stream of the Jordan? nay, a rock, deep-rooted, firm, immovable." I. EVERYTHING WE KNOW OF THE BAPTIST CONFIRMS THIS VIEW. He

learnt concentration of will in the solitary life of the desert. With the unshaken firmness which Christ saw as a root in his character, he accepted his position at once and for ever. Not one step did he take beyond his mission, though he must have seen to some distance beyond it. Never for a moment did he cease to point to Another away from himself. It is as noble a piece of self-renunciation as history affords, and it was unshaken. Though a hundred temptations beset him to do so, he never allowed his teaching to step beyond the limits of its special work. He met his death because he was no reed to be shaken by the promises of a wicked king. II. AND NOW TO MAKE THIS REAL TO OURSELVES. 1. Fidelity to our vocation in life. 2. The sinking of self in religious work. 3. The being unshaken in our truth and right, both in act and speech, against worldly influences when they are evil; and even when they are not evil in themselves, when they make us weak and vacillating. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *The Christian ministry*:—I. IT IS NOT A LINE OF PRIESTS. The principle of the priesthood rests upon a truth, the mediatorial power which man exercises over man. The apostles were in a sense mediators, and so far priests. But the prophecy of old was taken up joyfully by the apostles as the richest tune in the mediatorial kingdom, when the last offices of the priesthood should be taken away, when they should no longer teach every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all should know Him, from the least even unto the greatest. This, then, is the spiritual priesthood. But the priestly system—1. Removes God from the soul, whereas God is ever near. 2. Degrades humanity, for its language tells us not of the affinity of man to God, but of the immense distance between the two. 3. Produces a slavish worship. Pass on to consider what the ministry is. II. IT IS PROPHETICAL, not priestly. We greatly mistake if we think that the office of the prophet was simply to predict future events. 1. It was the office of the prophet to teach eternal truths. John's only prediction was, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." 2. All the most sublime passages in the Bible are from the writings of the prophets. The priestly writings were but temporary. 3. The difference between the prophet and the priest was that it was the office of the prophet to counteract the priestly office. "Bring no more vain oblations," &c. "Wash you, make you clean." III. THE MINISTRY OF OUR BLESSED LORD HIMSELF, HERE ON EARTH, WAS PROPHETICAL AND NOT PRIESTLY. I lay a stress on that expression "here on earth," because unquestionably He is a priest in heaven above. The high priesthood of the Son of Man is spoken of in the Hebrews. There it is denied on earth, but asserted to be in heaven. "For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest"; in other words, there is a priesthood now, but no earthly priesthood. In conclusion, I notice two points which seem to favour the notion of a priesthood:—1. Absolution. Unquestionably, there is a power of absolution in the ministry of the Church of Christ, but it is the power of the prophet and not of the priest. 2. Apostolical succession. There is such a thing; but it is a succession of prophets and not of priests, a succession never extinct or broken. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Good and bad ends in attending ministrations*:—I. WE OUGHT ALWAYS TO HAVE AN END IN VIEW IN ATTENDING THE MINISTRATIONS OF THE SANCTUARY. 1. It is due to ourselves. 2. It is due to God. 3. It is due to the occasion. II. THERE ARE SOME ENDS WE OUGHT NOT TO PROPOSE TO OURSELVES. 1. The gratification of curiosity. 2. The exercise of a critical and censorious spirit. 3. The improvement of our social position. 4. The pacifying of our conscience. III. THERE ARE SOME ENDS THAT SHOULD ALWAYS BE PRESENT TO OUR THOUGHTS. 1. Conversion. 2. Instruction. 3. Impression. 4. The diffusion of the gospel. (*G. Brooks.*) *A reed shaken by the wind*:—The ordinary interpretation of this expression has been this: "Did you suppose that John was one of the weaklings of this world, a mere courtier with delicate words and flowing robes, who would be tremulously seeking popular approval, who would turn and trim in order to secure favour, now one thing and now another, like a rush shivering in the breeze?" But lately, a new suggestion has been made by one who was born in Palestine, and who has been educated in the Greek language. He says that shepherd-boys often shelter themselves among the tall grass, and while away the hours of hot sunshine by playing on their native flutes; hence one frequently almost stumbles upon such a musician by the rivers or along the hillsides. So soft is the tone of the feeble instrument that it appears effeminate, and might well be the symbol of a gentle sweetness of entertainment without vigour or force. So here the exposition may be somewhat like this—"Did ye come down here beside the Jordan to hear a timid little flute-player, a reed blown with one's breath?" (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Ver. 27. **Behold I send My messenger before My face.**—*John first, then Jesus:*—I. WHAT DID JOHN THE BAPTIST PREACH? 1. He delivered the whole law against sin, arousing the consciences of people. 2. He made a demand for immediate repentance (Matt. iii. 10). 3. He heralded Jesus as the Messiah predicted of old. 4. He announced the special office of Jesus as a Redeemer of men (John i. 29–36). II. NOW WHAT DID JESUS TEACH WHEN IT CAME TO HIS TURN? 1. Christ testified to the entire accuracy of John's doctrine (Matt. xi. 11). 2. He proclaimed the full necessity of an atonement. 3. He declared that the necessary sacrifice was now to be accomplished by Himself (John iii. 16, 17). It shocked and stumbled His disciples, but He persisted in declaring that He came into the world to die. 4. He thus raised no new issue between men and God, but the rather narrowed down all the old into one; He made it clear that faith was to be the instrument of salvation (John vi. 28, 29), III. Thus, then, we reach the conclusion that, so far as Jesus' teaching and John's teaching had value in the New Testament, THE POINT OF GREATEST IMPORTANCE IS THE ORDER BETWEEN THEM. John's came earliest in fact, and earliest in logical necessity. 1. The historic position of the two men is enough to show all that is here claimed. There is an order in doctrine under the gospel arrangement as strict as the order of demonstration in problems in Euclid's geometry. John's work was a necessity and a solemn pre-requisite to the work of Jesus. 2. The similar form of procedure which in all their teaching these two preachers preserved, adds confirmation to the proof. John presented the law first, then the gospel; but his office was plainly to press the law into prominence. Jesus presented the law first, then the gospel; but His office was to bring the gospel into prominence. In both cases the law came earliest. 3. Our conclusion, therefore, is inevitable and clear. There remains no reason now why a single proposition should not be framed for permanent recollection and use: law-work preceded gospel-work in all God's dealings with souls. Practical inferences in conclusion: 1. We see why religious instruction in our day sometimes appears so tame, and proves so inefficacious. It is because Christian people preach Jesus without John. 2. We see why inquirers are so slow in finding peace at the cross. Peace? Why, there has been no disturbance! (see Ezek. xxxiii. 32). 3. We see why there is so much of unrest and misgiving among Christian people. They have no intelligent sense of Christ's legal work in bearing the curse of the law in their behalf. Hence they labour to keep up a mere fire of fervour in their souls. They have studied regeneration more than justification; and it is by justification that one finds peace. So, not united consciously to Christ as a Surety, they are not sure. 4. We see why backsliding is so frequent as the sin of converts. Some have never been taught what leaving first love implies. 5. Finally, we see how the new life begins and continues, according to the revealed plan (Rom. v. 1, 2). (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

Ver. 28. **For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.**—*Much more than a prophet, but less than a Christian worker:*—John's greatness not that of function or office only, but of character. But his greatness bows before the excelling and incomparable greatness of the Lord. Further, our Lord here declares that every lowliest sinner who accepted Him as his very own Saviour, thereby passed into the kingdom of heaven, and by this one act and fact took a stamp of greatness besides which even that of John the Baptist was dwarfed. As our tidal rivers enlarge into bays and reaches of the sea by the sea's simple flowing into them, or communicating its own mass and strength and riches to them; so these relatively narrow beings of ours become spacious and Christlike by the indwelling and sway of the Spirit with all the new and august power of the new kingdom. Three practical remarks. 1. Be it ours who are privileged to work for Christ to emulate John the Baptist's type of work. No thought of self. 2. Be it ours in the full day of the gospel to realize our greater responsibility. 3. Be it ours to beware of assumption (or presumption) of this excelling greatness. Mere function, mere human recognition, will count for nothing beneath the eye of Him with whom we have to do. (*Dr. Grosart.*) *Nature and circumstances:*—Jesus told men that the true greatness of human life must come by following Him. It was inevitable, then, that men should ask, "How is it about those great men who are not His followers; those great men who have gone before Him—are they not truly great? And if they are, what has become of His saying that true greatness lies only in Him, and in the Kingdom of God to which He is so earnestly summoning us?" To this question Jesus gave answer in the words of the text. Let us study the answer. I. It is a question which belongs not to the things of Christ,

nor to religious things alone. All life suggests it; for in all life there are two ways of estimating the probable value of men—one by the direct perception of their characters, the other by the institutions to which they belong, and the privileges which they enjoy. Sense in which the school-boy of to-day is greater than Socrates. The two elements of greatness—greatness of nature, and greatness of circumstance. They are distinct from one another; they do not make each other. II. Christ recognizes the two elements of personal greatness and lofty condition, and He seems almost to suggest another truth, which is at any rate familiar to our experience of life—that personal power which has been manifest in some lower region of life seems sometimes to be temporarily lost and dimmed with the advance of the person who possesses it into a higher condition. What really is a progress seems, for a time at least, to involve a loss. III. In ordinary life the power of the temptation to be satisfied with greatness in some lower sphere and not to aspire to the highest sort of existence, is constantly appearing. IV. See how the truth of the text applies to the explanation and understanding of a true and noble life lived in a false faith. I believe that this is the simple truth which a good many puzzled people among us need to know. The Christian, with his unbelieving friend whose daily life, so pure, upright, and honest, shames the poor half-discouraged believer every day—what can you say to him? 1. Bid him rejoice that his Christ can and does do for that friend of his so much even when that friend denies Him. 2. Bid him see that if that friend of his could conscientiously know and cordially acknowledge the Christ who is doing so much for him already, he would give that Christ a chance to do still more which now He cannot do. 3. Let him, for himself, be filled with an inspiring shame which shall make him determined to be worthier of his higher faith. This is the true ministry which ought to come to any Christian from the presence of a man who believes far less than he does, and is a far better man than he is. V. See how all of this must tell upon the whole idea of Christian missions. There may have been a time when, in order to make it seem right for the Christian world to send missionaries to the heathen, it required to be made out that all heathen virtue was a falsehood and delusion. That day is past, if it ever existed. May not the Christian glory in every outbreak of the heathen's goodness as a sign of the power with which his Christ, even unknown, may fill a human life which in the very darkness of its ignorance is obedient to whatever best spiritual force it feels? May not that very sight reveal to him what that aspiring heathenism might become if it could be made aware of the Christ whom it is in its unconsciousness obeying? May he not, even while he goes out to tell the heathen his completer gospel, be filled with an inspiring shame at his own poor use and exhibition of that gospel which he offers to the heathen world? This is the true attitude of Christendom to paganism. It is not arrogant; it brings no insult; it comes like brother to brother, full of honour for the nature to which it offers the larger knowledge of the Father's life. To such brave missionary impulse as that let us be sure that the increase of rational and spiritual Christianity will only add ever new and stronger impulse and inspiration. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *The judgment of Jesus on John*:—One thing clear at the outset, viz., that the comparison is not absolute, but relative to certain aspects under which the parties compared are viewed; such as the happiness they respectively enjoy, the spirit by which they are respectively animated, or the nature of the spiritual movements with which they are respectively identified. Christ's purpose in making the statement was not to assist the people to take full and accurate measure of John's genius and character. He did not discuss the question of the Baptist's comparative greatness in the spirit in which, in a debating society, youths might discuss the question, Who was the greater man and general—Cæsar or Napoleon? He was concerned about far higher matters. His anxiety was to get people to understand the spiritual phenomenon of their time, and in particular to form true, just, and wholesome opinions concerning the religious movements with which John and Himself were identified respectively. For the opinions we form of *men* very seriously affect our opinions concerning principles and movements. Those who thought too much of John would remain with him, and never join the society of the Christ whose harbinger he was. On the other hand, those who thought too little of John would think just as little of Christ. It is manifest, then, that the judgment pronounced is not so much on a man as on an era. It is a judgment on the law given by Moses; and the comparison made between the last prophet of law and any little one in the kingdom signifies the immense inferiority of the legal economy to the era of grace which came by Jesus Christ. Paraphrased, the verse means: John, the last

prophet of the old time, was a great prophet—none greater. No one who went before ever did better justice to the law than he; preached it with more power and boldness, embodied it in a more upright, blameless life, or gained for its claims more widespread and respectful attention. Still, with all that, nay, just because he is a hero of law, John is a weak, one-sided man. What he has is good, but he wants something of far more value, something which puts its possessors on a different platform altogether from that which he occupies, insomuch that it may be said without extravagance that those who possess it, though immeasurably inferior to John in other respects, are greater than he. He wants the spirit of the new time, of the era of the better hope. Strong in zeal, he is defective in love; strong in denunciation, he is weak in patience towards the sinful; strong in ascetic abstinence, he is weak in the social and sympathetic affections; strong as the whirlwind, the earthquake, and the fire, he is weak in the moral influence that comes through the still small voice of a meek and merciful mind. In these respects, any one in the kingdom of heaven animated by the characteristic spirit of love is greater than he. The programme of Jesus as in contrast to that of John might be summed up in these two principles:—1. Salvation by Divine mercy, not by penance. 2. New life by regeneration, not by reform. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*)

Was John the Baptist not in the Kingdom?—He was outside it in the same sense in which many excellent men are outside the visible Church, though not, thank God, on that account outside the invisible Church. In former times he had proclaimed the near approach of the kingdom, but at this moment he was in doubt whether either the King or kingdom had come, the actual characteristics of both being so different from what he had expected. In this sense John was outside the kingdom: he was not connected with it as a visible historical movement called by this name. The Kingdom of God was in him, in his heart, in his thoughts continually. His very message of doubting inquiry showed this; for his was a case in which there was more faith in honest earnest doubt than there is in the belief of many men. And in what he said Jesus had no thought of calling in question, or of so much as hinting a suspicion, as to John's spiritual state. And we must strive in this respect to imitate our Lord, and to bear in mind that because a man is outside the visible Church he is not therefore unsaved; that there may be many who, from one cause or another, are alienated from the visible Church, who nevertheless are children of God and citizens of His kingdom, though in many respects too probably erring, one-sided, defective men. If Christ judged John leniently and charitably, how much more should we abstain from judging those who are without, and full of prejudices against Christianity, when too probably the blame of their prejudice and alienation lies at our own door! Surely this is a very legitimate lesson to draw from the striking saying we have been studying. (*Ibid.*)

Grace is better than power:—To insist, in the presence of a successful millionaire, or a triumphant prince, or a victorious soldier, or a medalled artist, that the veriest infant in the class of a Sunday-school, who has intelligently learned the articulate language of love to the Saviour, is better than he, is a brave thing to do, of course. But whether the courage will be rewarded with any prosperity in making him believe it, is quite another consideration. It is power that most men are seeking, and not grace. And it is a pity that they do not all get either, even after the seeking. Think of the unfortunate architecture of Cologne Cathedral. The pile of stone has stood through the ages incomplete; just now it has at last been finished. But—most singular fate of genius—nobody on all this earth knows at the dedication who drew the early plans for the building, or whose is the fame of its beauty. John Keats left for his tombstone in Rome the somewhat violent epitaph: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water!" Alas! cannot we hope that it was written in the Lamb's Book of Life? It is exceedingly interesting to find the jealous Turner's beautiful landscapes between the two Claudes in the British Gallery; for we are glad to know neither of the great canvasses suffered from the comparison. But then who can help putting the tranquil inquiry, What difference does it make to those painters now which of them is considered the better artist? And where is Turner to-day, and where is Claude Lorraine also? For grace settles the long mysterious future; and gift is not grace. Socrates was a great man; but some say he sold his wife at a price. Alexander was a great monarch; but he died in a drunken debauch. Lord Byron was a great man; but his statue at Trinity College has on its front look the divinity of a genius, and on its profile one side is the leer of a lecher. It would be useless to deny that these famous people had power; but grace is better than power. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) The smallest diamond is

made of more precious substance than the largest flint. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *The greatness of the Baptist:*—In John x. 41 it is stated that "John did no miracle," and to some this may seem inconsistent with what our Lord here declared concerning him. Mightiness indeed is reckoned, and very justly reckoned, a considerable element of a prophet's greatness. Let us, then, consider how John the Baptist deserves the title of the greatest of the prophets, in spite of his having never wrought a miracle. 1. It is a greater thing to exercise a wide moral and spiritual influence upon our generation, than to work a miracle before their eyes. To work a miracle is to exhibit power over matter; to exercise a wide moral and spiritual influence is to exhibit a power over mind. To be made the means, in God's hand, of swaying the human will, curbing the unruly human passions, arousing the human conscience to wholesome alarms and sincere inquiries after the way of salvation, is a higher distinction than to be made the means of reversing nature's laws, or restraining the fury of the elements, or calling forth the tenants of the sepulchre from their dreary abode. 2. It is partly, I conceive, in his very lack of miraculous power, that the grandeur of John the Baptist as a prophet consists. Without the aid of miracles to give effect to his words he wrought a national reformation. Without supernatural resources he accomplished what other prophets were only able to effect with their aid. 3. John Baptist's magnanimity is another feature which enhances his greatness as a prophet. He sinks self, that he may exalt Christ. 4. Another element in his greatness is the relation in which he stood to Christ as His forerunner, and the opportunity which it afforded him of bearing testimony to the person of our Lord. Concluding lessons: 1. Learn to estimate aright, and not by the world's standard, the true greatness of man. 2. The testimony of Christ is the spirit of prophecy. (*Dean Goulburn.*)

Ver. 30. **Rejected the counsel of God against themselves.**—*The rejection of the counsel of God by the Pharisees:*—There they stood on the banks of Jordan, self-complacency written on their countenances, the calm peace of death upon their hearts; whispering to one another as they heard the fervid words of the preacher, "Never mind; you and I know better than that; we are not to allow ourselves to be carried away by this hot-headed enthusiast; we are too intelligent people for that; we are educated people; we have a certain refinement which, of itself, precludes our being so influenced. That is not the man for us; we will go back to our synagogue. I like to hear the calm, quiet exposition which Rabbi So-and-so gives of the Book of the Law; it is very interesting to listen to him, but this enthusiastic fanatic does us no good: come away, come away; we have had enough. He calls us 'a generation of vipers.' You cannot listen to a man that insults you." "But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected," &c. Yes, and that very moment "the axe was laid at the root of the tree." Yet another moment, and that axe should be lifted up by the hand of Divine judgment; a few short moments more, and that stroke should fall; only a few years were to pass over their heads, and the city they gloried in, and the temple they prided themselves about, were to lie strewn along the dust. Their name was to be obliterated from the roll of the nations of the earth; their national existence was to be trampled upon; their streets were to be drenched with blood; they themselves, as a den of robbers or a gang of murderers, were to be crucified round the wall of their own city, or dragged into captivity to adorn the triumphs of a foreign conqueror. All this was already in store; the edge of the axe was already sharp, and the hand of justice was already grasping it; and, all the while, these poor self-complacent men were flattering themselves that the message was not for them. "We have Abraham to our father; we are the children of privilege; what have we to fear?" And so they slept their sleep; and so they "rejected the counsel of God against their own souls." There are plenty of Pharisees in our own day, and they are just as true to the instincts of their own life as were the Pharisees of eighteen hundred years ago. What was the characteristic of these Pharisees? Self-complacency. They were satisfied with themselves. They had not yet found out "the plague of their own hearts." *W. H. M. H. Aitken, M.A.*)

Vers. 31-34. **Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation.**—*The Baptist and Christ:*—In the metaphor of the reed shaking in the wind, we traced that close observation of nature which enabled Christ to interpret so much of human life to man. In the similitude He uses here we trace His close observation of the ordinary aspects of human life, and the use which He made of them to

interpret to men His own thoughts, and the times in which He lived. Every one knows from pictures, from descriptions, the general appearance of the market-place of an Eastern town. One may image the quiet figure of Christ moving through the throng, enjoying its humours, with now a gentle smile, and now an inexplicable sadness on His face, as if all things spoke to Him of far-off analogies. One sight He often saw—the children at play in the unoccupied spaces and corners of the markets. They had their games in and out among the serious doing of the place, and one of these games is often spoken of in Eastern tales. It is the acting of childish dramas which the children themselves invent. Often three or four exhibit their little talents for the rest, while now and then a bearded man or a veiled woman loiter by to watch the sport. Sometimes the invented story is sportive, sometimes sorrowful, and the acting of them is good or bad, according to the sympathy given to the children. One such scene, at least, remained vividly in His mind (and He uses it with astonishing force), when the little band of actors, having tried to win the favour of their comrades with tiny tragedy, and then with tiny comedy, failed in their hopes, and said, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept." In this slight scene Christ saw a picture of the religious state of Palestine. There was no moral depth in that society, no vital strength to carry out in a life the wavering feelings of repentance. At first they tried the Baptist, but they soon had enough of that resolute teaching. They turned away with indignation, and said, "He hath a devil." They were mourned unto, and they had not lamented. All the same, they could not get rid of the religious impulse in their hearts. It seemed that Christ required no ascetic life, that He did not wish them to separate themselves from the world. "This is the teacher for us," they said, and they sought Him out and followed Him. "We will dance to His piping," was their thought, "and possess a religion." But the result was a still more complete failure. 1. The religion of the Baptist had been too hard for them because of its stern morality. It demanded outward purity. "We shall be better off with Christ," they thought. And they found themselves worse off than before. It was bad enough to hear that the whole of the outward life had to be reformed; it was ten times worse to hear that the inward life had to be reformed. 2. The religion of the Baptist had been too hard for them because of its demand for self-sacrifice. And lo! Christ was ten times more severe on this point than John. They turned away in wrath, but the little grain of conscience that still remained made them bitter. To relieve their conscience, they turned to abuse and vilify Him who had shown them a vision they could not bear. If they could put Him in the wrong, they might put themselves in the right. "Behold, then, a gluttonous man," &c. They were piped unto, and they had not danced. There is much the same sort of thing among men now. 3. Another class of men turned from the Baptist to look at the religion of Christ—the religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees. These drifted out to John in the wilderness; the wave of religious excitement had sent its tide even into their land-locked harbours; one wonders what took these models of piety to John. He could not understand it; his astonishment was frank enough. "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" When they found that John did not pay them more attention than the rest, when they saw that he talked with the publican as he did with them, they turned back, saying, "He hath a devil." So the hypocrites among them thought they would hear what Christ had to say. He might do them more honour. He might recognize their proud position as leaders of religion. But alas! they were disappointed. I suppose no sharper or more indignant language was ever used by man against other men than the words with which Christ denounced them. As to the other class of Pharisees who were pious bigots, they found in Christ all that they had disliked in John multiplied tenfold. He would have nothing to do with them unless they came to Him and humbly confessed themselves sinners. Not among their ranks, but among unlearned fishermen and villagers He chose His special followers. He dined with the publicans; even at one of their houses He admitted the sinful woman to salvation. It was more than could be borne. This was music no man could dance to. There are men of this sort at this time among us. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *Children at play*:—(To children.) The children of two thousand years ago were very like the children of to-day, even in their sports. Then, as now, when a number of children came together, and especially when they came together out of doors, they found it impossible to sit still or stand still. Whatever the game at which they played, there was pretty sure to be some

mimicry in it, some quaint imitation or comic burlesque of what they had seen their elders do. Now it happened one day that the Lord Jesus, as He passed through the streets and bazaars of a Galilean town, came on a number of children who were thus employed. They played first at a wedding, and then at a funeral. And we cannot wonder that they chose these two ceremonies for imitation. For a Jewish wedding was then, as to this day an Eastern wedding is, a very gay spectacle, sure to seize the fancy of children. The bridegroom and the young men who accompanied him were tricked out in their best and brightest robes; and they went in public procession, with music and with perfumes floating in the air, to fetch the bride to her new home. For many days after the wedding open house was kept. There was much mirth and feasting. The friends of the wedded pair went, with trains of their kinsfolk and servants, to carry them their presents, or to pay calls of ceremony and congratulation. The whole town was alive with music and dancing and feasting; and in the streets gay companies were continually passing to and fro. That was thought a very poor marriage, the festivities of which were not kept up for at least a week. So, again, a Jewish funeral must have been a very striking and dramatic spectacle to children. The body was carried by on an open bier, so that all could see it. And not only did the kinsfolk and friends of the dead man follow him to the grave with the most extravagant expressions of grief; but they were foolish enough to hire professional mourners, who tore their hair, and beat their breasts, and raised a keen cry or wail. Now children who saw these sad processions constantly going about the streets could not fail to be impressed by the dramatic features of the scene, and were likely enough to imitate and burlesque it in their play. That was what the children whom Jesus watched had been doing. First they had said, "Let's play at marrying!" And then the more forward and lively children of the company began to march, and to move their fingers up and down as if they were stopping and unstopping the holes of a flute. One of them, no doubt, was chosen to personate the bridegroom, and others to stand for the "sons of the bridechamber," *i.e.*, the young men who accompanied him; and off they started, as though to fetch the bride home, expecting that the rest of the children would follow, dancing and shouting, and pretending to carry torches. But those who should have filled this part declined to fill it. They were sulky, and would not play at *this* game. And so the cheerful children had to say to the sulky ones, "Why, what's the matter? We fluted to you, and you did not dance." Then they thought they would try another game. Perhaps the first was too lively. And so they say, "Let's play at burying!" And off they go like bearers of the bier, or like the hired mourners, walking with folded hands and downcast heads, but every now and then flinging up their heads, and howling, Oh, so dreadfully. But their companions won't play. This game does not suit them either. For, again, the first place is not assigned to them. And so, the livelier, the merry, good-tempered children have to turn upon them again, and say, "Whatever is the matter with you to-day? We wailed, and ye did not beat your breasts." Now if these children had known that Jesus was watching them; if, moreover, they had known how kind and good He was, do you think that any of them would have turned sulky and refused to play? It will do much to make you and those about you happy if you will learn to play in the right spirit. But this is not the only or the best lesson which Christ has made these children teach us. He told the men who were listening to Him that they were like those children in their treatment of John the Baptist and Himself. "The fault," He said, "is in you, not in the Baptist or the Son of Man." We are to show the very opposite spirit. Instead of hating the truth, and refusing to listen to it, wherever or however God speaks to us, we are to love the truth, and to welcome it, whatever the form or the tone it takes. Put yourselves to this test: "Am I really trying to do God's will and to love it, as Jesus did? Whether I work or play, do I try to show the kindly, unselfish, cheerful temper which He approves?" (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *On the impossibility of pleasing everybody*:—Explain the phrases, "children"; "market-place"; "piped unto you"; "mourned unto you." Learn—I. THE GOSPEL IS SENT ONLY TO SINNERS. II. IT IS RIGHT TO USE VARIOUS MEANS TO BRING MEN UNDER THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL. Look at the difference between the ministry of Jesus and that of John. III. IN THE USE OF THESE MEANS IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE EVERYBODY. John was a recluse, and they said he had a devil. Jesus came eating and drinking, and they said, "Behold a gluttonous man," &c. IV. ALL TRUE PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL MAY EXPECT OPPOSITION. V. NEVERTHELESS, WE MUST NOT CEASE DECLARING THE TRUTH. (*A. F. Barfield.*) *Transition periods*:—This little picture of children's plays, which Jesus gives us, is

an illustration of the illogical objections made against the truth, and shows us many things. 1. It shows us how uniform are the tendencies of human nature in all ages and times. Jesus, passing through the market of Nazareth, or Cana, saw the children playing their games, just as children play them now. The little Syrian boys and girls belonging to the great Semitic race, living eighteen hundred years ago, amid Asiatic customs and scenery, were just such little children as you and I saw playing on the common yesterday. They played games, imitating the customs of grown people; just as little children now play soldiers, play horse and driver, so they then played weddings and funerals. 2. It shows us Christ's habit of taking illustrations from everyday life. In His teachings there is nothing conventional, nothing formal. No fact in God's world is to Him common or unclean. 3. It also shows how much easier it is for good men, though differing in ideas, tastes, and methods, to agree in a mutual respect and sympathy, than for self-willed men to form any permanent union. No two were more unlike than Jesus and John; but they had a common aim. It was to do God's will; to make the world better. So they had a mutual respect for each other. There was a real union between them. John made the turning-point from the law to the gospel; his was the transition period, within sight of the gospel, yet with the terror of the law behind it. Such a transition period has continued in the Church down to our time. Perhaps the majority of Christians are now living, not under the dominion of law, nor yet in the kingdom of heaven, but in the dispensation of John the Baptist. But half-way convictions are not very satisfactory, and the remedy for this evil is to put both the law and the gospel in their right place. We cannot dispense with either, but we wish to distinguish between their sphere and their work. (*James Freeman Clarke.*) *Fickleness and folly in dealing with religion and its professors and teachers*:—I. THE CONTRARIETY BETWEEN THE CONDUCT OF CHRIST AND THAT OF JOHN, AS DESCRIBED IN THE TEXT, WAS RENDERED NECESSARY BY THE DIFFERING STANDPOINTS AND MISSIONS OF EACH. These descriptions—"neither eating bread nor drinking wine," and "eating and drinking"—are particular features, put for general character and conduct. John's abstemiousness and austerity befitted him as the last prophet of the Old Dispensation. Christ had come to establish a new order of things, to substitute for the bondage of the law the liberty of the gospel, to insist on inward purity as of infinitely greater importance than outward observance. Specifically his eating and drinking meant—1. His oneness with humanity. 2. The sacredness of common life and occupations. 3. That the natural appetites are to be reasonably and legitimately satisfied, not trampled upon. 4. That religion has its social side. 5. That it is possible to be in the world while not of it. II. THE PEOPLE, WITH THEIR LEADERS, NOT RECOGNIZING THAT THIS DIVERGENCE WAS FITTING AND NECESSARY, MISJUDGED BOTH CHRIST AND JOHN. The really austere life of John was a reproach to the pretended austerity of the Pharisees, whilst the immaculate purity of Him who could yet suffer His feet to be washed by the tears of the woman who was a sinner rebuked alike their uncharitableness and their hypocrisy. Hence, not being willing to repent at the call of John, or to humble themselves at the command of Christ, they must, to be consistent in their hypocrisy, condemn alike Christ and John—pronounce them to be either immoral in life, or endued with power from below. But the point in which they most pointedly warn us not to copy their example is here—that they formed their judgments upon grounds so insufficient. Learn the danger of hasty judgments—1. As regards the person judged. 2. Others, who might be benefited by him. 3. Ourselves. Prejudices hide the truth. III. THE TEXT SHOWS HOW EASY IT WAS FOR THE MEN OF CHRIST'S DAY, AS IT IS FOR US, TO FIND AN EXCUSE WHEN ONE IS WANTED. How did the Pharisees, feeling conscious that they were wrong, excuse themselves the trouble of putting themselves right? They adopted the plan which is said sometimes to be resorted to by legal pleaders: "If you have a weak case, blacken your opponent's counsel." How true a picture of the way in which men generally treat unpalatable truth! Note some of the flimsy grounds on which many reject Christianity, or refuse to make a Christian profession, *e.g.*, difficulties in the Bible; inconsistency in professing Christians. (*J. R. Bailey.*) *The sanctity of the common life*:—1. Poverty the common lot. 2. The happy endurance of poverty rare. The secret of its trust. 3. Besides these sweet virtues of resignation, trust and contentment, there is another which seems to me to become rarer and rarer—cheerfulness. Our age is not only perplexed but sad. There is not enough of enthusiasm and unselfishness left among us for hearty and wholesome laughter. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *The use of the world*:—Christian self-sacrifice is not asceticism. The idea of the essential badness of pleasure has

been very commonly held and advocated by the propounders of ethical and religious systems. Even Plato says that every pleasure enjoyed is as a nail fastening the soul more securely in its dungeon; every pleasure given up a nail withdrawn, and hastens on the period of its release. Like many other views which find no warranty in the Christianity of Christ, it has had a considerable influence upon the Christianity of Christendom. The pillar saints, *e.g.* If pleasure were essentially sinful, Stylites was the wisest of men. This not the kind of self-denial which Christ requires from us. Serious and earnest as He was, no one can say that He was a harsh or gloomy ascetic. Think of Him at the marriage-festival. Think of His friendly visits to the family at Bethany. Think of Him at the great feast in Levi's house. Think of His final interview with the disciples on the shore of Tiberias, when He accosted them with the words, "Children, have ye any meat?" and then, leading the way to a fire, "with fish laid thereon and bread," said to them, "come and dine." Christ never bids us give up anything that is good, unless it would keep us from something that is better. "The Son of man came eating and drinking." Ay, the very Man of Sorrows refused to join in the irrational worship of pain. (*A. W. Momerie, M.A., D.Sc.*) *The Son of man*:—This title is in the New Testament significantly enough used, with one exception [Stephen], by Christ alone. It emphasizes the humanity of Him who bears it, but a humanity that accomplishes a Divine work, creates and controls a society which is so finely human because so entirely a realization of the thought or mind of God as to man. Schleiermacher rightly said: "Christ would not have adopted this title had He not been conscious of a complete participation in human nature. But His use of it would have been meaningless had He not had a right to it which other men could not possess." The Son of man is the bond between earth and heaven, belongs in an equal degree to both; He is the medium through which God reaches man and man reaches God. The title, so often and so emphatically used, enables us to see what Christ conceived Himself to be, and where He believed Himself to stand; He affirmed that He possessed our common human nature. But He also affirmed His pre-eminence—"*The* Son of *man*." Other persons had been, or were, sons of individual men, members of particular nations or families; but Jesus, as "the Son of man," was no man's son, but the child of humanity; belonged to no age, but to all ages; to no family or people, but to mankind. He is, as the Divine idea realized, universal and everlasting, an individual who is, in a sense, humanity. (*A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.*) *Divine friendship*:—In the Bible Christ is presented to us in many aspects—as a Judge, a Saviour, a Counsellor; as Brother, Prophet, Priest, and King. In this passage He stands forth in the light and garb of a Friend. I do not intend to analyse friendship, and enumerate its elements. I will only suggest one or two of the more prominent. I. CONSTANCY. II. IMPARTIALITY. Not a friend only to the good. III. SYMPATHY. IV. THE SPIRIT OF HELPFULNESS. Christ was the friend of those who were morally all wrong. It is to those whose lives have been a failure, whose natures, spiritually considered, are all in ruins, that Jesus comes in the spirit of friendly assistance. (*W. H. H. Murray.*) *Sinners wilful and perverse*:—I. THE COMPANIONS OF THESE PERVERSE CHILDREN EMPLOYED VARIOUS MEANS TO CONQUER THEIR OBSTINACY AND PERSUADE THEM TO JOIN IN THEIR AMUSEMENTS. So God has employed a great variety of means to persuade sinners to embrace the gospel. He has sent judgments to subdue, and mercies to melt them; arguments to convince, and motives to persuade them; threatenings to terrify, and invitations to allure them. In different parts of His Word He has exhibited Divine truth in every possible variety of form. In one place it is presented plainly to the mind in the form of doctrines; in another, it is couched under the veil of some instructive and striking parable; in a third, it is presented to us in a garb of types and shadows; in a fourth, it is illustrated by the most beautiful figures; and, in a fifth, exemplified in some well-drawn character, or interesting portion of history. Corresponding to these various means, and to the different modes of instruction adopted in His Word, are the various gifts and qualifications, with which He furnishes those who are sent as His ambassadors to men. As He knows the different tastes and dispositions of men, and the modes of address best adapted to convince and persuade them, He endues His messengers with a great diversity of gifts, so that by one or another of them, every class of hearers may be gratified. II. Notwithstanding the different means employed with these perverse children, THEY WOULD NOT BE PREVAILED UPON TO COMPLY WITH THE WISHES OF THEIR COMPANIONS. We have piped unto you, say they, but ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented. Precisely similar is the conduct of impenitent sinners. III. THE

REASON WHY THESE PERVERSE CHILDREN COULD NOT BE PERSUADED TO COMPLY WITH THE WISHES OF THEIR COMPANION, WAS, THAT THEY WERE OUT OF HUMOUR, OR FOR SOME OTHER REASON FELT INDISPOSED TO GRATIFY THEM. Similar is the reason, why sinners will not be persuaded to embrace the Gospel, by all the means which God employs for this purpose. They do not come to Christ for life, because they will not. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *The success of the gospel*:—I. OBSERVE GOD'S GRACIOUS DEALING WITH MAN. He useth all kind of means, sendeth men of several natures, austere John, and meek Christ. He turns Himself into all shapes to gain wretched man unto Him. II. OBSERVE THE ORDER GOD USETH; FIRST JOHN, THEN CHRIST. John prepares the way, throwing down hills: "O ye generation of vipers" (Matt. iii. 7). Oh, say they, this man is too harsh, I think he hath a devil. Then Christ comes with blessed: "Blessed are the poor, blessed are you that weep," &c. (Matt. v. 3, *seq.*). So He sent the law first, then the gospel; first He threatens, then promises. III. OBSERVE THAT THE MANNER OF THEIR TEACHING IS DOUBLE, BY DOCTRINE AND LIFE, AND THESE AGREE, wherein observe it is good that life and doctrine should suit; for John's life was austere and retired, his doctrine was also tending to beat down the proud conceits of man. Christ came to all, conversed with all meekly and lovingly; and the reason of God's making use of men of severe dispositions is, because of the different natures of men, whereof some can better relish one nature than another. Some love the hot and fiery nature, others delight in the meek spirit; and though there be diversity of gifts, yet they come from the same Spirit. Even as the diverse smells of flowers comes from the same influence, and the diverse sounds in the organs comes from the same breath, so doth the Spirit diffuse itself diversely, as it meets with diverse natures. Yet all tendeth to the perfecting of one work. And the papists shall never be able to prove their foolish austere vows of a solitary life, &c., to be preferred before communication and society, unless they will prove John better than Christ. And again, this should teach us to moderate our censures of the diverse natures and carriage of men, as knowing that God in wisdom hath appointed it for excellent use, and that all agree in the building up of the spiritual temple of the Church. IV. OBSERVE THAT WHERE GRACE DOTH NOT OVERPOWER NATURE, NO MEANS WILL PREVAIL OVER THE OBDURATE NATURE OF MAN. Neither John nor Christ could work anything upon these Pharisees. V. In the next place, observe, from the calumniation of the scribes, THAT REBELLION AND OPPOSITION AGAINST GOODNESS IS NEVER WITHOUT SHOW OF REASON; and men they will never go to hell, but they have reason for it. Austere John "hath a devil"; sociable Christ "is a wine-bibber." And the reason is, the pride of man, that will not be thought so foolish as to speak, or do anything without reason, and therefore when it is wanting they will feign one. VI. For use therefore of this doctrine, LET US ACCOUNT IT NO STRANGE MATTER IF WE BE TRADUCED, DISGRACED, AND SCANDALISED, for it was Christ's and John's lot. Great slanders must be maintained from great men, such as them that sit in Moses's chair, the Pharisees and Scribes. VII. LET US TAKE HEED WE TAKE NOT A THING IN THE WRONG SENSE AND OF VAIN PREJUDICE. Men are witty to lay stumbling-blocks in their own way to heaven. This preacher is too strict, that too mild; this too plain, that too poor. "But wisdom is justified of all her children" (ver. 35). I. From the connection of these words with the former, by this word "but," we may observe, THAT IT IS THE LOT OF GOD'S TRUTH TO HAVE DIVERSE ENTERTAINMENTS IN THIS WORLD. Some will be children of wisdom, and justify it; others, as the Pharisees, will scandalise it. This is wisdom; and called so here by way of emphasis, showing it is the only excellent wisdom, which will further appear in these respects. 1. It doth arise from a higher beginning than all other wisdom whatever; for it comes from God's goodness and mercy. 2. The matter. It is a deep mystery. Christ, God-man; His nature, offices, and benefits. 3. It is more powerful than all other wisdom; for it transforms us. It makes us wise, and changes us from wicked, and makes us good. 4. It is better than the law, which was a killing letter. This gives life. 5. Furthermore, this wisdom is everlasting, and it is ancientest: intended before the world was. It is also inviolable. God will change the course of nature for His Church's sake; and sooner will He break covenant with the day and night than this covenant, which shall be for ever (Psa. xix. 9). 6. The end of it is "to bring us home to God" (1 John i. 3). 1. From the doctrine we may observe, therefore, that those that follow the best rule, which is God's Word, and intend the best end, which is their own salvation, these are the most wise. 2. And, in the second place, let this persuade us to attend upon wisdom, be we who we will be, a publican, an extortioner, a persecuting Saul. 3. In the next place, observe the children of wisdom do justify it;

that is, they receive it, approve it, defend it, maintain it. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) *On profaneness to disparage religious characters*:—I. I design, in the first place, TO EXPLAIN THIS PASSAGE. II. HOW SHALL WE APPLY TO OUR EDIFICATION THE LESSONS WHICH THIS PORTION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE CONVEYS? 1. Let us consider it as a very unfavourable symptom of the state of our hearts, if we discover in ourselves a propensity to cavil at religion; and to impute blame to those persons, whether ministers of the gospel or individuals among the laity, who, by holiness of life and conversation, conspicuously demonstrate the power of faith. 2. If, through the influence of Divine grace, you have been brought to the love of religion, wonder not, nor be discouraged, when you hear the truths of the gospel slandered, or yourself made the theme of evil-speaking for their sake. Thus it always has been; and thus, until Christianity shall have established a more general dominion over the hearts of those who avow themselves her subjects, it always will be. 3. Justify wisdom, justify true religion, by manifesting yourselves to be her children. 4. If you thus justify wisdom, behold the hour approaches when before the assembled world wisdom shall justify you. (*T. Gisborne.*) *Children sitting in the market-place*:—I. THAT THE PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION TO SINNERS MAY FITLY BE COMPARED TO SWEET AND SOUL-RAVISHING MUSIC. 1. Music hath its distinct notes, and that makes it melodious; so ministers should preach distinctly, not confusedly, for that makes no music. "If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare to the battle?" (1 Cor. xiv. 8.) 2. He that would make sweet music, must not harp too much upon one string, or have only one distinct note. So a preacher that would make right gospel-music, must not always preach upon one particular gospel truth. 3. It is a curious art to attain to the clear knowledge of music, and to be very skilful, or play well upon an instrument. So it is a most blessed spiritual art to know how to preach the gospel with all true spiritual wisdom; for as music is a mystery, so is the gospel a great mystery. 4. Some musicians make sweeter music than others, though all may have some skill in it; so some ministers make more sweet gospel music than others. 5. Music elevates the hearts of some people wonderfully; so the doctrine of the gospel tends to raise, nay, to ravish, the hearts of gracious persons. 6. But though music is sweet to some, others love it not, but cry, "Away with it, it makes our hearts sad." II. THAT THOUGH THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST DO WHAT THEY CAN, OR STUDY WHAT WAYS AND METHODS THEY CAN, AND LIVE NEVER SO CIRCUMSPECTLY, YET THEIR PERSONS NOR THEIR MINISTRY SHALL BE ACCEPTED OF SOME PEEVISH AND FROWARD PEOPLE. (*B. Keach.*) *Criticism easy*:—Nearly everybody has heard the story of the painter of olden time who exposed his picture to the public criticism, and put a paint-brush handy, that anybody might paint out any particular feature he did not approve. Of course, the stupid man soon found that everybody had some fault to find, and his picture was totally obliterated. Just as it was with that artist's picture, so it is with the life-work of the majority. Somebody will be pretty sure to take a crooked and distorted view of our characters and doings, however meritorious they may be. Some will do this wilfully and maliciously, others through misunderstanding. *Unfair objections are often prompted by selfishness*:—Many an objector to Christianity in our day, if he said out what he really thinks, would say, "I disbelieve Christianity, because it does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil; it makes such serious demands, it sets up so high a standard, it implies that so much I say and do is a great mistake that I must away with it. I cannot do and be what it enjoins without doing violence to my inclinations, to my fixed habits of life and thought." This, before his conversion, was the case with the great Augustine. Augustine tells us in his "Confessions" how completely he was enchained by his passions, and how, after he had become intellectually satisfied of the truth of the creed of the Christian Church, he was held back from conversion by the fear that he would have to give up so much to which he was attached. (*Dr. Talmage.*)

Ver. 35. **But wisdom is justified of all her children.**—*Wisdom's justification*:—We trace the truth and the applicability of this saying—I. IN THE DIFFERENT FIELDS OF PURELY HUMAN INTEREST AND STUDY. Each subject that engages the attention of man has a wisdom, that is to say, governing principles, methods, modes of thought and inquiry—in short, a philosophy peculiar to its own. Those who have mastered this wisdom even in part are prepared for results which are startling or absurd in the eyes of others who are strangers to it. II. IN THE REGION OF HUMAN CHARACTER. That which enables us to do justice to character is

sympathy with it. III. IN REGARD TO THE CHRISTIAN CREED. Here, too, it is clear, upon reflection, that "wisdom is justified of her children." The word "wisdom" in our Lord's mouth had a special significance. His more instructed hearers would recognize in it an ancient and consecrated word (see Prov. viii.). This Eternal Wisdom, born of a virgin in the fulness of time, crucified, bruised, risen, ascended, is at once the Teacher, and in the main the substance, of the Christian creed. Two practical lessons: 1. Nothing is so fatal to the recognition of moral and religious truth as a scornful temper. 2. Wisdom may and must be won by prayer. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Wisdom justified of her children*:—"Justified" means acquitted, recognized, or acknowledged. "Of" means "by." And Christ says, "Wisdom is recognized by her children." The wisdom of a Divine life had appeared in two forms—ascetic in John the Baptist, social in Christ. The world recognized it in neither. In John they said it was insanity; in Christ worldliness and irreligion. To the world Christ replies that they were incompetent judges. None could recognize the Divine life but those who lived it; none justify wisdom except her children. The Divine life was always the same, but it expressed itself outwardly in no special single form of life. Wisdom, under whatever form she might appear—the life of asceticism or the life social—would be justified or recognized by her children. I. THE TONE OF MIND WHICH CAPACITATES FOR JUDGING HUMAN CHARACTER. By sympathy alone can you judge of character. This is the doctrine of the metaphor. A mother, changing her garb, may be mistaken by strangers, but under every metamorphosis she is recognized by her children, who know her voice by the secret tact of sympathy. Would you judge of Christ? Feel Christ. "Learn to love one living man." II. THE TONE OF MIND WHICH INCAPACITATES, AND THE HINDRANCES TO RIGHT JUDGMENT OF HUMAN CHARACTER. 1. The habit of insincere praise incapacitates for forming a right judgment of character. During the life of Jesus the Pharisees and Sadducees alike flattered Him. To their unreal flatteries He returned indignant replies: "Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites?" 2. A light, satirical, and irreverent spirit also incapacitates. See how ribaldry unfitted them for judging, and how even a Divine character could be made to seem ridiculous! That such cannot judge of character is intelligible. One reason is—(1) Because excellence of character is not shown them; and another, (2) because this spirit withers all it touches. 3. Jealousy incapacitates for forming a right judgment. The scribes were jealous of Christ, because His teaching was on a principle different from theirs; the Pharisees, because His righteousness was of a different stamp. Joseph's brethren, Haman—examples of jealousy. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) Life's gladness, its joy, its humour, and its mirth, are sometimes stumbling-blocks to "serious" people. Wisdom's children, in the main, we charitably and devoutly hope they are, but none the less we see in them a touch and trick of the children in the market-place. There is a foolish seriousness, and there is a wise mirth. How often do we see pathos and humour, tears and laughter, rapidly following each other, even joining and blending in the person of some strong, wise man, whom we can both respect and love; while the stolid people, who pride themselves upon their "seriousness," too dull for mirth, are amongst the most unlovable. Robert Hall was conspicuous for the blending in his fine nature of the pathos and humour that we speak of. On one occasion, when he had preached a most solemn and pathetic discourse, and was followed in the evening by a "serious" brother, when the day's work was done, he was as witty as he was wise, mirthful and jocund, and the cause of wit in others. The "serious" brother at length remonstrated. "Mr. Hall, I am surprised at you, sir, after the solemn discourse you preached this morning, that you should trifle as you are doing now." "Are you, sir," replied Mr. Hall; "shall I tell you the difference between you and me, sir? You talk your nonsense in the pulpit, I talk mine out of it." A bit of sound philosophy! for the bent spring when released will recoil, and where the mind of a man has been wrought up to the highest tension, the reaction, by God's great mercy, comes as one of the conservators of the forces of life. And herein, also, is wisdom justified of her children. (*J. W. Lance.*) If wisdom was justified in the cases both of John and Jesus, it follows—I. THAT WISDOM IS COMPATIBLE WITH VARIOUS WAYS OF LIFE. II. THAT WISDOM IS NOT A TIME-SERVER, SEEKING TO PLEASE THE WORLD BY FOLLOWING ITS FASHION. Many men, many minds. It is hard to please all, and best not to try. Following fashion is wearisome, for fashion changes fast. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *Waywardness and wisdom*:—I. WE HAVE HERE A CONTRAST PRESENTED. On the one side the perverseness and waywardness of man; on the other side the sympathy of

wisdom with wisdom; the kindred and affinity which exists between the voice of God in His Word and the voice of God in the heart and conscience of His creatures. II. THE WAYWARDNESS OF WHICH OUR LORD HERE SPEAKS IS MORE OR LESS IN ALL OF US. III. THE MOST DISTRESSING FORM OF IT IS THAT IN WHICH IT RUNS ON INTO THE AFFAIRS OF THE SOUL. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Seeing wisdom:*—They whose hearts are softened by a true self-knowledge, and enlightened by a real communion with God; they who are wise in that wisdom of which the condition is humility, and the beginning the fear of the Lord, will see wisdom in that which to the caviller is folly, will recognize a Divine harmony where all is discord to the self-confident, and own an abundance of resource worthy of the All-wise and the All-merciful, in that variety of evidence which affords to different minds and, perhaps, to different ages of the world, their appropriate, as well as conclusive, reason for believing. The very things which others calumniate are to them indications of wisdom. They see how the message of the Baptist and the habits of the Baptist — the office of the Saviour and the life of the Saviour—are severally harmonious and of a piece. (*Ibid.*) *Wisdom's justification:* — The union of good men is internal, though there may be outward differences. The union of selfish men may be external, but there are always inward differences. The children of folly may unite for a common purpose, may be allied together as Herod and Pilate were allied against Christ. Pirates may join for plunder; the children of this world, for power, pleasure, and earthly gain, But there is no inward union, and, as soon as the outward advantage of the alliance ceases, the partnership is dissolved. But good men, though separated outwardly, are inwardly at one. They belong to one invisible and indivisible Church. By and by they shall come together outwardly, and see eye to eye. The inevitable logic of faith and reason shall at last unite them, and then "wisdom shall be justified of all her children." John the Baptist will understand Christ; Barnabas will comprehend Paul: Fenelon and Martin Luther, Athanasius and Arius, Dr. Channing and Dr. Beecher, will recognize each other's worth, and bless God together for what each has accomplished for the kingdom of heaven. So shall wisdom be at last justified of all her children. So shall all good men, sincerely desiring to do right, be found at last to be walking together on the same road towards the best things. Wisdom is not sectarian nor bigoted; she has a large Church, and many children, and is justified of them all. (*James Freeman Clarke.*)

Vers. 36–50. **And, behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner.**—*Jesus anointed by a weeping penitent in the house of Simon the Pharisee: Much love shown where much sin has been forgiven:*—I. IT IS TO THIS INDIVIDUAL THAT OUR ATTENTION IS, IN THE FIRST PLACE, TO BE DIRECTED. Her name is not given, but only her character. This poor sinner had very different reasons from those of the Pharisee for wishing to see Jesus. The recent miracle of restoring to life the widow of Nain's son, had produced, in regard to its author, a deep and general impression. "There came," we are told, "a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us, and that God hath visited His people. And this rumour of Him went forth throughout all Judæa." Simon, among others, wished to know something more perfectly concerning Him. The motives of the poor sinner were of a far higher and more interesting nature. She also had heard the fame of Him who had raised the dead, and, instead of merely musing whether He was a prophet, she seems to have been fully persuaded that this was the case; nay, that He was the Great Prophet—the promised Messiah—the Saviour of sinners. Yet all that she had heard of Him only made her wish to hear more. She had already tasted of the fountain of living waters; and the language of her soul was, "Let me drink again—let me drink abundantly." 1. She evinced her humility and her godly sorrow. Nor did her humility proceed only from the profound sense which she had of His surpassing excellence and dignity. It proceeded partly from the feeling of her own past guilt and exceeding unworthiness. Her humility, in other words, was closely associated with her deep and godly sorrow. 2. But, by her conduct in the guest-chamber, the penitent also evinced her gratitude and affection. Great as were her modesty and humility, she did not permit these feelings to keep her back, even in the presence of uncharitable observers, from expressing her unspeakable obligations and ardent attachment to Jesus. They were tears of affection not less than of sorrow. They were what she could neither repress nor conceal. 3. The penitent here evinced her profound sense of the veneration and homage that were due to Christ. She came for the express purpose of anointing Him—not only of acknow-

ledging her personal obligations and attachment to Him, but of owning and honouring Him as the Messiah or Anointed One. He was the object of her faith not less than of her love. II. The next subject, then, which now solicits our attention, is THE WAY IN WHICH OUR LORD MET THE INWARD SURMISES AND COMPLAINTS OF THE PHARISEE, AND IN WHICH HE NOT ONLY VINDICATED THE CONDUCT OF THE WEEPING PENITENT, BUT SET IT FORTH AS AN HONOURABLE CONTRAST TO THE CONDUCT OF THE PHARISEE HIMSELF. (*J. Grierson.*) *The penitent*:—In the conduct of this penitent we may observe the following particulars: 1. Her deep humility—"She stood at the feet of Jesus." Mary, the sister of Martha, sat at His feet, which might signify the calm, settled, and composed state of her mind. But this woman stood; a posture which denotes humility, reverence, and fear. She stood like a servant in waiting, ready to put in practice what she had designed for His honour. 2. Observe the holy shame of this penitent—"She stood at Jesus' feet behind Him." Such was the beauty of His holiness that she was ashamed, and such the glory of His majesty that she was afraid to look Him in the face. 3. Her unfeigned sorrow—"She stood behind Him weeping." Those eyes, which had been the inlets of temptation and sin, now become the outlets of godly sorrow. 4. Her sorrow was not only sincere, but abundant—"She stood weeping, and washed His feet with tears." It was not a sudden gust, but a continual flow. 5. Witness the ardour of her love to Christ—"She kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment." A pardoned sinner will think no expense too great whereby he may honour Christ or testify his love to Him. 6. Her contempt of the world. She did not mind the things of the world any more than the men of the world. The box of precious ointment was of little value to one who had found the pearl of great price. 7. Her gratitude and joy. All her grief was mingled with love and thankfulness; her tears were tears of joy for sin pardoned, as well as of sorrow for sin committed. Her ointment became a thank-offering to her Saviour. From this instructive history we may learn that the displays of Divine mercy have always a practical tendency. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *A great sinner and a great Saviour*:—1. First, THE CHARACTER OF THE WOMAN. Everything in Scripture is addressed to character. Oh, how true is that statement of the Apostle Paul, when he declared that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Witness the record given in the Word of God of a variety of prominent characters who have been the recipients of the grace of God. Go back to old father Abraham; an idolator amongst the Chaldeans, yet the grace of God found him, and brought him out, and distinguished him. Mark the character of Jacob. I cannot admire it, except in that which grace did for him. He was a deceitful, supplanting young man; and who would not censure him for the conduct he pursued in obtaining the blessing? Beloved, I wish you to be brought to a deep consciousness that sinnership belongs to us, as well as to the woman of the city, and that our sinnership is such that nothing but the blood of Christ can meet our condition before God. Mark yet further. This poor woman was evidently overwhelmed with the consciousness of her sinnership. It is not simply a cold admission of the fact, but compunction is felt, distress of soul realized, a broken and a contrite heart bestowed, an overwhelming consciousness that you deserve nothing but eternal wrath. II. Now let us glance at THE OPPORTUNITY WHICH THE POOR WOMAN HAD OF COMING TO JESUS. There is something interesting in the fact that it should have been in a Pharisee's house. Think for a moment, here, of the display of discriminating grace. Simon might look upon her to hate, but Jesus looked upon her to manifest that the distinguishing grace which He is accustomed to exercise in the most sovereign manner had reached her heart; and thus, in Simon's own house, the discriminating grace of God was exhibited to take the sinner and to leave the Pharisee. Moreover, this poor woman must have been informed where Jesus was, and what He was as the sinner's Friend; and this is the very pith of the message of the gospel of Christ. Our great business, from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from week to week, is to publish the name and the fame of the sinner's Friend. There must have been, after all, an influence put forth upon this poor woman's soul to bring her to the feet of Jesus, or she would never have come there. III. WE NOW COME TO THE MANIFESTATION OF FEELING IN THIS POOR WOMAN. What are the feelings that she must have been the subject of? The first I shall mention is the feeling of necessity, and the second is that of a new nature's affection for what she had discovered. She loved much. This feeling of necessity not only brings the sinner to Jesus under Divine power and might, but constrains the sinner to put forth the emotion which is described of this woman—weeping. I do not so much regard the literal effusion of water from the bodily eyes as I do the

weeping of the soul—the compunction of the spirit; though, with persons who are naturally sensitive, this very compunction will flow forth in external tears, but in other constitutions not so visibly. I am very much afraid that many who pass for Christians have glided into their Christianity in a very smooth and easy manner; and I as strongly fear that they will glide out of it as easily, and perish for ever. The best repentance which is known on earth is that which flows from Calvary, from atoning blood, from pardoning love in the contrite soul. What knowest thou, my hearers, of these feelings? Many persons are greatly frightened about going to hell, and sometimes, perhaps, grieve lest they should do so. IV. Let us now pass on to say A FEW WORDS CONCERNING THIS POOR WOMAN'S EXPECTATIONS. No doubt they were great. They are not recorded, but I should think we might sum them up in two particulars. She expected to eye the glories of His person, and gaze upon Him with delight; and she expected, also, to receive absolution from Him, and she got both. Now, if you are brought to the feet of Jesus, I would have you encourage this two-fold expectation. The first is, to eye the personal and official glories of Christ. Think, for a moment, of the privilege of gazing by faith upon Him, who is declared to be "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." "Behold Me," is His cry. Look off from everything else to gaze upon the precious Christ of God, and know more and more of Him; yea, till ye "know even as ye are known." This poor woman expected, also, to receive absolution from the Saviour, and she obtained it. A word relative to the difference between the declaration of the doctrine of absolution, and the reception of it from Christ by the poor sinner. They are two different things. Unto Simon the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." But that would not have satisfied her if she had stopped there. (*J. Irons.*) *A bruised reed:*—Probably when Simon invited our Saviour to dine there were a great many that wondered why. Simon was, I suppose, a very good-natured fellow, evidently shallow, but easily excited and easily forgetting it. He was a slate, on which you could write that which you could easily rub out. Everybody was running after the Saviour, and Simon was one of those men that liked to catch lions and parade them in his house. He was, therefore, patronizing Christ. Still he did it cautiously. He professed simply to be His gracious entertainer. Christ went. It is of more importance perhaps to ask, "Why did He go there?" Well, He went, because He was neither an ascetic nor a rigorous moralist, after the modern sense of the term. He never was afraid of soiling Himself. He carried in Him the light that dispels darkness. Nor do I suppose He ever once thought, "What will folks say? Is it best for Me to go?" While they were reclining there was an uninvited guest that came in. "And behold!"—an exclamation, to arrest attention—"a woman which was a sinner." Her outward life had been bad. But there was a woman within the woman, a soul hidden within the body. How knew she of Christ? She had heard Him doubtless. She had beheld His face and His eye of mercy, and the gentleness with which He treated children and the poor, and she had said within herself, "If there is a good man living, that man is good." So, hearing that He was gone to dine with the Pharisee, she determined to go and see Him. What kind of a teacher must that man have been who could inspire in a harlot's bosom those conceptions of human and Divine greatness as manifested in Christ, and who could also draw towards Him from out all the lines of wickedness a creature like unto this woman? Christ was a prophet, and more than a prophet. He saw not only the woman, but also the man; her depth and power, his shallowness and feebleness. He then preaches a short sermon to Simon. No words had passed, but He answers Simon's thought. Let us believe, with all true charity, that from the hour of her resurrection she followed the footsteps of her new-found Master, and that she dwells with Him in the purity and the bliss of immortality. Now translate from the wonderful scene some lessons. 1. Your own duty. Separate not yourselves from those that have gone wrong. 2. Have faith to believe that under bad appearances there yet lurks and there yet sighs a soul, a moral conscience. 3. Never forget that when a man has gone wrong he can go right. God is on the side of every man that, having stumbled and fallen, gathers himself together and gets up; and, though his garments may for a long time be soiled, he is on his feet again, and prepared to resist again. Do not forget the all-loving heart of God. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Jesus in Simon's house:*—I. THE FORBEARANCE AND CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST. II. LOVE IS IN PROPORTION TO THE GREATNESS OF THE BENEFITS FELT TO BE RECEIVED. III. From Simon's mistake learn THE DANGER OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE. 1. Spiritual pride blinded his eyes as to himself. 2. It misled him in estimating the character of this woman.

3. It prevented him understanding Christ. (*D. Longwill.*) *Much forgiveness, much love:*—The woman had a definite purpose in coming to the house of Simon. She came, not to be a mere spectator, but to anoint her benefactor with a box of precious ointment. Her benefactor we must assume Jesus to have been, though we know nothing of the previous relations. Conduct so unusual could not fail to create a general sensation in the guest-chamber, and especially to arrest the astonished attention of the host. Happily for the object of his harsh judgment, there was One present who could divine the real situation. One brief, simple parable serves at once to apologize for the accused, and to bring a counter-charge against the accuser. The parable was spoken with a threefold aim. I. To DEFEND THE CONDUCT OF THE WOMAN BY SUGGESTING THE POINTS OF VIEW UNDER WHICH IT OUGHT TO BE REGARDED. II. To IMPUGN THE CONDUCT OF THE PHARISEE. III. To DEFEND THE CONDUCT OF JESUS HIMSELF IN ACCEPTING THE HOMAGE RENDERED. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) *Lessons:*—1. Let sinners of every name and degree be encouraged by this narrative to go at once to Christ. 2. If we would be successful in raising the fallen, and reclaiming the abandoned, we must be willing to touch them, and to be touched by them. 3. If we wish to love God much, we must think much of what we owe to Him. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Faith and forgiveness:*—1. Does it not seem as if the Pharisee, if he had had a larger heart, would have gained something of the experience of the woman's sin without entrance into the sin in the midst of which she had lived, and so would have known the richness of love with which she came to the Saviour? 2. The Pharisee has precisely the same reason for thanking God for having been saved from falling into sin that any vilest sinner has for thanking God when he has been dragged out of sin after falling into it. 3. Remember (1) that you have the right and the power to rescue your brother-man, and share in the enthusiastic and ecstatic gratitude of the rescued soul; (2) that every soul has sin enough in it to warrant a consecration of the whole life to the God who has rescued the soul, even from that degree of sin in which it has lived; (3) that the sense of preservation may lay as deep a hold upon our affections as the sense of rescue. (*Phillips Brooks, D.D.*) *The weeping penitent:*—I. LOVE for the Saviour brought her into His PRESENCE. II. HUMILITY for her sin brought her to His FEET. III. Sorrow for her sin made her WEEP AT HIS FEET. IV. GRATITUDE for sin forgiven led her to WASH AND ANOINT HIS FEET. (*J. Dobie, D.D.*) *Oriental feasts:*—The guests are in their places, not sitting cross-legged on the floor, like modern Orientals, nor seated on chairs, as with ourselves; but reclining, after the old Roman fashion, on couches, the head being towards the table, and the feet, unsandalled, stretched out behind, while the body rested on the left side and elbow. Around the walls of the room sit some of the inhabitants of the place who have heard of the feast, and who have come in to see the banquet, and to listen to the conversation. In one of the earliest, and still one of the best, of the books of Eastern travel, being the report of the party of which Andrew Bonar and Robert McCheyne were members, we find the following statement:—"At dinner, at the Consul's house at Damietta, we were much interested in observing a custom of the country. In the room where we were received, besides the divan on which we sat, there were seats all round the walls. Many came in and took their places on these side seats uninvited and yet unchallenged. They spoke to those at table on business or the news of the day, and our host spoke freely to them." (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Jesus and the woman:*—There was an unrecorded history behind this manifestation. The two must have met before. This was not the first time she had seen the Lord. On some previous occasion virtue had gone out of Him to her, and had awakened new hope within her. She saw the possibility of being forgiven, even for her life of sin. She felt uprising within her the determination to become a pure and noble woman. Nay, she had the persuasion that she was already pardoned and accepted by God; and so, unmoved by all surrounding discouragements, conscious of nothing but that He was there to whom she owed her new-born blessedness, she eagerly threw herself upon His feet, and took this method of telling Him "all that was in her heart." She came to Him, not as a penitent seeking pardon, but as a sinner already forgiven; and so that which looked like extravagance to others was perfectly natural in her, and thoroughly acceptable to Him. It was but the "return and repercussion" of that love which He had already shown to her. Her tears were, as Luther calls them, "heart-water"; they were the distillation of her gratitude. She had not come indeed to weep; she had come designing to use the ointment only. But her tears had, as it were, stolen a march upon her; they had come unbidden and unexpected, and had rather interfered

with the fulfilment of her purpose. But, in order that her original intention might be thoroughly carried out, she wiped them from His feet with her flowing tresses, and then poured over Him the precious ointment, whose odour filled the house. (*Ibid.*) *At His feet:*—I. IT IS A BECOMING POSTURE. 1. As He is Divine, let us pay Him lowliest reverence. 2. As we are sinful, let us make humble confession. 3. As He is Lord, let us make full submission. 4. As He is All in All, let us manifest immovable dependence. 5. As He is infinitely wise, let us wait His appointed time. The best are at His feet, joyfully bowing before Him. The worst must come there whether they will or no. II. IT IS A HELPFUL POSTURE—1. For a weeping penitent (Luke vii. 38). 2. For a resting convert (viii. 35). 3. For a pleading intercessor (viii. 41). 4. For a willing learner (x. 39). 5. For a grateful worshipper (xvii. 16). 6. For a saint beholding his Lord's glory (Rev. i. 17). III. IT IS A SAFE POSTURE. 1. Jesus will not refuse us that position, for it is one which we ought to occupy. 2. Jesus will not spurn the humbly submissive, who in self-despair cast themselves before Him. 3. Jesus will not suffer any to harm those who seek refuge at His feet. 4. Jesus will not deny us the eternal privilege of abiding there. Let this be our continual posture—sorrowing or rejoicing, hoping or fearing, suffering or working, teaching or learning, in secret or in public, in life and in death. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Pharisee's mistake:*—I. AS IT REGARDED CHRIST. 1. He could not read Christ's nature, and undervalued it. 2. In regard to Christ, he mistook also His way of rescuing from sin. II. AS IT REGARDED THE WOMAN. 1. The Pharisee thought that as a sinner she was to be despised. 2. He did not see that into her heart a new life had entered. III. AS IT REGARDED HIMSELF. 1. The Pharisee showed that he did not know his own heart. 2. He did not see that in condemning this woman he was rejecting the salvation of Christ. IV. SOME TRUTHS WHICH WE MAY LEARN FROM THE PHARISEE'S MISTAKE. 1. Those who profess religion should be careful how they give a false view of it by uncharitable judgments and assumptions of superiority. 2. On the other side, we must remind those who profess to be seeking religion that they are bound to form their judgment of it from its Author. (*J. Ker, D.D.*) *She is a sinner:*—This is the Pharisee's compendious trial and verdict and sentence of one in whose soul, it seems, the sore but wholesome struggle of repentance was actively going on. "She is a sinner"; accursed from God she is, and must continue. There is abomination in her touch, and falsehood in her tears. All that a prophet can do for her is to pass her by on the other side. Thus reasoned a sincere, respectable man among the Jews; not a monster of intolerance; not a brutal scorner of the suffering; but a respectable Jew of the most exact sect among the Jews, speaking in the interests of society, and echoing an acknowledged social principle. And thus reason many sincere and worthy men amongst ourselves almost two thousand years after the Lord has taught lessons of another spirit and a more loving wisdom. "She is a sinner." One word suffices to classify all that have gone astray; the Pharisee makes no inquiries, draws no distinctions, indulges no hopes. It is all one to him whether a depraved will or a giddy vanity made her a willing victim, or the sheer presence of starvation drove her to ruin. It is all one whether, every day when she rises and every night when she lies down she hates herself, and in bitter anguish compares the thing she is with what she was; or acquiesces in her own destruction, and does all she can to hasten the darkness that is settling down upon her moral nature, and to welcome the perfect night. We pass our hasty sentence upon thousands and tens of thousands of erring beings, not considering for a moment how many among them are devoured by an unspeakable remorse; how many are capable of sorrow, though they stave it off; how few, comparatively, are the hopeless children of perdition, lost in this world and the world to come. Now there are two facts which may well make us pause ere we adopt the hard and thoughtless rule of society in dealing with guilt; and they are facts, not surmises. 1. Society is, in a large measure, responsible for the very sins which it so readily condemns and casts out. 2. That there is hardly any escape for those who have once entered the path of sin. "She is a sinner"; no one will take her into a blameless home to employ her; no one will visit her and give her counsel. Thus does one step in sin utterly destroy one whom God created to serve and praise Him. God bids the sinner turn from evil ways, and we will give her no chance of turning. (*Archbishop Thomson.*) *Representative characters:*—The woman represents humanity, or the soul of human nature; Simon, the world, or worldly wisdom; Christ, Divinity, or the Divine purposes of good to usward. Simon is an incarnation of what St. Paul calls the beggarly elements; Christ of spirituality; the woman of sin. (*Preacher's Lantern.*) *The secret*

of devotion:—I. We find here an illustration of THE RECOGNIZED VALUE OF ALL ACTS OF SIMPLE-HEARTED DEVOTION TO CHRIST. In the act of justification God is entirely sovereign, and man is entirely passive; but in the work of sanctification which succeeds it we are permitted to co-operate with the Holy Spirit. And all along in our career, as the forgiven children of the Highest, we are welcomed in the ministries of affection which evidence our appreciation of Divine grace. The early reformers had no confusion in regard to this point. Their notion as to the proper blending of faith and works may be seen in the two seals which Martin Luther used indiscriminately in his correspondence. On one was cut his family coat-of-arms—two hammers laid crosswise, with a blunt head and a sharp head, his father's tools at the time when he was a miner; and Martin used often, in connection with this, to quote the saying of Achilles: "Let others have wealth who will; my portion is work." Upon the second seal was cut the device of a heart, with wings on each side of it spread out as if soaring, and underneath this was the Latin motto: "*Petimus astra.*" II. Our second lesson is concerning THE ACTIVE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH ZEAL PROCEEDS, AND FROM WHICH COMES ITS VALUE. 1. Many men feel the superior power and dignity of a Christian life, and so seek something like conformity to its maxims. They move on in a correct living of outward morality, because it brings a reputation with others and satisfaction in their own minds: they are wont to speak pleasantly of themselves as "outsiders, with a great respect for religion, you know!" No value whatever in this. The instincts of an honest heart make us claim, as the very first characteristic of friendship, its disinterestedness. We will not suffer ourselves to be used or patronized; can we suppose God will endure it? 2. Another motive, which gives to many a life a sort of religious cast, is found in conscientiousness. We are all by nature devout; something draws us, and keeps drawing, to God; we grow uneasy under its tension. We seek a kind of temporary relief by yielding a little, without at all intending to yield the whole; just as the foolish fish is said to run up towards the fisherman for a moment, to ease off the stress of the hook, and yet without purposing ever to leave the water. Such a service of God we call "duty." Now there is no value either in the surrender we make, or in the acceptance we profess. When we give up sin from mere pressure of pain, we are apt to choose those which will be missed the least, and have grown the weariest in indulgence. Nor is our obedience any better; we go on with a round of duty-doing as senseless as the whirling of a Japanese praying-machine in the market-place. Our motive is the refinement of selfishness, for we work like a galley-slave who is afraid of the lash. Because we mean to cheat on the "principal" by and by, we scrupulously keep paying the regular "interest" now. And all this is mere hypocrisy. 3. The true motive for all Christian zeal is found in love—simple, honest affection for Christ as the Lord of grace and glory. A good deed is measured by the temper and feeling which underlies it. III. THE RECOLLECTION BY WHICH TRUE ZEAL IS STIMULATED. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." The one great matter of notice here is that alabaster box. It becomes the symbol of a heart full of experience, which no possible language could describe. It would have been more properly named a phial or a jar. It was one of those small vessels, wont to be cherished in that day by vain and silly women, containing rare and curiously-perfumed cosmetics, used by the fastidious Orientals for a meretricious and luxurious toilet. Two things, therefore, were exhibited in the act of this woman—penitence and faith. 1. Her penitence appears in the surrender of the unguent; it was one of the tools of her trade. By this act she avowed her definite and final relinquishment of that old, gay life she had been living. 2. Observe, also, the faith in this action. She ventured much when she came to that feast unbidden. If Jesus should rebuke her, she would be excluded with contumely and contempt. But she trusted Him with all her heart; she believed in her forgiveness in the very moment of asking for it. So she offered her Saviour the highest of all she had. She gave Jesus her last glory; He gave her His full pardon of her sins as His reward and benediction in return. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Jesus in the house of the Pharisee*:—Then one of the Pharisees desired that Jesus would eat bread with them; and as the crowd falls back they go on their way together to this Pharisee's house. And now He lies reclining on the couch. LET US TURN TO LOOK AT THE HOST. He has given Christ a very heartless welcome, and a very scanty entertainment. The commonest courtesies of life were wanting. There was no hint of enthusiasm, no whisper of affection; no token of any loving regard. Not even was it a stately formality—all was as empty as it was cold. Yet do not put down this man as a hypocrite or a knave. Not at all. We overdo the

character of the Pharisee, and so we destroy it altogether. This man is just a fair type of a great many religious people to-day—people who are quite willing to extend a kind of patronage to the claims of Jesus Christ, but who never put themselves much out of the way for Him. They give their heart and energy to their business—for that no care, no toil, nothing is grudged. They give their enthusiasm to politics, if they live in the city; if they live in the country they share it with their horses and guns. They keep their money for themselves. For religion they are willing to expend an occasional hour on Sunday, and a yet more occasional subscription. Alas! that our Blessed Redeemer, the King of Heaven, should find still so cold a welcome and so scanty an entertainment in many a house to-day! With such people there may be a degree of orthodoxy on which they pride themselves, but what is much more rigid and essential is a certain refinement of taste, which is really the only religion of many; there is, too, a certain standard of morality, less important, however, than the standard of taste; and for everybody who does not come up to their standard either of manners or morals, there is a stoning to death with hard judgments—and an equal condemnation for those who venture to go beyond their standard. Look at it. It is religion without any love to God and without any love to man. It is religion without any deep sense of indebtedness, and without any glad devotion. There it is: religion without any deep sense of sin, and so without any glad sense of forgiveness; religion without any need, and so without riches; religion without a Saviour, and so without any love. This man knew of a law which demanded a certain degree of goodness: that was exactly the goodness which he himself lived up to. And good people like himself, of course, should go to heaven for ever and ever. And bad people like this woman should go—elsewhere; and he went on his way quite comfortable and contented with an arrangement altogether so advantageous to himself. Look at this man carefully; and see in him a peril that besets all of us who are brought up in religious forms and observances. It is religion without the Holy Spirit of God, who is come to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come; to make these the great and awful realities, by which the world is tested and all things are esteemed, for without that Holy Spirit who is come to shed the love of God abroad in the heart, God is but a name; religion is but a form; sin is but a notion. NOW LET US TURN TO THE UNINVITED VISITOR. The Eastern custom of hospitality meant very literally "open house." The curiosity with which the people followed Jesus everywhere would be sure to follow Him here, and though He has entered into the house He cannot be hid. And yet of all heresies the most persistent and most deadly is that of which the Church makes but little ado. It is this—that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save good people who don't think they need any saving; and if real sinners come to Him—dreadful sinners: black sinners—it is a presumption and an intrusion which good people cannot tolerate. SEE HERE THE RIGHT CHARACTER, IN THE RIGHT PLACE, SEEKING THE RIGHT THING, IN THE RIGHT WAY. A sinner at the feet of Jesus—here is a sight that all heaven shall come forth to rejoice over; and they shall go back to celebrate it in the sweetest music that even angels ever sang. "She is a sinner"—it is the only certificate of character that Jesus wanted. The only thing for which He came, the only work for which He had qualified Himself, had to do with sinners. "She is ignorant," said Simon, within himself. "The people that knoweth not the law is accursed. What does this wretched woman understand of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven? What appreciation can she have of its lofty promises and high glory?" She knew that she was a sinner and in that she knew more than Simon knew; and knew all that she needed to know. A sinner at His feet. Oh, blessed hiding-place! A refuge sure and safe, in His shadow, within reach of that Hand, there, where all the heart may pour forth its sorrow and the story of its sin, where all His love may look its benediction, and may touch with healing power. Coming in the right way. She just cast herself upon His love and help. Having no hope but in Him, feeling that the torrents swept and surged about her, but that Hand held her and was lifting her up, and should set her feet upon the rock. She came unto Him and found the rest that she sought. The hold of the past was loosed and broken; its record was blotted out and forgotten. The touch of that gracious Hand healed the broken heart. His words fell like the very music of heaven upon her soul. "Thy sins are forgiven thee." And there came a new life, fresh, sweet, pure, beautiful, like the life of a little child. This is Jesus, our Saviour, who speaks to us this day. "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." But the story is not finished yet. There with the sobbing woman down at His feet, with that gracious

Hand laid on the bent head—that Hand whose touch healed the broken heart—Jesus became her Advocate and Defender. The silence was broken as Jesus looked up and said, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." With what rich blessing must every word have fallen upon her—what gentle courtesy and tender grace was His! (*M. G. Pearse.*) *The woman that was a sinner*:—Here are two silver bells, let us ring them; their notes are heavenly—O for ears to hear their rich, clear melody! The first note is "grace," and the second tone is "love." I. GRACE, the most costly of spikenard; this story literally drips with it, like those Oriental trees which bleed perfume. 1. First, grace is here glorified in its object. She was "a sinner"—a sinner not in the flippant, unmeaning, every-day sense of the term, but a sinner in the blacker, filthier, and more obnoxious sense. Grace has pitched upon the most unlikely cases in order to show itself to be grace; it has found a dwelling-place for itself in the most unworthy heart, that its freeness might be the better seen. 2. Grace is greatly magnified in its fruits. Who would have thought that a woman who had yielded her members to be servants of unrighteousness, to her shame and confusion, should have now become, what if I call her a maid of honour to the King of kings?—one of Christ's most favoured servitors? This woman, apart from grace, had remained black and defiled still to her dying day, but the grace of God wrought a wondrous transformation, removing the impudence of her face, the flattery from her lips, the finery from her dress, and the lust from her heart. Eyes which were full of adultery, were now founts of repentance; lips which were doors of lascivious speech, now yield holy kisses—the profligate was a penitent, the castaway a new creature. All the actions which are attributed to this woman illustrate the transforming power of Divine grace. Note the woman's humility. She had once possessed a brazen face, and knew no bashfulness, but now she stands behind the Saviour. 3. I would have you remark, in the third place, that grace is seen by attentive eyes in our Lord's acceptance of what this chosen vessel had to bring. Jesus knew her sin. Oh, that Jesus should ever accept anything of me, that He should be willing to accept my tears, willing to receive my prayers and my praises! 4. Further, grace is displayed in this narrative when you see our Lord Jesus Christ become the defender of the penitent. Everywhere grace is the object of human cavil: men snap at it like evening wolves. Some object to grace in its perpetuity, they struggle against persevering grace; but others, like this Simon, struggle against the bounty of grace. 5. Once more, my brethren, the grace of God is seen in this narrative in the bestowal of yet richer favours. Great grace saved her, rich grace encouraged her, unbounded grace gave her a Divine assurance of forgiveness. "Go in peace." II. LOVE. 1. Its source. There is no such thing as mere natural love to God. The only true love which can burn in the human breast towards the Lord, is that which the Holy Ghost Himself kindles. 2. Its secondary cause is faith. The fiftieth verse tells us, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Our souls do not begin with loving Christ, but the first lesson is to trust. Many penitents attempt this difficult task; they aspire to reach the stair-head without treading the steps; they would needs be at the pinnacle of the temple before they have crossed the threshold. Grace is the source of love, but faith is the agent by which love is brought to us. 3. The food of love is a sense of sin, and a grateful sense of forgiveness. The service this woman rendered to our Lord was perfectly voluntary. No one suggested it, much less pressed it upon her. Her service to Jesus was personal. She did it all herself, and all to Him. Do you notice how many times the pronoun occurs in our text? "She stood at *His* feet behind *Him* weeping, and began to wash *His* feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed *His* feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment." She served Christ Himself. Forgetfulness of the personality of Christ takes away the very vitality of our religion. How much better will you teach, this afternoon, in your Sabbath-school class, if you teach your children for Christ! The woman's service showed her love in that it was fervent. There was so much affection in it—nothing conventional; no following chilly propriety, no hesitating inquiry for precedents. Why did she kiss His feet? Was it not a superfluity? O for more of this guileless piety, which hurls decorum and regulation to the winds. This woman's love is a lesson to us in the opportunity which she seized. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The woman that was a sinner*:—I. THE PERSON DESCRIBED. 1. She was a sinner. This applies to all. 2. A notorious sinner. 3. A mourning and deeply penitent sinner. II. THE COURSE WHICH SHE ADOPTED. 1. Strong desires after the Saviour. 2. Deep humility and lowliness of mind. 3. Deep contrition. 4. True and hearty affection to Christ. 5. Liberality and devotedness to Christ. 6. An after-life worthy of the profession she now made.

She attended Christ in many of His journeys, &c. III. THE PUBLIC TESTIMONY SHE RECEIVED. She had honoured Jesus; and He now honours her, by testifying of her. 1. He testified to her forgiveness. 2. He testified to her faith as the instrumental cause. 3. He testified to the greatness of her love. 4. He testified to His approval and acceptance of her. Application. Learn: 1. The condescension of Christ. 2. The riches of His grace. 3. His power and willingness to save the chief of sinners. 4. The true way of coming to Christ. 5. The effects of true love to Him. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The penitent-citizen:*—1. Her humility. She takes her stand at the feet of Christ, esteeming the lowest place too good for her, so vile an abject. 2. Bashfulness and shame. She doth not boldly face Christ, but gets behind Him; being conscious of her sins, which thus placed her deservedly. 3. Sorrow. The rock is now turned into a water-pool, and the flint into a river of waters: she weeps, and in such abundance, as that she washeth Christ's feet with those streams of penitence. 4. Revenge. That hair which she had so often gently combed, and cunningly broidered against the glass, and then spread forth as a net to catch her amorous companions withal, she now employs in the wiping those feet, which she had with her tears washed. 5. Love; manifested in kissing Christ's feet, acknowledging thereby that she tasted of the comfort that was in Him. O how gladly will one who hath escaped drowning kiss the shore! 6. Bounty. She pours a precious and costly ointment upon those feet she had thus washed and kissed. Every way she approved herself a perfect penitent. And therefore no marvel (the great prize coming) if the trumpets sound; the news of this rare convert is proclaimed with an "Ecce, Behold a woman." (*N. Rogers.*) *Jesus attracting sinners:*—Travelling along a country road in a hot summer's day, you may have noticed the people before you turn aside at a certain point, and gather around something that was yet hidden from you. You knew at once that it was a clear, cold spring that drew them all together there. Each of them wanted something which that spring could supply. Or you have seen iron filings leap up and cling to the poles of a magnet when it was brought near to them. The attraction of the magnet drew them to itself. So sinners were drawn to Jesus; they felt that in Him was all fulness, and that He could supply their need. (*American Sunday School Times.*) *Love produces repentance:*—From this incident we see what it is that produces true repentance. If you were going out into the open air on a frosty day, and were taking a lump of ice, you might pound it with a pestle, but it would still continue ice. You might break it into ten thousand atoms, but so long as you continue in that wintry atmosphere, every fragment, however small, will still be frozen. But come within. Bring in the ice beside your own bright and blazing fire, and soon in that genial glow "the waters flow." A man may try to make himself contrite; he may search out his sins and set them before him, and dwell on all their enormity, and still feel no true repentance. Though pounded with penances in the mortar of fasts and macerations, his heart continues hard and icy still. And as long as you keep in that legal atmosphere it cannot thaw. There may be elaborate confession, a got-up sort of penitence, a voluntary humility, but there is no godly sorrow. But come to Jesus with His words of grace and truth. From the cold winter night of the ascetic, come into the summer of the Great Evangelist. Let that flinty frozen spirit bask a little in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Listen for a little to those words which melted this sinner into a penitent—which broke her alabaster box and brimmed over in tears of ecstatic sorrow and self-condemning devotion: for, finding that you too have much forgiven, you also will love much. (*J. Hamilton, D.D.*) *Self-righteous murmuring:*—When the prodigal son returned home, that respectable elder brother of his was the only one who begrudged his welcome. So this punctilious Pharisee murmured at the woman who anointed Jesus' feet. It is told of a noted geologist that once, when travelling over a new district, he hired an ignorant countryman to carry the specimens of the different rocks which he had collected, to his inn. The countrymen afterwards, conscious of his own superior knowledge, used to tell of "the poor mad gentleman who went around gathering stones." The Pharisee, clad in his own self-righteousness, has the same difficulty regarding the mission of Jesus; he cannot see how Jesus stoops to even the outcast. He does not see the hidden jewel of the soul; he forgets that the physician must lay his hand upon the loathsome sore, if he would heal it. (*American Sunday School Times.*) *An unfeeling religionist:*—There is a story in the *Bustan* of the famous Persian poet Saadi, which seems an echo of this evangelical history. Jesus, while on earth, was once entertained in the cell of a dervish, or monk, of eminent reputation for sanctity. In the same city dwelt a youth, sunk in every sin, "whose heart was so black that

Satan himself shrank back from it in horror." This last presently appeared before the cell of the monk, and, as if smitten by the very presence of the Divine prophet, began to lament deeply the sin and misery of his life past, and, shedding abundant tears, to implore pardon and grace. The monk indignantly interrupted him, demanding how he dared to appear in his presence, and in that of God's holy prophet; assured him that for him it was in vain to seek forgiveness; and to prove how inexorably he considered his lot was fixed for hell, exclaimed: "My God, grant me but one thing—that I may stand far from this man in the judgment day!" On this Jesus spoke: "It shall be even so; the prayer of both is granted. This sinner has sought mercy and grace, and has not sought them in vain. His sins are forgiven: his place shall be in Paradise at the last day. But this monk has prayed that he may never stand near this sinner. His prayer, too, is granted: hell shall be his place; for there this sinner shall never come." (*Trench.*) *The nun and the penitent*:—One of the legends of Ballycastle preserves a touching story. It is of a holy nun whose frail sister had repented her evil ways and sought sanctuary at the convent. It was winter; the shelter she claimed was granted, but the sinless sister refused to remain under the same roof with the repentant sinner. She left the threshold, and proceeded to pray in the open air; but looking towards the convent, she was startled by perceiving a brilliant light issue from one of the cells, where she knew that neither taper nor fire could have been burning. She proceeded to her sister's bed—for it was in that room the light was shining—just in time to receive her last sigh of repentance. The light had vanished, but the recluse received it as a sign from heaven that the offender had been pardoned, and learned thenceforward to be more merciful in judging, and more Christlike in forgiving. (*S. C. Hall.*) *Influence of Christ's love*:—A pious man relates the following incident: One day I passed a shed where I saw several men at work loosening a waggon whose wheels had frozen into the ice. One of the men went to work with axe and hammer, and with much labour loosened one of the wheels, not, however, without doing considerable injury to it. Suddenly, the woman of the house came near, with a pailful of hot water, and poured it on the spokes. The wheels were now quickly loosened, and the loud praises of those standing near were bestowed on the woman. I thought: I will note this! The warming influence of Christ's love loosens the icy bands around a sinful heart sooner than the axe of carnal power or dogmatic opposition.

Ver. 40. **Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.**—*On administering reproof*:—1. To say somewhat to our brother when we see him run into an error. In such a case we may not be silent. "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him" (Levit. xix. 17). Observe—2. Courteous usage should not keep us from telling men of their faults, and discovering their failings to them. (*N. Rogers.*) *Rebuke in parable*:—It is none of the worst observations we meet withal in Oleaster; that the holy prophets in dealing with great ones have spoken most an end in parables, as our Saviour did here to Simon. Let reproof be as good and wholesome diet as a partridge, yet it would not be served in to a great man's table raw, or with the feathers on, but cooked and seasoned. Reproof of them must be well wrapped up (as we do a pill in sugar), that it may the more easily be swallowed, and work before they think on it. But it may not be wholly withheld from any man whatever, be he our dearest friend. In so doing we should deal unkindly with them who deal friendly with us. Unhappy is that friendship, saith Carthusianus, which favouring our brother's cares doth break his neck. Such friendship David putteth in his Litany, and desireth God to keep him from. (*Ibid.*) *On receiving reproof*:—The word Christ speaks ought to be received with all readiness of spirit. Thus Simon received it, so ought we. Eli desired Samuel to tell him all (1 Sam. iii. 17). Such should be the desire of all God's people, that God's ministers would deal faithfully with them in delivering the whole counsel of God unto them—as well one part as another. Wantons, you know, come into a garden to pick only flowers; here they pick a gay, and there another; but the good housewife comes to gather herbs: so should we come into God's house to hear His Word. (*Ibid.*) *The ear the door to the soul*:—The devil's study is to keep this door shut, that Christ may not enter. Like a gaoler, he will sometimes be content to let his prisoner have hands and feet free, provided the prison doors and gates be fast locked and barred. His captives shall sometimes give an alms, or do some other outward work of mercy, come to church to satisfy the law, &c. But he cannot endure the doors should stand open, for fear of an escape. (So Acts vii. 57; Psa. lviii. 45.) Search the

Scriptures, and you shall find that none was cured with greater difficulty than he that had a deaf and dumb spirit. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 41. **There was a certain creditor which had two debtors.**—*God is our Creditor* :—God is this Creditor; He trusts us with His goods; what we have we have from Him to use. 1. How many daily spend of God's stock and store. Neither man nor beast (for the use of man), but daily receive from His hand, and seek to be further trusted (Psa. civ. 27). It would undo the richest man that ever was to have so many in his debt at once. 2. Think how prodigal and expensive men are in spending on God's stock; how prodigal of His mercy, patience, goodness, &c. (Rom. ii. 4, 5). How lavish are men of the time lent, of health, wealth, &c. (Luke xv.). Look but on the life of some one sinner, and judge of the rest (Hosea xii. 1; Jer. xx. 7). 3. Consider we with ourselves how long God hath forborne and been out of purse. 4. Add to all God's bounty and liberality—which is renewed to us daily—He is as willing still to lend us, as if we had paid Him in all, and owed Him not a groat. 5. In all our wants and needs, from hence we have direction to whom to go a-borrowing. (1) He is a bountiful Creditor, and no needy one; better provided than any other. He hath for our need, and always is at home. (2) He stands not upon any great security; He is willing to take our words, our promises, for the payment (Gen. xxviii. 20; 1 Sam. i. 11; Matt. xviii. 26, 27). Only He expects that we should be just of our words, that we may be again trusted (Eccles. v. 4). (3) Though we borrow of him to-day, yet if we stand in need of Him to-morrow, as questionless we shall, and desire to be further trusted, He will be willing to pleasure us, especially when He sees we employ those talents well wherewith He hath betrusted us. (*N. Rogers.*) *Other debts* :—1. A day is set for the payment of other debts. Till the day be come we fear no arrest, they cannot be exacted. But the sinner goes in danger every hour; God may arrest him whensoever it pleaseth Him, as He often doth and hath done, when men think themselves most safe (1 Sam. xv. 32; Dan. v. 4–30; Job xxi. 13). 2. Other debts make us liable but to a bodily arrest only. The conscience may be free; but the debt of sin doth endanger both body and soul too. 3. Other debts may be forgotten, and so not required; but the debt of sin cannot be forgotten of the Lord (Amos viii. 7). He keepeth a debt-book, wherein all is written, with the day and place, &c. (Isa. lxv. 6). Cain's debt is as fresh in God's mind as if it were but yesterday. 4. From other debtors there may be some protection, either place or person may keep us from arrest; but there is no protection against the Lord's attachments. Angels nor men cannot save us (Job x. 7). The horns of the altar cannot protect us (1 Kings ii. 28–31). Nor can mountains and rocks conceal us (Rev. vi. 16). 5. There may be a flying away from other debtors, and a hiding ourselves from man's attachments; but flying here will not save us (Psa. cxxxix. 7). 6. In man's prison some favour may be showed, good usage obtained; but in the prison wherein sin doth cast us, there is no ease. 7. If thou art not freed out of the hands of other creditors, by friends or other means, yet death will free thee. But it is not so here, the debt which sin cast thee into is most called for, and most terrible after death. (*Ibid.*) *Condition of these two debtors* :—All are not alike indebted to the Lord. Some are more indebted to Him than others. This appears by that parable (Luke xvi. 5); and by other express scripture (Matt. xi. 21; xii. 31; xxiii. 14, 15, 24). 1. All have not received from the Lord a like number of pounds nor talents. He hath not given to all a like stock to trade with (Luke xix. 14; Matt. xxv. 14). 2. Again, all are not alike deep in respect of actual transgressions. For albeit original sin be equally and alike extended unto all, it hath no degree nor parts in any child of Adam more than other; yet actual sins committed by us are of a thousand kinds, and every vice hath its latitude and degree. Some are bound up in folio, other some in quarto, others in octavo, and the sins of some other in a decimo sexto. 3. We have learned better, and accordingly we should examine of what kind our sins are, and how much our debt is; and as we find, let us put down in our account. To help us a little in this our search, take this for a general rule, the more directly any sin is done against God, the greater the sin is to be accounted of, and the more the debt. Thus the sin against the Holy Ghost is the greatest sin, because he who committeth that sin, sinneth of malice, purposely to despite the Spirit of grace. Hence it follows—(1) The sins of the highest degree against the first table are greater than the sins of the highest degree against the second table. (2) Those sins that are committed against the means which should keep us from

sin are greater than other (Matt. xi. 24). So sins against knowledge are greater than those that are committed out of simple ignorance (Luke xii. 47; James iv. 17). And as it is thus in the sins of omission, so also in the sins of commission (Acts iii. 17; 1 Tim. i. 13). Paul found mercy, because he did it ignorantly. So sins against the gospel are greater than those against the law, for that they are committed against more light. "This is the condemnation," saith Christ, "that light is come into the world" (John iii. 19). To commit sin in the clear light of the gospel is a reproach not much unlike that of Absolom. "He committed wickedness in the sight of the sun." (3) Sins often committed are greater than those but once committed by us, for that here is an abusing of God's patience and forbearance (Rom. ii. 4, 5; Jer. v. 6; 2 Peter ii. 22). In arithmetic a figure, in the first place, stands for itself; in the second place, it stands for ten; and, in the third place, for a hundred, and so higher. (*Ibid.*) *No peace to the debtor:*—Augustus hearing that the goods of a merchant who died much in debt were set forth to sale, he sent to buy his pillow, saying that he thought it had some rare virtue in it to get one asleep, seeing he that owed so much could sleep on it so quietly. As for these who are so deep in arrearages with God, and in such danger by reason of their debt, and yet sleep securely, God keep me from their bed and pillow. That sleep of theirs is but Porkepose playing before a tempest. (*Ibid.*) *Small debts:*—1. That the nature of sin stands not in the material part, but in the form, which is the transgression of the law. 2. Small sins, with their multitude and number, hurt the soul as much as great sins do with their weight. 3. Small sins serve to make way for greater. Huntsmen first ply the deer with their little beagles, till it be heated and blown, and then they put on their great buckhounds. Such use the devil makes of little sins. A long thread of iniquity he hath let in with a small needle, as we find in David's case, and in Peter's, &c. A great fire hath been kindled by a little spark; and a great blot made with a little hair hanging in the pen. 4. Small sins are cured with more difficulty than greater. A wound made with a stiletto is more dangerous than a wound made with Goliath's sword; here the wound presently closeth up, and so bleeds inwardly in greater abundance. 5. Forget not what Christ suffered for small sins, even His precious blood (Heb. ix. 7). Our great sins were as the spear in His side, and as the nails in His blessed hands and feet; and our small sins were as the thorns upon His head, they, though small, yet put Him to pain and grief. How dare we crown the Son of God (again) with thorns, and put Him by our small sins to an after suffering? (*Ibid.*) *Free forgiveness:*—I. IT IS AN UNSPEAKABLE MERCY TO HAVE OUR SINS FORGIVEN. This is the first desire and prayer of an awakened sinner, and a principal blessing in the covenant of grace. II. IT IS THE SOLE PREROGATIVE OF GOD TO FORGIVE SIN. None can pass by an offence but the party offended, and none can discharge a debt but the person with whom it was contracted. III. THOSE TO WHOM GOD FORGIVES SIN HAVE NOTHING TO PAY. The whole creation is become insolvent. IV. THOSE WHOSE SINS ARE PARDONED ARE FIRST BROUGHT TO SEE THAT THEY HAVE NOTHING TO PAY. V. THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS ALL OF GRACE. VI. THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN TENDS TO GLORIFY GOD. Hence we may learn—1. How much those wrong God who entertain hard thoughts of Him. 2. What gratitude and love is due to Him from those whose sins are pardoned! (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) From the whole, we may observe these six things. 1. That sinners are in debt to God, as having violated His law, and so laid themselves open to the punishment threatened: "The wages of sin is death." 2. Some have contracted greater guilt, and so are more in debt to God than others, as having laid themselves open to greater punishment; from the greater advantages they have enjoyed and abused, they have more to answer for and more to fear. 3. It is the common condition of sinners indebted to God that they have nothing to pay, nothing to satisfy Divine justice, or redeem themselves from deserved wrath. 4. God is able and ready to forgive the greatest debt and debtors, as well as the least; those that owe five hundred pence, as well as those that owe fifty. 5. Whom God forgives, He forgives freely; not excluding the satisfaction of Christ, but upon the account of it, which is so far from lessening the freeness of that grace that forgives us, that it greatly exalts it. I. SOME WHO HAVE RUN FAR IN DEBT TO GOD HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN. Manasseh in the Old Testament, and Paul and Mary Magdalene. 1. Thus He magnifies His patience, and proves it Divine, the patience of God, and not of a creature, much less of a man. (1 Tim. i. 16.) 2. Some whose iniquities have abounded have been forgiven, for the greater exaltation of grace. Grace is thus exalted and glorified—(1) In its fulness; that so where sin hath abounded grace may much more abound. (2) Herein grace shines in its freeness; which, that it

may be regarded, it is God's method, before He makes the offer of pardon, to sum up what sinners have been and done (Isa. xliii. 22–24). II. WHAT THERE IS IN FORGIVING GRACE TO BE AN ARGUMENT FOR LOVE IN THOSE THAT RECEIVE IT. If blessedness be an argument for love, forgiveness has this belonging to it, and connected with it (Psa. xxxii. 1, 2). This is a comprehensive blessing, and the foundation of many others. They who have their sins forgiven, are freed from the greatest evil, the wrath of God, and eternal condemnation. Pardon of sin is a covenant-mercy, always connected with the favour of God, and a special relation to to Him. The pardon of sin will sweeten every other mercy, and render any outward burden or affliction tolerable. Sin imbitters, and adds a weight to any affliction; but pardon doth lighten and sweeten it. In a word, the sinner, pardoned in this world, shall have eternal life in the future. III. How GOD'S GRACE, AS FREELY FORGIVING GREATER DEBTS, SHOULD LEAD THE FORGIVEN SOUL TO LOVE HIM THE MORE. And here God's rich grace, freely forgiving greater debts—1. Tends to this, as it frees the soul from greater torment, to which its multiplied sins laid it open, especially those committed against light and grace. 2. God's mercy, as forgiving greater debts, may free the soul from the more tormentful apprehensions it is under, even here, of the wrath to come, and so engage Him to love the more. 3. The greater and more astonishing grace abounding towards great sinners, and singling them out for mercy when others are left, is another ground of greater love. Application: 1. Have such as have run deeply in debt to God been freely forgiven by Him? What reason have we, then, to believe Him when He declares Himself thus, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live"! 2. How unreasonable are the hard and horrid thoughts whereby sinners, awakened to a sense of their vileness and guilt, are kept off from a forgiving God? 3. How disingenuous would it be for any to go on with the greater security and boldness in sin, because God is ready so freely to forgive the greatest debt? 4. For the greatest sinners to say, There is no hope in their case, is to say what they have no warrant for, from God or His Word. 5. Let such as have any good hope that their debts, how large soever, are forgiven, love much, yea, love the more, the larger their debts have been. If we are pardoned at all, it is a very great debt from which we are discharged. O let us labour after suitable affection, and show it. (1) By reflecting upon sin with the greater shame and sorrow, hatred and abhorrence, as committed against so good a God. (2) Having much forgiven, love God the more, and give Him the glory due unto His name. "Who is a God like unto Thee, who pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression," &c. (3) Having much forgiven, let your love show itself greater by your growing esteem of Jesus Christ, whose blood was the price of your pardon, and though it is given you freely, cost Him His life. (*D. Wilcox.*)

Vers. 42, 43. **He frankly forgave them both.**—*Free forgiveness*:—There is one thing that is needful in all true religion—there is no religion without it—and that is love towards God. It is quite true that some Christians love God more than others. Cannot you fancy what those two men went through? They would not each go through the same experience. There was a great difference between their cases. Take the first man. You can fancy his saying to himself: "Well, it is a nasty thing, this little debt of mine; I wish I had not got so much behind-hand; I do not quite know how I am going to clear it off, but I must try: perhaps my creditor will be content with a few instalments; if I pay him half a crown a week for such a time I shall begin to make a hole in the debt, and, ultimately, he may get it all: I must cast myself on his forbearance." The other can indulge in no such hope. Let one of you—a poor, labouring man, earning fifteen or eighteen shillings a week—put himself in that man's position. Just imagine yourself encumbered with a debt of a hundred pounds. How hopeless a thing it would seem to you; all your efforts to clear it off must fail; you might work almost to death, and yet the debt would be there still. We can fancy what took place in that man's house as the reckoning day drew near. The debt laws in those countries, you know, were terribly severe. His feeling is one of hopelessness. The prison looms up in view; he will be sold, and all that he hath, his children will be torn from him; his little home will be broken up. How desolate the man feels! Try to make him happy if you can. Go and talk cheerfully to him. Tell him to have good hope, to keep up his courage, and that sort of thing. You cannot bring a smile to the man's face; he looks as miserable as he can be. On his way he meets the other man, and he asks him what his business is. "Well," says he,

"I have got an awkward affair—not very serious, but still awkward; I have a nasty little debt that I cannot settle; I am sure I don't know how the creditor will treat me; there are those fifty pence that I owe him; I know he has a right to exact them to the very last farthing, and I have 'nothing to pay'; I do not know how he will deal with me." "Well, what are you going to do?" "Oh, I am going to make a few proposals to him, and see if I cannot get him to take a few instalments, so that I may pay him off by degrees. What is your case, my poor fellow? You look very sad." "Oh, mine is a far more serious case than yours." At last the great man stands before them. "Well," he says, "have you got your money?" They both hang down their heads. Turning to one he says, "Have you got your fifty pence?" "No, sir, I have not got it." "Why have you not got it?" "Well, sir, the truth is, I have got no money—I am a bankrupt—I have nothing to pay." Then, turning to the other, he says, "What have you got to say for yourself? Have you got your five hundred pence?" His head hangs down; tears come into the strong man's eyes; his body quivers with emotion; he can hardly control himself. The next moment the mystery is solved. "He frankly forgave them both." The one man rises to his feet, and says, "Sir, I thank you." The other drops on his knees, and buries his head in his hands. He cannot thank his benefactor, he is too much overpowered. The one man feels, "Well, he is very kind in his dealing with me." The other feels, "He has saved me from ruin; I should have been utterly lost if this man had not acted such a generous part towards me." The one man goes out of the house with a kind of respectful feeling towards his benefactor. The other goes away with the feeling that he has been bought over, so to speak, by the benefactor's goodness: that all that he has, and all that he is, belongs to that man who has stretched out his hand of forgiveness, and done him so unexpected a favour. Now, my dear friends, among the many figures which bring before us some idea of our sin, there are very few more suggestive than this figure of debt. Now, is there any difference between us in this respect? Yes, doubtless, there are shades of difference. Some owe more than others. Some have been more prodigal in wasting the Master's substance than others; but there are none of us who can say that they owe an inconsiderable debt. Friends, have you come to the point which these debtors reached? Have you discovered, that all your life, you have been heaping up debt, and that you have "nothing to pay?" What! will you tell me that these debtors did not know that they were forgiven? There are plenty of nominal Christians in our day who say, "Ah! but then we cannot know that we are forgiven; we may have a faint idea about it, but we cannot know it." Did not these debtors know it? (*W. Hay Aitken.*) *The parable of the two debtors*:—This parable suggests a grave question, a question the answer to which branches out into many forms of practical truth. In the parable, the debtor who owes five hundred pence seems to have the advantage over the debtor who owes fifty. More is forgiven him, and he loves more; he is quit of the larger debt, and proves the better man. In the narrative, the Roman who is a sinner seems, in like manner, to have the advantage over the man who is a Pharisee—the harlot over the devotee. She is more open to the words of Christ, and, once forgiven, shows incomparably the warmer love. Now, if this parable and narrative stood alone, we might not care to raise the question, whether or not it is well to have sinned much—whether the greatest love springs from the most heinous transgressions, just as the fairest flowers and most fruitful trees spring from a plentifully manured soil? But they do not stand alone. The impression they make is deepened as we listen to other parables, as we turn to other narratives. (The two sons; the prodigal; the Pharisee and publican.) Is it, then, an advantage to have offended much, to have gone far and deep into sin? To suppose that to be the case is to utter a monstrous libel against God and man. Nevertheless the parables which seem to support this view subserve a most useful purpose; they contain truths which we are very apt to neglect, and suggest warnings of which we stand in constant need. 1. Observe that flagrant sinners are much more likely to discover that they are sinners than moralists and ritualists. 2. The much and the little of sin are for the most part measures of conscience, not of iniquity. 3. Christ does not teach us to run into sin, but to hate hypocrisy—the worst of sins. 4. Christ specially warns us against forming those hard judgments of our brethren, which of all men the "unco' guid" are apt to form. (*S. Cox, D.D.*) *Love's foremost*:—I. WE MUST FIRST BE SAVED IN THE SAME MANNER AS OTHERS. 1. All are in debt; we must heartily own this to be our case. 2. None have anything to pay; we must confess this, without reserve, as being our own personal condition. 3. The loving

Lord forgives in each case; personally we have exceeding great need of such remission. We must feel this. 4. In each case He forgives frankly, or without any consideration or recompense; it must be so with us. We must accept free grace and undeserved favour. 5. Out of this arises love. By a sense of free grace we begin to love our Lord; and in the same way we go on to love Him more. II. WE MUST AIM AT A DEEP SENSE OF SIN. 1. It was the consciousness of great indebtedness which created the great love in the penitent woman. Not her sin, but the consciousness of it, was the basis of her loving character. 2. Where sin has been open and loud, there ought to be this specially humbling consciousness; for it would be an evidence of untruthfulness if it were not manifest (1 Cor. xv. 9). 3. Yet is it frequently found in the most moral, and it abounds in saints of high degree (1 John i. 8). 4. It is to be cultivated. III. THIS WILL LEAD TO A HIGHLY LOVING CARRIAGE TOWARDS OUR LORD. 1. We shall desire to be near Him, even at His feet. 2. We shall make bold confession, and shall do this at all risks. 3. We shall show deep humility, delighting even to wash His feet. 4. We shall exhibit thorough contrition, beholding Him with tears. 5. We shall render earnest service; doing all in our power for Jesus, as this woman did. 6. We shall make total consecration of all that we have; our tears, our choicest gifts, our hearts, ourselves. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The parable of the two debtors*:—I. THE INCIDENT WHICH OCCASIONED THE PARABLE. 1. The anointing. 2. The woman. 3. The manner in which the Jews sat at meat. 4. The woman's conduct. (1) Her deep humility. (2) Her ardent affection. (3) Her grateful sacrifice. 5. The presumption which led Simon to his surmisings respecting Christ. II. THE PARABLE ITSELF. 1. That sins against God are justly denominated debts. (1) Because they imply the withholding from God what is due to Him. (2) Because they render us liable to be cast into the prison of hell. 2. That all mankind are debtors to God, but in different degrees. 3. That no debtor to God is capable of paying the debt he owes. 4. That the forgiveness of our sins, or debts, is of the utmost importance to us. 5. That a consciousness of our own insolvency must precede our pardon. 6. That forgiveness may be confidently expected, when sought in the way of God's appointment. III. OUR LORD'S APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE. 1. Just reproof wisely given. The evils reproved in the Pharisee were various and marked; including (1) His unbelief in the Saviour's mission. (2) His self-esteem. (3) His censoriousness. (4) His want of respect for Christ. 2. Seasonable consolation graciously administered. 3. Divine instruction kindly suggested. (1) That Christ is truly God. This is evident from His knowledge of Simon's thoughts, and from the blessings He conferred. (2) That forgiveness is certain to all true believers. (*T. Gibson, M.A.*) *The two debtors*:—I. MAN IS HERE REPRESENTED AS A DEBTOR. God as our Creator has an undoubted right to the universal obedience of His creatures. To Him we owe the consecration of every power and faculty, whether of mind or body. As moral Governor of the world, it is for Him to propound the rule of our duty; and accordingly He has given us a law, the transcript of His own Divine perfections, immutable in its demands, universal and perpetual in its obligations. But where is the individual who has kept it? There is none who has. Consider, each one, the vast number of your debts. They are too many to be told. God's Book is full of them. II. AMPLE PROVISION HAS BEEN MADE FOR THE FREE REMISSION OF THE UNTOLD DEBT. As man is entirely ruined by sin, so he is entirely saved by the free grace of God. The debt is paid, justice is satisfied, God is glorified, and the sinner is saved. But by what mighty process has this been effected? God in the person of His Son appears as the Substitute for offenders. And it is a complete forgiveness, extending to the five hundred as well as to the fifty pence. III. NOTICE ALSO THE GRATEFUL LOVE WHICH INVARIABLY FOLLOWS A SENSE OF PARDONING MERCY. Do not, however, imagine that the penitent women was forgiven *because* "she loved much." Her love was not the procuring cause, but the effect, fruit, and evidence of the pardon she had received. Much had been forgiven her, therefore she loved her Saviour much in return. (*James Williams, M.A.*) *The two debtors*:—Our Lord's immediate object in this parable was to defend the woman and justify His own allowance of her presence and expressions of affections. This defence and justification are accomplished when it is shown that the very familiarities which the Pharisee thought Jesus should have rebuked are the proof that the woman is forgiven, cleansed, and pure. 1. Christ points to the woman's demonstrations of love to Him as proof that her sins are forgiven. His argument is, that she has been forgiven a debt, and therefore loves her creditor. It is Christ Himself she loves, and He therefore is the creditor

who has forgiven her; but her debt was sin, transgression against God, and it is therefore God who is her true creditor. Christ thus identifies Himself with God, and in the simplest manner accepts love to Himself as if it were love to God, and as decisive evidence regarding the woman's relation to the Highest. Love to Christ, therefore, is the measure and the pledge of purity. 2. Love to Christ is the result of forgiveness, and varies with the amount of debt forgiven. It is not, however, simply the amount of sin, but the sense of it, which is the measure of gratitude to Him who forgives it. (*M. Dods, D.D.*) *The two debtors*:—There are aggravated sinners who have no deep sense of sin, and there are great saints who regard themselves as the chief of sinners. The measure of one's gratitude for forgiveness is the conception which he has of his sin. He who makes light of his sin will make light also of salvation. But he who has a profound conviction of the evil of sin as the abominable thing which God hates, will have an overwhelming sense of God's love in granting him forgiveness. The deeper an apprehension of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the greater will be our love to Him who gives us deliverance from it. And where there is that sense of the hatefulness of sin, there will be no disposition to go deeper into it. 1. Let sinners of every name and degree be encouraged by this narrative to go at once to Christ. He will in no wise cast them out. "A bruised reed" was not deemed worthy of the shepherd's trouble when he was piping in the field; and so he flung it away, and got another. "Smoking flax" gives an offensive odour; and rather than be annoyed with it, the housewife will take it out of the lamp, and tread upon it. But it was otherwise with Jesus. That which others would cast away, He sought to retain, and turn to good account. That which others would give up as hopeless, He would not abandon. 2. If we would be successful in raising the fallen, and reclaiming the abandoned, we must be willing to "touch" them, and to be "touched" by them. In other words, we must come into warm, loving, personal contact with them. What an uplift Christ gave to the soul of this poor woman, when He, the pure and holy, let her thus approach Him! And this was His way all through His ministry. Contact is needed, if virtue is to go out. When the Lord wished to save the human race, He touched it by taking on Him our nature, without our nature's pollution. So we must take the nature of the degraded, without its impurity, if we would help him. We must stoop to take him by the hand, or to let him grasp our hand, if we would lift him up. 3. If we wish to love God much, we must think much of what we owe to Him. Low views of sin lead to a light estimate of the blessing of pardon, and a light estimate of the blessing of pardon will lead to but a little love of God. This cuts deep, my brethren. Your love to God will be but the other side of your hatred of sin; and there, as it seems to me, is the radical defect in much of the religious experience of the day. Men make light of their obligation to Christ because they have first made light of sin. Low views of the evil of sin are at the root of all heresies in doctrine and all unholiness in life. Get rid of all such minimizing ideas of sin, I beseech you; and to that end come near the cross, for nowhere does sin seem so vile as it does there. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Bankrupt debtors discharged*:—I. First, let us think of THEIR BANKRUPTCY. This was their condition. They were unquestionably in debt. If they could have disputed the creditor's claim, no doubt they would have done so. If they could have pleaded that they were never indebted, or that they had already paid, no doubt they would have been glad to have done so; but they could not raise a question; their debt could not be denied. Another fact was also clear to them, namely, that they had nothing to pay with. No doubt they had made diligent search; they had turned out their pockets, their cash-boxes, and their lockers, and they had found nothing: they had looked for their household goods, but these had vanished piece by piece. Now there are certain temptations to which all bankrupt sinners are much subject. One of these is to try and forget their spiritual estate altogether. Another temptation to a man in this condition is to make as good a show as he can. A man who is very near bankruptcy is often noticed for the dash he cuts. There are some men of like manners; they have nothing that they can offer unto God, but yet they exhibit a glittering self-righteousness. Another temptation which lurks in the way of a bankrupt sinner is that of making promises of what he will do. And thus do sinners too. Another temptation is, always to ask for more time—as if this was all that was needed. Settle this business before you attend to anything else. Take care that you face it, like an honest man, and not as one who makes the best of a bad story. One thing more: it will be your wisdom to give up all attempts to pay, because you have nothing to pay with. II. Our

second head is, THEIR FREE DISCHARGE. "He frankly forgave them both." 1. In this free discharge I admire, first of all, the goodness of the great Creditor. What a gracious heart He had! What kindness He showed! He said, "Poor souls, you can never pay Me, but you need not be cast down because of it, for I freely cancel your debts." Oh, the goodness of it! Oh, the largeness of the heart of God! I was reading of Cæsar the other day. He had been at fierce war with Pompey, and at last he conquered him, and when he conquered him he found among the spoil Pompey's private cabinet, in which were contained letters from the various noblemen and senators of Rome who had sided with him. In many a letter there was fatal evidence against the most eminent Romans, but what did Cæsar do? He destroyed every document. He would have no knowledge of his enemies, for he freely forgave them and wished to know no more. In this Cæsar proved that he was fit to govern the nation. But look at the splendour of God when He puts all our sins into one cabinet, and then destroys the whole. 2. Then, observe the freeness of it. They did not stand there and say, "Oh, good sir, we cannot pay," and plead and beg as for their lives; but He freely said to them, "You cannot pay, but I can forgive." 3. Furthermore, this debt was fully discharged. 4. A very effectual forgiveness too. 5. An eternal discharge. III. I now beg your very special attention to the last point, and that is THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS BANKRUPTCY AND THIS FREE DISCHARGE. It is said, "*When* they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." There is a time when pardon comes, and that time is when self-sufficiency goes. A sense of spiritual bankruptcy shows that a man has become thoughtful; and this is essential to salvation. Next, when we come to feel our bankruptcy, we then make an honest confession, and to that confession a promise is given—"he that confesseth his sin shall find mercy." The two debtors had owned to their debts, and they had also openly confessed, though it must have gone against the grain a bit, that they could not pay. Under conviction a poor soul sees the reality of sin and of pardon. My dear hearer, you will never believe in the reality of forgiveness till you have felt the reality of sin. I do believe that the Lord will give us our quittance when we have got to our last farthing, and not till then, because only then do we look to the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, my dear friends, as long as we have anything else to look to, we never will look to Christ. That blessed port into which no ship did ever run in a storm without finding a sure haven is shunned by all your gallant vessels: they will rather put into any port along the coast of self-deceit than make for the harbour which is marked out by the two lighthouses of free grace and dying love. We are emptied to be filled. When we cannot give, God can forgive. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Two ways of discharging a debt*:—A debt may be paid, or it may be pardoned. If it is paid, the debtor owes no thanks to his creditor. If it is pardoned, gratitude for the grace is a duty. A man under a burden of debt ought to know whether he can pay what he owes, or whether his only hope is of being forgiven. If he has anything to offer, he ought to proffer it. If he has nothing to offer, he ought to say so, and implore forgiveness as an unmerited favour. These two ways of wiping out a debt ought never to be confounded. In the one case, a man looks for a receipt; in the other, for a pardon. It is the same in the moral world as in the material. A man can either meet and discharge his moral obligations, or he cannot. It is the one thing or the other. Apologies or excuses are not a payment. Yet how common it is for one who has nothing to pay with to thrust forward an excuse or an apology in place of a request for forgiveness. This is always evasive and unmanly. Instead of saying, "I forgot," or "I didn't mean to," or "It was a mistake," or "It was an accident," we ought to come out frankly and unequivocally with the admission, "I was wrong. Forgive me"; or "I failed to do as I agreed to do. Forgive me"; or "I did not do as I was directed to. Forgive me." Don't let us shirk our duty of asking forgiveness when we have nothing to pay with. (*H. Clay Trumbull.*) *A generous creditor*:—One Reuben Rouzy, of Virginia, owed the general about one thousand pounds. While President of the United States, one of his agents brought an action for the money; judgment was obtained, and execution issued against the body of the defendant, who was taken to gaol. He had a considerable landed estate, but this kind of property cannot be sold in Virginia for debts, unless at the discretion of the person. He had a large family, and for the sake of his children preferred lying in gaol to selling his land. A friend hinted to him that probably General Washington did not know anything of the proceeding, and that it might be well to send him a petition, with a statement of the circumstance. He did so, and the very next post from Philadelphia after the arrival of his petition in that

city brought him an order for his immediate release, together with a full discharge, and a severe reprimand to the agent for having acted in such a manner. Poor Rouzy was, in consequence, restored to his family, who never laid down their heads at night without presenting prayers to Heaven for their "beloved Washington." Providence smiled upon the labours of the grateful family, and in a few years Rouzy enjoyed the exquisite pleasure of being able to lay the one thousand pounds, with the interest, at the feet of this truly great man. Washington reminded him that the debt was discharged; Rouzy replied, the debt of his family to the father of their country and preserver of their parent could never be discharged; and the general, to avoid the pressing importunity of the grateful Virginian, who would not be denied, accepted the money; only, however, to divide it among Rouzy's children, which he immediately did. (*Arvine.*) *Released from debt*:—There is a story of a rich Eastern master whose most skilful artizan began to fall off in his work. The master spoke to his steward about it. The steward replied: "It is no wonder that the poor fellow cannot turn out good work. His hands tremble so that he cannot manage his tools; his eyes are so full of tears often that he cannot see what he is about. A heavy debt is pressing him, so that he even drinks to drown his sorrow. While that debt remains, you need not expect him to produce any more good work." "Then," replied the generous master, "go and tell him that his debt is paid." From that hour the artizan was a changed man. His tears were dried and he plied his tools with a happy heart; his work was done better than ever before. *When they had nothing to pay*:—1. Had man any ability left, and were able to do something towards the payment of the debt due; yet if he cannot do all, how is the debt paid? Let but twelve pence be wanting in the payment of a £100, the bond, you know, is not discharged; let light gold be tendered, will it be accepted? Our best works are full of imperfections (Isa. lxiv. 6). 2. All the good a man can do, though he do more then ever any man did, is itself a due debt, and how shall that go for a discharge of former debts? One debt will not discharge another, nor the payment of this year's rent discharge the last year's forfeiture. (*N. Rogers.*) *We are not only debtors but bankrupts*:—1. A bankrupt makes great show of what he hath not; so doth a sinner (Prov. xiii. 7). 2. A bankrupt will be borrowing of every one, but pay none to whom he is indebted; thus the sinner borrows of all. Of God, of man, of the creatures; but that love, duty, service, that is expected, he performs not. Promises, vows, bonds, all are broken (Rom. i.). 3. A bankrupt will take up at high rates, and put off at low; buy dear, but sell cheap; so doth the sinner. Ahab takes up land, Naboth's vineyard; Achan, a wedge of gold; Gehazi, a bribe; Esau, Jacob's pottage; Judas, thirty pence. All these took up their wares at dear rates, as do the sinners of these days. But one day will be forced to cry out with Lysimachus, "How great a kingdom for how small a pleasure have I lost!" 4. A bankrupt will be offering composition to his creditors; but it shall be very little, three or four shillings in the pound—it may be not so much. Thus deals the sinner; he will be offering a composition as Pharaoh did (Exod. viii. 25). 5. A bankrupt cannot be trusted of any one that knows him, no more a sinner; God will not trust him (Job iv. 18, 19); Christ will not trust him (John ii. 24); nor will the godly, if they be wise (Jer. ix. 14; Micah vii. 2; Job xix. 14, 15). We may expect love and duty from them, but how can they pay who have nothing? (*Ibid.*) *Remission and forgiveness of sins is attainable*:—There is a possibility for a sinner to have his debts pardoned and remitted (Acts iii. 19; x. 43; xxvi. 18). 1. The sacrifices under the law prefigured as much (Heb. v.). 2. The grounds are two: (1) Mercy in God, who "desireth not the death of a sinner" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). It is His name to be merciful; an attribute as infinite as Himself, it suits with His nature. (2) Merit in Christ. By His sacrifice He satisfied God's justice, and paid the debt of sin (1 Cor. xv. 9; Gal. i. 4; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; 1 John iii. 5; Heb. ix. 26). But whence is it that men are so careless in seeking after this one thing necessary? Divers reasons may be rendered of this great neglect. 1. An erroneous judgment about the thing itself. Some think it is that which cannot be had, or if it be feasable, yet it is not so necessary as other blessings, which lies them more in hand to seek after. The error of which opinions what hath been said before, discovers. 2. This great neglect ariseth from want of due consideration of men's present states, they spend no thoughts this way; like bankrupts, they love not to cast up their accounts. 3. This ariseth in some through a bold presumption of God's mercy, conceiting that God will forgive us our sins, though we take no pains about it. 4. God in forgiving sin, fully forgives it, no part of the debt is

reserved to be exacted of us. (*Ibid.*) *Pardon requires increased care for the future:*—And, to conclude, be careful that we lay up safe our discharge and pardon, having once obtained it. How careful men are to lock up a general discharge from some pecuniary debts, we know well enough; but no discharge to this, so lay it up, that you may not have it to seek in the hour of temptations and trial. Such times you must expect, and then your acquittance, sealed with Christ's blood, will stand you in much stead. Our carelessness this way often causeth God to hide from us the comfort of it, to the end that we may seek it up and keep it better. Thus we lay some piece of plate aside for a while to teach a careless child or servant to be more careful of it after it is returned. And thus much of the fulness of God's pardoning. Come we now to the freeness of it. He frankly forgave them both. Whence observe we—Remission is of free grace and mercy; whom God forgives He forgives gratis. The pope indeed sells pardons; God sells none—what God doth this way He doth freely. (*Ibid.*) *Them both:*—1. Forgiveness and pardon is general to all that cast themselves on God's free mercy for it. 2. God forgiveth great debts as well as small, hundreds as well as tens. 3. He who owes least stands (as well) in need of mercy and forgiveness as he who owes most. *Which of them will love Him most:*—God is truly loved of all those whose sins are pardoned. This is a truth granted and unquestioned. If need were, it might be further strengthened from sundry other texts (Psa. cxvi., 1 xviii. 1; Cant. xiii. 2, 5; Phil. iii. 8, 9; Psa. cxix. 132). How can it otherwise be? For every act of God's special favour begets another in the heart of the godly like it. He choosing them, they choose Him again; He calls them, they call on Him; He loving them, they must needs again love Him. "We love Him," saith St. John, "because He loved us first." The cold stone cannot cast forth heat, as you know, till it be warmed by the sunbeams: being warmed by them, then it reflecteth back some of the heat which it received; thus is it with our cold hearts. (*Ibid.*) I might use many arguments to put you on upon this pursuit. There is no duty hath more reasons to speak for it than this hath. I will name only two, which St. Bernard hath; the one is in respect of God, the other in regard of ourselves. I. IN RESPECT OF GOD, and so nothing is more just and equal than that He should be loved of us. 1. This is that He doth require both in law and gospel (Deut. vi. 5; Matt. xxii. 38). It is the first and great commandment, and that on which all other acceptable services are grounded. 2. This is that He doth deserve, for hath not He placed in us that affection of love? Is it not a stream of that living fountain who is love itself (1 John iv. 8)? Now "he that plants a vineyard should drink of the wine thereof," saith the apostle (1 Cor. ix. 7). And God who hath planted this affection in us, should chiefly taste of it Himself. 3. God hath manifested His love to us in giving His only beloved son for us (John iii. 16). He hath begun to us in the cup of love (1 John iv. 10). Is it not fit that we should pledge Him? It is an elegant observation of St. Bernard upon the Canticles; of all the motions and affections of the soul, none is so reciprocal as love. 4. Besides, there is nothing in God but deserves love; "I will call upon God," saith David, "who is worthy to be praised" (Psa. xviii. 3). So may we say truly, "I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be loved." But if in case we set our love on any other object than the Lord, we become losers and not savers. By loving Him we are made better both in grace and glory. You know love assimilates the heart to the thing loved; so love of honour makes the heart proud; love of pleasure makes the heart vicious and loose, &c. And the love of God makes us to conform unto His image, and be like Him in holiness; thus we become better through our loving God in grace. II. ALL THAT LOVE GOD DO NOT LOVE HIM WITH THE LIKE DEGREE OF LOVE. (*Ibid.*) *God seen in little love:*—They do not well to forget that Cæsar's image is not only seen in his coin of gold, but in his silver penny; and that this degree of love, though weak, is also the gift of God, and not to be despised (Zach. iv. 10; 1 Cor. i. 11; iii. 1). He that made the elephant made the ant; the fly as well as the eagle; the poorest worm which creeps on the earth, as well as the most glorious angel, is the work of God's hands, and He looks to be glorified in His least works as well as greatest. (*Ibid.*) *Small love not to be despised if it be growing:*—Give the humble daisy leave to grow, though it sprout not up to that height as doth the marigold. And let not him that joineth the frame despise him that heweth the timber or makes the pins; who so hath greatest degree of grace, let him use it to God's glory, but no way despise his weak brother, who comes far short of his scantling. Let it serve for an encouragement to those whose hearts are newly warmed with the beams of love, though they find

it not kindled to that height that others of God's children have attained unto. It is not every one's portion to attain to that height of passion, so as to be sick of love. God takes in good part a growing and increasing love which may be attained. 1. By enlarging our communion with God both in public and private duties. Strangeness, you know, breeds an overliness with men; so with God. The nearer the fire, the greater the heat; speak often to God by prayer, hear Him again speaking unto you by His Word and Spirit. 2. By weaning our hearts more and more from this world. You know superfluous branches draw the sap from the top boughs, and the love of the world draws the love of God out of our hearts, as we find in Demas (2 Tim. iv. 9). 3. Carefully observe and call to mind the many and sweet experiences you have of God's love and favour. The more plentiful our apprehension is of God's love to us, the more will our hearts be enlarged to love Him again. (*Ibid.*) *Love*:—1. Inflamed or burning love will not be easily quenched; much water, many floods cannot do it (Cant. viii. 7). It is firm and invincible, so that neither force nor fraud, promises nor persecutions, height nor depth, things present nor things to come, shall be able to prevail against it. 2. Love inflamed is still ascending. It hath earnest and affectionate longings after God, and to enjoy Him. 3. Inflamed love gives great light. It is like a fired beacon on a hill, all the country take notice of it. Such cannot forbear but they must be speaking in God's praise, and admiring everything that is in Him. "The tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Cant. v. 9). (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 44. **Simon, seest thou this woman?**—*Penitence worth seeing*:—Not only with the bodily eye, for with that he saw and mistook, but with consideration and observation. The deportment of a true penitent is worth our seeing; their carriage and conversation is worthy observation. (*N. Rogers.*) *Thou gavest Me no water for My feet: Ceremonies of courtesy*:—And, to reason from the less to the greater, if ritual observances are requisite for the full welcome of friends, think it not enough in entertaining your Saviour that you give Him the substance of good usage, neglecting the compliments. Simon, you see, here gave Him both meat and welcome, yet the neglect of washing, kissing, and anointing is not well taken. When we come to His house, and to His ordinances, as to the word, sacraments, prayer, we make Him good cheer, He esteems Himself then feasted; but if we perform not these things with the decency of outward carriage, we give Him neither water, kiss, nor oil. Believe it, our best actions receive either life or bane from their circumstances; the substance or matter of a work may be good, and yet the work cannot be so called, unless it be done *modo et forma*. Velvet is good matter to make a garment, timber good matter to build a house; and yet the one may be so marred in the cutting and the other in the framing, as that neither the one nor the other shall attain the name of good. What is good in the substance may be sin in the circumstance, and for want of care about the manner, the best work may be done thanklessly. (*Ibid.*) *She hath washed My feet with tears*:—There are two sorts of tears, as shows St. Austin. Some are commendable, others are discommendable. 1. Commendable tears are natural or spiritual. Natural tears, as Jer. xxxi. 15. These discover natural affection, and being well bounded are not to be blamed (Luke xxiii. 28). 2. Spiritual tears are either tears of passion and contrition, as Matt. xxvi. 75, or of compassion and devotion, as Jer. ix. 1, 2; Luke xix. Tears culpable or discommendable are likewise of two sorts, temporal or infernal. 1. Temporal, are those shed in this life by wicked ones. And they are of two sorts, worldly or hypocritical. (1) Worldly tears are those which are occasioned merely for worldly losses. Of these we read in Ezek. viii. 14; Hos. vii. 14; Heb. xii. (2) Hypocritical tears are those which are produced from dissimulation and deceit. Of these we read in Jer. xli. 5, 6. 2. Infernal tears are those shed by the damned in hell (Luke xiii. 28; Matt. xxiv. 51; xxv. 30). (*Ibid.*) *The smart of sin a good sign*:—And as it is in a diseased body or with some old sore, if in the dressing of the wound no pain be felt, we conclude the flesh is dead, but when the patient begins to complain of the pain and is sensible of the smart, then it is taken for a good sign that the cure is in a good forwardness. (*Ibid.*) *Is shedding of tears absolutely necessary in godly sorrow?*—May not the heart be drowned, and yet the eyes dry? Tears are additions and necessary appendences of true repentance, but not always necessary and true tokens of it. Some have repented truly who have not wept, and some have wept bitterly who have not repented truly. All who shed tears are not straightway penitents; the hardest marble against some weather may weep. And how often do we see the dew to stand on the blasted corn or grass.

There are eyeing waters spoken of by Jeremiah, as well as clouds without water, spoken of by St. Jude. It is an easy matter to give you instances (Gen. xvii. 3, 4; 1 Sam. xxiv. 17; Mal. ii. 13). Tears are deceitful things; nothing sooner dried up than a tear, and, therefore, not to be trusted too far. For a man may as well go to his grave's end by water as by land. (*Ibid.*) *Tears few at first*:—In a deep or fresh wound in the body, there is not first that pain felt, nor so much blood seen, as is in a little cut of the finger, because the part is astonied for the time. So is it sometimes with the soul. The wine vessel, you know, without vent runs not though it be ready to burst. (*Ibid.*) *Tears vocal*:—Tears have a voice with them, nay, they are not only vocal, but importunate. "What do you weeping, and breaking my heart?" saith St. Paul (Acts xxi. 13). You may remember how the tears of Moses, whilst he was floating in an ark of bulrushes on the water, prevailed with Pharaoh's daughter. "The babe wept," saith the text, "and she had compassion on him" (Exod. ii. 6). (*Ibid.*) *To answer the greatness of our sin with the greatness of our sorrow*:—According to the proportion of the one, should the other be proportioned. Look how grievously we have sinned, so greatly should our sins be bewailed and lamented. A deep wound must have a large plaster, and our repentance, as showeth St. Cyprian, must not be less than our fault. (*Ibid.*) *Sorrow for sin must not be slight*:—Where sins are great, think it not enough that your sorrow be slight. If thy sins be small and little, thy sorrow may be the less, but if great, thy grief must be suitable. A garment that is deeply soiled cannot, without much rubbing and many lavers, become clean. Where there is a deep pollution, and of a scarlet tincture, there must be not only *ablutio*, but *balneatio*, a soaking and bathing in the tears of contrition, as is required in Isa. i. 16). But may not a man exceed in sorrow, may he not grieve over much? A man cannot exceed in the displeasure of his will against sin, yet he may in the testification of his displeasure by weeping and macerating of his body. Too much moistening chokes a plant, when moderate moistening quickens it. Too much rain gulls the earth, and standing waters on low grounds breed nothing but flags and rushes. So it is with our hearts when they prove standing pools. (*Ibid.*) *Sorrow for sin measured by duration*:—A torrent may run faster for the present than a continual current, but the current is to be preferred, and hath more water in it than the torrent. One keeps open house at Christmas, but all the year after the gates are shut; he hath taken up a city's refuge. Another keeps a constant and full table all the year, though at that time he may not be compared with the other for abundance. Which of these two now would you count the best housekeeper? I suppose you will grant the latter. So is it here. (*Ibid.*) *Grace quickened by tears*:—By tears, likewise, grace is quickened. They are not like well water, springing out of the bowels of the earth, nor like rain, distilling from the clouds which clear the air, but they are as the dew of Hermon, which makes all herbs to flourish. Such as mourn for sin grow up as the lily, and fasten themselves in grace like the trees of Lebanon. They are like the former and the latter rain, they make the heart fruitful in all good works, as you see here in Mary. It is a sovereign water, and will fetch the sinner again to the life of grace though never so far gone. As for glory hereafter (Psa. cxxvi. 5). Thus as the sun draws up vapours from the earth, not for itself, but to restore them back again; so doth God our tears. But the bottle spoken of (Psa. lvi. 8), and the vial (Rev. v. 8), are for the saints both. In them He preserves both their tears and prayers. Not a drop of their eye-water will He suffer to run in waste, He catcheth every tear before it comes to the ground; and till death close up those two fountains, Jor and Dan, flowing from Mount Lebanon, they shall never fail running, but then shall our souls be wafted in them from grace to glory, as they were first transported by them here from sin to grace. (*Ibid.*) *The city of waters taken by Satan*:—If, in case what hath been said of the good which our tears procure for us prevail not, then give me leave to add a word of the great danger which follows upon the neglect of them, and it shall be only by way of allusion to that we read (2 Sam. xii. 27). Joab having taken the city of waters, he sent to David and willed him to come quickly to take the city itself, well knowing that it could not hold out, the city of waters being cut off before. Thus when Satan hath taken the eyes and cut off the pipes, can you think your soul can long hold out against his temptations? (*Ibid.*) *Wiped them with the hairs of her head*:—1. In true repentance there is a converting of those things which have been abused to the service of sin to the service of God. 2. That the best ornament of the body, in the judgment of a penitent, is not too good to be employed about the meanest piece of service which concerns Christ.

(*Ibid.*) *Truth impressed by living examples*:—After all, there is no so forcible way of impressing truth as by a living example. The parable of the two debtors could but faintly show the power of forgiveness to win gratitude, in comparison with that vivid picture of the penitent, trusting, grateful woman, washing the feet of her Saviour with her tears, and wiping them with her dishevelled hair. And so it has been from the beginning. Would you realize the power of one person in tempting others to ruin? Seest thou this woman Eve, or this woman Jezebel? Would you realize the beauty of fidelity in friendship? Seest thou this woman Ruth? Would you realize the grandeur of moral heroism? Seest thou this woman Esther? Would you realize the holy influence of a mother's love and faithfulness? Seest thou this woman Jochebed, or this woman Hannah, or this woman Eunice? Would you realize the power of unwavering faith? Seest thou this woman of Syro-Phœnicia? Would you realize the force and beauty of any trait of human character, or the preciousness of any truth which God would have his children to bear in mind? Seest thou this woman before you, who illustrates it as it could not be taught in any other way? That woman is your mother, your wife, your sister, your friend, your neighbour. Look at her glorious example, and thank God for the blessedness of His grace in a willing and trustful human heart. (*H. Clay Trumbull.*) *Seest thou this woman?*—Simon had not seen the woman yet. He had only seen the sinner. Look, then, on the woman at last, O Pharisee. Look upon her in the light of the parable you have just heard. Look on thyself, too, for as yet thou hast not seen thyself—the Pharisee hiding the man from thy incurious eyes. Thou poor blind Pharisee! if love be the proof of forgiveness, how much hast thou, loving so little, been forgiven? (*S. Cox, D.D.*)

Ver. 46. **My head with oil thou didst not anoint.**—*The use of hospitality*:—For such is our frailty that if we were not strengthened and refreshed with baits in the way our minds would grow dull and sluggish, and our bodies be tired out. The heathen of old could say that the life of a man without some delight was like a long way without an inn, in which all is travel and toil, but no comfort or refreshing. The soul of such an one would be like a flower that grows always in the shade, which is nothing so sweet nor lovely as that which grows in the sight of the sun. (*N. Rogers.*) *Perfumes*:—"My head with oil thou didst not anoint." Perfumes were associated with almost every action and event in the life of the ancients. The free use of them was peculiarly delightful and refreshing to the Orientals. A bouquet of fragrant flowers was carried in the hand; or rooms were fumigated with the odorous vapours of burning resins; or the body was anointed with oil mixed with the aromatic qualities of some plants extracted by boiling; or scents were worn about the person in gold or silver boxes, or in alabaster vials. When entertainments were given, the rooms were fumigated: and it was customary for a servant to attend every guest as he seated himself, to anoint his head, sprinkle his person with rose-water, or apply incense to his face and beard; and so entirely was the use of perfumes on such occasions in accordance with the customs of the people that the Saviour reproached Simon for the omission of this mark of attention, leaving it to be performed by a woman. (*H. Macmillan, LL.D.*)

Ver. 47. **Her sins, which are many, are forgiven.**—*Her sins*:—Incontinency of life is enough to give the denomination, and is a sin that is accompanied with many other sins besides itself. A brood of sins are hatched out of this one egg. Instance we but in David's case (we need go no further). The devil having prevailed with him in the sin of adultery, draws him on to other sins, whereby he might hide his wickedness from the world, so that they might not espy it. (*Ibid.*) *The greatest sin*:—I have read a story of a hermit that led a devout and solitary life. One day talking with the devil, he demanded of him which were the greatest sins; he answered him, Covetousness and lust. The other demanded again whether blasphemy and perjury were not greater. The reply of Satan was that in the schools of divinity they were the greater sins, but for the increase of his revenues, the other were far the greater. And therefore Bede styles lust, *filiam diaboli*, "the daughter of the devil," which bringeth forth many children to him daily. Nor doth any one such special service to the devil as an harlot. (*Ibid.*) *That grievous sinners upon repentance shall find mercy*:—And for further proof, read 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12; 1 Cor. vi. 11; 1 Tim. i. 12, 13; Acts ii. 38, 39; Luke xv. 20. Though then thou hast been an egregious sinner and led a vicious life, defiling thy soul with many sins, yet suffer not thyself through Satan's malice to be plunged into the

pit of despair; thou hast provoked God's justice grievously heretofore by thy presumption, wrong not His mercy through desperation. (*Ibid.*) **For she loved much.**—*A note of inference*:—But are they ignorant of this; the "for" is oftentimes a note of inference or consequence, and as well an argument of the effect from the cause, as of the cause from the effect. We say it is spring-time. Why so? "For," or "because" the fig-tree puts forth and buds. The putting forth of the fig-tree argues the spring-time, but the budding and putting forth of the fig-tree is not the cause of spring-time. I say this child is alive, because it cries; or this man lives, because he moves; will any so understand me as if I meant the crying of the one and the moving of the other is the cause of life and motion in the one or in the other? Our Saviour Himself useth this kind of arguing, as we find: "I have called you friends, for all things I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you" (John xv. 15), where declaring of those things to them is the effect not cause of His love. And that our Saviour here reasoneth from the effect to the cause is evident enough from the whole discourse. (*Ibid.*) *Love as a cause*:—A proof (*a posteriori*) from the effect is a strong proof, and very demonstrative. Thus the truth of our faith is to be proved (James ii. 18). And of repentance (2 Cor. vii. 11). And of charity (1 John iii. 14). And so St. James proves wisdom from above by the effects (James iii. 17). Still Scripture puts us upon the trial of our graces, by these kind of proofs. Grace is invisible in its nature, it cannot be seen *in habitu*. Therefore, as God was seen to Moses, so is grace to men, by its back parts; and as the wind, which no man can see in its proper essence, by the full sails of the ship is perceived which way it stands. Let this be a direction to us in our examination and trial of ourselves. Would I know if the sun shines? there is no climbing up to the sky to be resolved, nor examining what matter it is made of; I look upon the beams shining on the earth, I perceive it is up and shines by the light and heat it gives. Would I know if God hath elected me to life and to salvation? There is no climbing up into heaven to know His decrees and hidden counsel (as too many would most audaciously) but study well the marks of it from the effects. The head of Nilus cannot be found, but the sweet springs issuing from thence are well known. No surer way to the sea, than by taking a river by the hand. Our vocation and sanctification will carry us to election (Rom. viii. 30; 2 Peter i. 5–10). These are the means whereby our election and salvation is made certain, not the efficient causes whereby it comes to be decreed. The sun, not the shadow, makes the day, yet we know not how the day goes by the sun, but by the shadow. In a word, as the planets are known by their influence, the diamond by his lustre, and the soul by her vital operations, so grace is more sensibly known to us by the effects thereof. Secondly, we observe from hence, that a true and unfeigned love of Christ is a sure sign that our sins are remitted. (*Ibid.*) *Love hard to simulate*:—This grace can the hardiest be counterfeited of any other grace. There is scarce anything else that we can instance in, saith one, but a hypocrite may go cheek by jowl with a good Christian. He may do all outward services, he may abstain from sin, a great change may be wrought in him; we know how far the third ground went (Matt. xiii.) And those (Heb. vi.) But this they cannot counterfeit to love the Lord. A hypocrite may hear the Word, pray, give alms, but to do these out of love, that is a thing which no hypocrite is able to reach unto. Secondly, though saving graces have their counterfeits, yet a man may be assured by the Word that he hath this and other graces in him in sincerity, so as that he cannot be deceived in them. For as God gave Moses in the Mount a pattern, according to which He would have all things made in the Tabernacle (Heb. viii. 5), so that when he viewed the work and saw all was done according to that pattern, He was sure He had done right, and blessed them, as we read (Exod. xxxix. 43). So hath God given us a pattern in His Word, according to which He would have everything in His spiritual tabernacle (as faith, repentance, love, obedience, &c.) to be wrought. And if a man can find that the grace he hath be according to the pattern, as (if he take pains with himself to view the work, as Moses did) he may, then he may be sure it is right, and shall have cause of rejoicing, as the apostle saith (Gal. vi. 4). Thirdly, Learn hence a notable way to establish our hearts in the assurance of the pardon of sin. Thou needest not climb up into heaven to search God's books, whether they be crossed or no, there to behold the face of God whether He smile or frown; but dive into thine own soul, and there find out what love thou bearest to thy Maker and blessed Saviour; if thou findest that thou lovest Him unfeignedly, that is, that thou lovest Him more than these, lovest Him for Himself, for those beauties and excellencies that are in Him. It is the greatest comfort that thou canst have in this life, for that thou

mayest rest assured hereupon that God is reconciled to thee, and that thy sins (be they never so great or many) are forgiven thee. Finding this in thee, thou mayest be sure, and never till then canst thou be assured of it. For, we may easier carry coals in our bosom without burning, than by faith apprehend truly this love of God in the pardoning of sin without finding our hearts burn in love to Him answerably. Only see that our love be rightly qualified, that it hath these requisites which God's Word speaks of, that it be with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our might (Deut. vi. 5; Mark xii. 30.) In the fourth place we do observe, That loving much argues much mercy received from the beloved party. (*Ibid.*) *Love and forgiveness*:—This story contains three figures, who may stand for us as the types of the Divine love and of all its operation in the world, of the way in which it is received or rejected, and of the consequences of its reception or rejection. There is the unloving, cleanly, respectable, self-complacent Pharisee, with all his contempt for "this woman." There is the woman, with gross sin and mighty penitence, the great burst of love that is flowing out of her heart sweeping before it, as it were, all the guilt of her transgressions. And, high over all, brooding over all, loving each, knowing each, pitying each, willing to save and be the Friend and Brother of each, is the embodied and manifested Divine love, the knowledge of whom is love in our hearts, and "life eternal." I. CHRIST HERE STANDS AS A MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINE LOVE COMING FORTH AMONGST SINNERS. 1. He, as bringing to us the love of God, shows it to us, as not at all dependent upon our merits or deserts. "He frankly forgave them both." 2. He tells us, too, that whilst that love is not caused by us, but comes from the nature of God, it is not turned away by our sins. Christ's knowledge of the woman as a sinner; what did it do to His love for her? It made that love gentle and tender, as knowing that she could not bear the revelation of the blaze of His purity. "Daughter, I know all about it—all thy wanderings and thy vile transgressions: I know them all, and My love is mightier than all these. They may be as the great sea, but My love is like the everlasting mountains whose roots go down beneath the ocean; and My love is like the everlasting heaven, whose brightness covers it all over." 3. Christ teaches us here that this Divine love, when it comes forth among sinners, necessarily manifests itself first in the form of forgiveness. There was nothing to be done with the debtors until the debt was wiped out. 4. We see here the love of God, last of all, demanding service. II. THIS WOMAN—THE PENITENT LOVINGLY RECOGNIZING THE DIVINE LOVE. Great blunders have been built on the words of our text. I daresay you have often seen epitaphs written on gravestones, with this misplaced idea on them, "Very sinful; but there was a great deal of love in the person; and for the sake of the love, God passed by the sin!" Now, when Christ says, "she loved much," He does not mean to say that her love was the cause of her forgiveness—not at all. He means to say that her love was the proof of her forgiveness. As for instance, we might say, "The woman is in great distress, for she weeps;" but we do not mean thereby that the weeping is the reason of the distress, but the means of our knowing the sorrow. The love does not go before the forgiveness, but the forgiveness before the love. That this is the true interpretation you will see, if you look back for a moment at the narrative which precedes: "He frankly forgave them both: tell me, therefore, which of them will love Him most?" 1. Then all true love to God is preceded in the heart by these two things—a sense of sin, and an assurance of pardon. 2. Love precedes all acceptable and faithful service. If you want *to do*, love. If you want *to know*, love. III. A third character stands here—THE UNLOVING AND SELF-RIGHTEOUS MAN, ALL IGNORANT OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST. Simon is the antithesis of the woman and her character. What was it that made this man's morality a piece of dead nothingness. What was it that made his orthodoxy just so many dry words, from out of which all the life had gone? This one thing: there was no love in it. And, love is the foundation of all obedience. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) The text teaches—I. THAT SIN IS PARDONABLE. A very elementary truth, yet a very important one. The obstacle to forgiveness. 1. Not in God. 2. Not in nature. 3. Not in the sinner, if he repents. II. MUCH SIN CAN BE REPENTED OF AND THEREFORE FORGIVEN. "Her sins, which are many." III. A GREAT SINNER CAN BE A GREAT SAINT. Bunyan, in his sermon on "The Jerusalem sinner saved," explaining the reasons why Jesus would have mercy offered in the first place to the biggest sinners, remarks, "If Christ loves to be loved a little, He loves to be loved much; but there is not any that are capable of loving much, save those that have much forgiven them." Having cited Paul as an instance, he adds the quaint reflection, "I wonder how far a man

might go among the converted sinners of the smaller size before he could find one that so much as looked anything this wayward." Then coming to the scene in Simon's house, the moral lesson it suggests is thus put: "Alas! Christ has but little thanks for the saving of little sinners. He gets not water for His feet by the saving of such sinners. There are abundance of dry-eyed Christians in the world, and abundance of dry-eyed duties too—duties that were never wetted with the tears of contrition and repentance, nor even sweetened with the great sinner's box of ointment." (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*

THE WOMAN THAT WAS A SINNER.

Simon, her kisses will not soil;
Her tears are pure as rain;
Eye not her hair's untwisted coil,
Baptized in pardoning pain.

For God hath pardoned all her *much*,
Her iron bands have burst;
Her love could never have been such
Had not His love been first.

But oh! rejoice ye sisters pure,
Who hardly know her case;
There is no sin but has its cure,
Its all-consuming grace.

He did not leave her soul in hell,
'Mong shards the silver dove,
But raised her pure that she might tell
Her sisters how to love.

She gave Him all your best love can.
Was He despised and sad?
Yes; and yet never mighty man
Such perfect homage had.

Jesus, by whose forgiveness sweet
Her love grew so intense,
We, sinners all, come round Thy feet—
Lord, make no difference. (*George Macdonald.*)

The value of deep feelings:—You will observe the very striking instance here of the difference between natural feeling and conventional feeling. There are many persons who would not desecrate, by wearing the hat, any cathedral or church, but who are not troubled by sin in their own souls—by pride, malice, envy or uncharitableness. This woman was heart broken in the presence of the Saviour, the contrast of whose purity and truth threw such a light of revelation upon her own past life; but in all her feelings, so strikingly manifested, the Pharisee saw nothing. 1. In the beginning it must not be supposed that love is to be derived only from a sense of benefit conferred, and that the conscious benefit of forgiven sin is the true fountain of the highest love. For love will be in proportion to the strength of the love-principle in the subject of it. We do not love God merely on account of what He has done for us. We begin to love God by a perception of His great mercy to us. It then goes higher, and widens and purifies itself. 2. Nor must we reason falsely upon the implications of this passage. For we might say, "If love is to be in proportion to the forgiveness of sins, then men should sin freely in order that they may love greatly." Paul had precisely the same case presented to his mind by an objector. He had been urging that God's grace was in proportion to a man's sin; and the objector said, "Must we, then, go on and sin that grace may abound?" "No, God forbid!" said the apostle. "That would be contrary to the very nature of love. It is impossible for a man who loves to go on sinning for the sake of loving more, or for the sake of winning more grace. The two ideas are practically incompatible with each other." Nor are we to say, "As I have not been a great sinner, I am not bound to love much." 3. But not to speak longer upon these possible perversions of this truth here, I proceed further to say that it is a truth

which opens for consideration the question of the value of great feelings, deep feelings—especially a profound experience of personal sinfulness incident to a Christian life. There is a powerful effect wrought upon a man's moral nature by the mental experience through which he goes. If a man has had such a struggle with himself that he is profoundly impressed with the might of evil in him; if there has been in his experience a revelation of the destructive tendencies of sin; all this experience would tend to produce, most vividly and most powerfully, a sense of God's grace. His sense of the gift is to be measured by this experience. No man that has a low conception of sin will ever have a very high conception of grace. God's rescue will seem great in proportion to your conscious peril. How much has been forgiven you will be determined by how much you consciously have been in debt. As a practical matter, almost all men know that eminent experiences have grown out of profound convictions of sin, and come up to this point of conviction of sin, and stopped there. It may be that you have not enough conviction of sin; you have enough to begin a life of reformation with. Then what will happen? In proportion as a man goes toward that which is right, his conscience becomes firm, his moral sense becomes stronger, and conviction of sin, like every other Christian experience, will develop and grow. Let the sense of sin grow as you grow. A profound experience of unworth will open more and more upon you, as you go on in the Divine life. The magnitude of the debt that has been forgiven you, will constitute a growing practical Christian experience. You are like a child that wants to read a book, but will not learn his letters because he does not want to touch a book till he can go off all at once. You must learn your letters before you can read. The experience of every trait, of every element of Christian life, is an experience that begins small and waxes larger, and by and by becomes like a branch of a tree in full top. And that which is true of every other feeling is true of this one—namely, conviction of sin. If, then, you have enough feeling to condemn you, you have enough for yeast. 4. Very wicked men ought to become very eminent and active Christians. Usually, men who have been very wicked, are men who have very strong natures. Men who have been dissipated, are men who have had very strong passions and appetites. Usually a wicked man is a man of power and audacity, if he is very wicked; but where there is great power to do wrong, there is great power to react from wrong; and if a man has been going away from God with vigour, that same vigour should supply him with the elements by which to return. It is pitiful to see a man fruitful, energetic, from day to day, and constantly diversifying his experience in wickedness, but sterile, and close, and formal, and proper when he becomes a Christian. Bad men also are usually acquainted with human life. They know the dispositions of their fellow-men; and whatever knowledge there is of bad men they have. And such men are bound to consecrate their knowledge, and to bring it into the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has forgiven them, and renewed their life, if they are born again. If a man has been a gambler, and is converted from his wicked way, that ought to be a sphere in which he feels peculiarly called to labour. There is also a sense of Divine goodness that ought to go with cases of conversions of bad men, and that ought to be specially affecting and influential. I see a great many persons who try to serve God softly. The devil puts excuses into their mouths like these: "I ought not to meddle with sacred things. I ought not to put on airs in religion, or give people reason to suppose that I do." And under these guises they do but little, and very soon wither and go back to their old state. If, therefore, within the hearing of my voice, there are those who are thinking about a Christian life, I open the door of the church to you—but on this condition; come in with all your might! If you have been a swearing man, your lips must not be dumb now in the praise of that God whom you have been blaspheming all your life. If you were sick, and your case had been given over by all the physicians, and a stranger should come to your town, and should examine into your difficulty, and should say, "It is a struggle with death itself, but I am in possession of knowledge by which I think I can heal you;" and he should never leave you day nor night, but should cling to you through weeks and weeks, and at last raise you to health, would it not be contemptibly mean if you should be ashamed to acknowledge him to be your physician, and testify to what he had done for you? If I was that physician, would I not have a right to have my name and my skill made known by you? 5. Men who have sinned, not by their passions but by their higher faculties, if they would be true Christians, must have just the same spiritual momentum—though for different reasons—as those that have sinned by their lower faculties. 6.

Let every man who is going to begin a Christian life pursue the same course that she pursued whose name has been made memorable, and whose soul this day chants before her Beloved in heaven—or she is one of those of whom Christ says, "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you," Pharisees. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Much love the fruit of abundant pardon:*—Learn from the mistake of the Pharisee to be very careful in the formation of your opinions of others, and especially in the expression of your judgment. Great changes may take place in persons, which changes do not come to your ears. I. THE FIRST OF THESE LESSONS IS, THAT GRATITUDE IN A LIVING HEART RISES WITH THE OCCASION. You know that gratitude is a joyous sense of obligation. I lay great stress upon that word "joyous." There may be a sense of obligation without thankfulness—there may be a sense of obligation associated with hatred, and malice, and revenge. There are men who are excited to indignation by obligations which they cannot cast off. Gratitude is a joyous sense of obligation to another, accompanied by a desire to confess that obligation. If this sense be absent, and if the consciousness be painful, and if a man shrink from the utterance of acknowledgment of the obligation, gratitude is not in his heart. Now, as the mercury in the barometer rises with the lightness of the atmosphere, and in the thermometer with the heat of the atmosphere, so gratitude in a true heart swells with the extent of the obligation. Christ says of this woman, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Thankfulness in this poor woman's soul had reached a very high point; that is, it responded to the demand made upon it. Gratitude in a living heart will not be stationary. As the clouds of guilt and sorrow are blotted out from the firmament of the man's heart, and from the firmament of the man's prospects, thankfulness will rise. Gratitude cannot be the same in two individuals of equal spiritual sensitiveness, but of different conditions. "She loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." The difference in the condition, the heart being alive, produces the difference in the thankfulness. As a trunk-line receives traffic from its branch-lines, or as the principal stream through a valley receives accession by tributary streams, so thankfulness is deep or shallow, wide or narrow, in proportion to the circumstances which call it forth. The highest occasion of thankfulness is large pardon from God—pardon dispensed by God abundantly. Sin admits of degree. Transgressions may be many or few, and they are marked by degrees of aggravation. Observe, too, the manner in which God dispenses forgiveness. He pardons freely, without money, and without price; readily, without the vain repetition of continued entreaty—abundantly, making the scarlet, snow, and the crimson, wool. Now, until a guilty man is forgiven by his God, none of the gifts of the Father of Mercies partake thoroughly of the nature of blessing. He has health, and strength, and life; but these are only adding distance to his wanderings from God. Strong gratitude, brethren, is very free in its utterance. It is not restricted to place. The man who is really thankful cannot expend his emotions in the sacredness of retirement only. Yet the thankful heart is not dependent upon the excitement of the multitude. Still, gratitude is not restricted to time, or to mode. It finds regular seasons for utterance—in the morning and evening, and at noon-day. It will lisp like an infant; it can chant like a seraph. It will utter itself in a sigh or in a song, in a tear or in an alabaster, in a look or in a course of service. Look at a third fact. Gratitude breaks the laws of propriety which a formalist would recognize. It puts its hand on the best and it offers the best. Now, how ought the gratitude of a forgiven man to be expressed? Honour the Saviour's person in the persons of His disciples. (*S. Martin.*) *She loved much: she had much forgiven:*—In treating this subject more fully I shall try to analyze—I. The secret springs of the poor sinner's conduct. II. The nature of the action, which was viewed so diversely by the Pharisees and the Lord. I. THE SPRINGS OF THE WOMAN'S CONDUCT. The woman was "a sinner." Into the precise form or extent of her transgression there is no need to pry. The word was very significant; a "lost woman" would be its equivalent now. The sin was one which filled her whole consciousness. The springs of her action, perhaps, lie here. 1. In her desperate self-abandonment the Lord had lit one ray of hope within her spirit. "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What sin-crushed spirit would not leap to hear such words from such Divine lips? Despair is the devil's own instrument. The first step in the reformation of the most abandoned profligates is to get them to care for themselves—to think themselves worth the care. Doubtless, this poor sinner had long loathed her vocation. Doubt-

less, the burning blush of shame had often stained her cheek, and tears, tears that had a tinge of blood in them, had often dimmed her eye, when she remembered that she had lost her womanhood, lost her soul, lost her life, for ever. Surely, too, the thought of reformation had often visited her. But the "Where shall I go, what shall I do?" as often checked her. "Who in this universe cares for a woman that is a sinner?" 2. The Lord had quickened within her numbed and withered heart the pulses of a blessed and purifying love. Love is the strong redeemer of pollution. How hard and how long will even a human love struggle against the pollution of a sensual life. The devil has not fairly secured his victim until the very embers of love are extinguished in the hearth-fire of the heart. Jesus made her a woman again. The tendrils of love, torn from their pristine hold, all tangled and rotting on the damp earth whereon she grovelled, began to tingle and thrill again. Heaven seemed to open above her and beam its benediction. II. And now LET US TURN OUR THOUGHTS TO THE NATURE OF THE ACTION, AND ANALYZE THE OPPOSING JUDGMENTS WHICH WERE PASSED ON IT BY THE DISCIPLES AND THE LORD. Worldly wisdom would probably find a double objection to this transaction. 1. It was shameful that a woman, who was a sinner, should approach a prophet; and—2. The gift was lavish and wasteful, and might have been put to better use. And Jesus seems to me to say by His answers—1. That love—such love—must be left to its native affinities. Its elections are absolute, its decisions are supreme. 2. The Lord said that there are gifts which a love like hers alone can justify. "She loved much," He pleaded, in answer to the glances which condemned the occasion as a scandal, and the gift as a waste. There are gifts which are simply the utterance of the heart of the giver, outlets of surcharged feeling, expressions of thoughts too deep for words, for tears. Let the cold and cautious stand aside while such are passing, nor stay the flight of these angels on the wing. The heart's first duty is to find itself expression. She loved much; she spent her living in telling how much she loved. Simon, there is a malignant devil in that cautious calculation. Moreover, love like hers is not so uncalculating, though it disdains Pharisaic measures. The woman gave her living, but she won her soul. The ointment was lost, and the money which bought it, but her soul was for ever rid of its burden, and was braced for conflict and heavenly work. Love, though profuse in gifts, clears the intellect, kindles the spirit, stirs the courage, and nerves the hands. 3. The Saviour says that love like hers may well seek strange and profuse expressions, for it is the parent of a glory and blessedness which transcends all utterance and thought. Love is life. The woman who was a sinner, loving much, grew more swiftly and strongly to saintly perfectness, than Simon the just Pharisee measuring and obeying. Love, like electric fire, leaps swiftly to its object. Justness, the quiet sense of duty, the careful measuring of obligations, travels slowly, though wisely and surely, along the road. (Read Luke vii. 47–50.) (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*)

Ver. 48. **Thy sins are forgiven.**—*Assurance of forgiveness*:—It is not enough that our sins are pardoned in heaven, but we are to endeavour and seek after the particular assurance of the pardon of them to our own consciences for our further comfort. Unknown things are not desired. How, then, can they be rejoiced in? Say a man be in prison for treason fast bound, and that a pardon is granted to him, yet, till he knows thereof, he can rejoice no more in that his happiness than if he were to be executed the next day. (*N. Rogers.*) *Personal assurance*:—This serves to stir us up earnestly to seek after particular assurance of the remission of sins, as we desire true comfort to our souls. Let a man know never so much of God and of Christ His Son, yet the general apprehension of these things will but add a kind of vexation to his spirit, till he have assurance of some special interest he hath in God's mercies. What a torment is it for a hunger-starved beggar to pass by a wedding-house, and smell good cheer, yet (Tantalus like) never taste of it? What a vexation to a poor man to see a great dole given, and multitudes relieved by it, yet he get nothing? So is it certainly in this case; the more any man knoweth of Christ, and of the plenteous redemption that is by Him purchased through His blood, the greater must the horror of his soul be when he findeth that he hath no part therein. (*Ibid.*) *The blessing of forgiveness*:—The text may suggest to us four subjects or heads of consideration. 1. The forgiveness of sin. 2. The forgiver of sin. 3. The means of forgiveness. 4. The blessed effect in the heart of man—"Go in peace." (*J. Slade, M.A.*) *Pardon available for the greatest sinner*:—When the last war had passed, the Government of the United States made proclamation of pardon to the common soldiery in the

Confederate army, but not to the chief soldiers. The gospel of Christ does not act in that way. It says pardon for all, but especially for the chief of sinners. I do not now think of a single passage that says a small sinner may be saved; but I do think of passages that say a great sinner may be saved. If there be sins only faintly hued, just a little tinged, so faintly coloured you can hardly see them, there is no special pardon promised in the Bible for those sins; but if they be glaring—red like crimson—then they shall be as snow. Now, my brethren, I do not state this to put a premium on great iniquity. I merely say this to encourage that man in this house who feels he is so far gone from God that there is no mercy for him. I want to tell him there is a good chance. (*Dr. Talmage.*)

Ver. 49. **Began to say within themselves.**—*Care to be exercised in our judgment of others:*—This should teach us to take heed how we pass sentence upon the inward intentions and purposes of men. This power is God's, and belongs to Him; what have we to do to usurp it? It is a well too deep for us to draw in. And yet, such is the presumption of some, that they will take upon them infallibly to know what is in the bottom of that well, whence ariseth jealousies and contentions, many times as causeless as pernicious. Indeed, by some discoveries there may be some conjectures; but let not a small conjecture make thee a great offender. Every key a man meets with is not the right one for this lock; every likelihood thou apprehendest is not a sure sign of what is within the breast. Not to let a man be private in his house is a great injury; not to let a man be private in his heart is a greater. Lastly, let us be persuaded hence to be as upright before the Lord in thought as we are just in dealing before men. It is not the white fleece God especially eyes, but the sound liver. He hath windows into the soul, and there sees that hypocrisy which lies lurking there. He is very list of hearing, and well understandeth what the heart thinketh, and (as before was showed) will answer us accordingly, (*N. Rogers.*)

Ver. 50. Thy faith hath saved thee.—*Saving faith:*—It is not every faith that saves the soul. There may be faith in a falsehood which leads only to delusion, and ends in destruction. There is a faith that saves; it puts us into immediate and vital and permanent union with the Son of God. What was the nature of this woman's faith? Was it merely an intellectual opinion, a clear conviction that this wonderful man of Nazareth was a strong and sympathetic character whom she could trust? Yes, it was that, and a great deal more. It was a transaction by which she approached Christ humbly, embraced His very feet, acknowledged her sinfulness, and relied on Him to do for her some great spiritual good. The woman was really saved through her faith. Jesus Christ Himself did the saving work. When I turn the faucet in my house, it is not the faucet or the water-pipe that fills my empty pitcher. I simply put my pitcher in actual connection with the inexhaustible reservoir which is at the other end of the pipe. When I exercise faith in a crucified Saviour, I put my guilty self into connection with His Divine self, my utter emptiness into connection with His infinite fulness. This is the faith which the apostles preached, and which you and I must practise. "Believe *on* the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Not in Christianity, but *on* Christ. Not enough to believe *in* the Christ described in the New Testament. Millions of unconverted people do this, just as they believe in Wilberforce as a noble philanthropist, or in Lincoln as an unselfish patriot. When the miner looks at the rope which is to lower him into the deep mine, he may coolly say to himself, "I have faith *in* that rope. It looks well made and strong." That is his opinion; but when he grasps it, and swings down by it into the dark yawning chasm, then he is believing *on* the rope. This is more than opinion, it is a voluntary transaction. Faith is the cling to the rope, but it is the rope itself that supports the miner. I. FAITH IS A VERY SIMPLE PROCESS. The most vital of all acts is as easily comprehended as a baby comprehends the idea of drawing nourishment from a mother's breast, and falling asleep in a mother's arms. II. FAITH IS A SENSIBLE ACT. The highest exercise of reason is to trust what the Almighty has said, and to rely on what He has promised. III. FAITH IS A STOOPING GRACE. Self must go down before we can be lifted up into Christ's favour and likeness. IV. FAITH IS THE STRENGTHENING GRACE. Through this channel flows in the power from on high. V. Finally, IT IS THE GRACE WHICH COMPLETELY SATISFIES. When a hungry soul has found this food, the aching void is filled. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *The prominence of faith in the thoughts of Christ:*—This was only to

be expected in one who preached a gospel of grace. Grace and faith are correlatives. A gospel of grace is a gospel which proclaims a God whose nature it is to give. The proper attitude of those who worship such a God to the object of their worship is that of recipiency. (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*) To hold a correct dogmatic definition of "saving faith" has been considered the most important criterion of a standing or falling Church. Yet I defy anybody to put into dogmatic shape this woman's "saving faith." It put itself into shape, but it was the shape of feeling and of action; of love which braved all to express itself in outward acts of reverence and affection; of sorrow which found more joy in bitter weeping than ever in laughter and in song; of personal devotion which recked nothing of any one else's opinion, if only it might gain one kind word from Him. Whoever they they need not fear but that theirs is "saving faith." (*R. Winterbotham, M.A.*) *The work of faith and love in salvation*:—It is surprising to think that the conclusion of this affecting incident should have been made the battle-field on which controversialists should have contended, whether this woman was saved by faith alone, "Thy faith hath saved thee"; or by love, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much"; and as love is assumed to be a work, some on one side would deny that love had anything to do with saving her, whilst others, on the other side, would assert that her faith, unless it was mixed with love or issued in love, would be simply the faith of devils. Now, let us try and reconstruct, as it were, the spiritual history of this woman. In its leading features I think we cannot be far wrong. Our knowledge of human society would teach us that she could scarcely have been the only sinner of her class. Very likely great numbers who sinned either openly or secretly after the same sort of sin had heard, along with her, the Lord's call to repentance. But there was that within her which attracted her to Him, and made her listen to Him, whilst other similar sinners did not. What was that? It was an alteration in her will, a sense of sin as foul and polluting, which made her not only be willing, but "will" (*i.e.*, strongly desire) to be rid of it. This was the root of all. What was it? Being a change of heart, or mind, a turning from sin and turning to God, we may call it repentance; but it was not repentance alone, if so, it would have turned to despair—it was inextricably mixed with faith, faith in God and goodness, a belief in the present excellence and future triumph of purity, as distinguished from the present degradation and future condemnation of impurity. So it was faith as the evidence of things not seen. This gave her the ear to listen to the words of Christ, because in them she heard the words of One who was Himself divinely pure, and yet showed Himself able and willing to relieve the hearts of all who came to Him under the burden of impurity. This was a further act of faith on her part. She not only believed in a God of purity, but in Christ as the representative of that God of purity. She consequently came to Him in spirit as she listened to His words, because His words first opened before her the door of hope. So then we have here a confirmation of the truth of the remarkable words of the apostle, "We are saved by hope." If the words of Christ had not been full of hope for a person in her sad condition, she would not have listened to Him so as to be attracted to Him. But we have used the word "attract"; what is the attraction of soul to soul? Most people would unquestionably call it love, and they would be right; for how could there be the attraction of a penitent soul to a pure, yet loving, Saviour, for such benefits as forgiveness and cleansing, without love? What was it, then, which "saved" her? It was her will, the opposite of the will of those to whom the Lord said, "Ye will not come unto Me that ye may have life." Being the change of her will, it was repentance (*metanoia*), "repentance unto life"; but repentance which differed from despair or worldly sorrow, because it was inspired by hope. It was a change of mind Godward, and so was faith in God; and Christward, because it recognized in the Lord the Saviour from sin; and yet from first to last it was faith, whose very life was holy love. She was attracted to the former guilty partners of her sin by unholy love; she was attracted to Christ by penitent, believing, hopeful, holy love. It seems to me the height of folly and presumption to try to separate the will, the repentance, the faith, the hope, the love, and assign to each their respective parts in the matter of salvation. God hath joined all together; let us not try, even in thought, to put them asunder. But what is the significance of the Lord's words, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much"? The real drift seems to be in the *many* sins (*αἱ πόλλαι*) and the loving *much* (*πολύ*), the same

Greek adjective. A sinful life such as hers, in which she had laid herself out to seduce others to sin, required a deep sense of guilt, a deep repentance: a superficial, light-hearted sorrow in her case would have been, humanly speaking, of no avail, no repentance at all; but God, in His mercy, gave her true and godly sorrow. This appeared in her whole action, particularly in her washing the Lord's feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. Now, Mary of Bethany similarly poured precious ointment on the Lord's feet, and similarly wiped them with her hair; but in all the three accounts there is not a word said of her shedding a single tear; and if she had, her tears would not have been those of penitence, but of gratitude for the restoration of her brother. What, then, was the washing of the Lord's feet with her tears? of what, I mean, was it the sign?—of repentance? of faith? of love? Of all three, I answer, all inseparable, all permeating one another, all sustaining and nourishing one another. The whole action, if a sincere one, could not have existed without all three. The Lord's words, then, cannot have the slightest bearing on any post-reformation disputes respecting faith and works, faith and love, love as preceding forgiveness, or love as following it. They are emphatically natural words, describing the natural effect of the grace of God in the soul; for though grace be above nature, it yet works not unnaturally, but naturally, according to its own nature, and according to the nature of the human being who receives it. (*M. F. Sadler, M.A.*) *The true and believing penitent even in this life is saved*:—For—1. We have salvation in the promises of it (2 Cor. vii. 1). 2. We have it in those graces which begin it (John xvii. 3; Tit. iii. 5, and ii. 12; John iii. 8). 3. We have it in the assurance of it. Doth the Lord say and shall He not do? His foundation standeth sure and hath His seal. And if this counsel be, of God as Gamaliel said in another case, ye cannot destroy it. (*N. Rogers.*) *The weeping penitent and the disdainful Pharisee*:—I. THE PRINCIPLE TO WHICH OUR LORD ATTRIBUTED HER SALVATION WAS HER FAITH. This was the medium through which the blessing was conveyed, and this was indeed the secret spring of all her proceeding. And in what way, we ask, could this individual have been saved except by faith? As for salvation by works, that was out of the question in her case. She was a sinner, as the Evangelist testifies; and therefore, instead of being justified by the law, was convicted by it as a transgressor. What was there then that could save her? Her relation to Abraham? That she had virtually renounced, and by advancing any plea on that ground would only have convicted herself of apostasy. The comparative innocence of her early years? The sacrifices of the law? These had no power to purify the conscience; nor could "thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil" have washed away a single stain. Might her repentance, then, have saved her, and her diligent efforts after reformation? Alas, the convictions and terrors of a guilty conscience furnish no propitiation for sin, and have in them more of fretfulness and irritation than of submission and loyal obedience. And as for the feelings of broken-hearted contrition, of genuine love, of all true devotion, these are the fruits and evidences of mercy already experienced; and therefore, instead of saving the soul, they show it to be already saved. Her faith saved her as accepting the blessing freely given her of God. And this view of faith refutes the notion of those who, from a mistaken zeal for morality, ascribe the saving efficacy of faith to the moral excellence of this principle as implying submission and obedience; for this is to make faith itself a work, and to ascribe salvation to ourselves in performing it. But in Scripture, salvation by faith is constantly opposed to all idea of desert on our part; for "to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him who justifieth the ungodly"—that is, one in himself ungodly—"his faith is counted for righteousness." We appropriate a gift, we have said, by accepting it; but does this acceptance merit the gift? II. Having said this much of the nature of faith, it is fit we proceed to consider ITS GRACIOUS AND BLESSED EFFECTS AND EVIDENCES. For while faith saves us simply as receiving the Saviour, it is not to be forgotten that it is an intelligent, holy, and powerful principle: intelligent, as implying a just apprehension of man's state and of God's character; holy, as being the "gift of God," and the first fruit of His regenerating grace: powerful, as bringing us under the influence and authority of those great truths which it is its essential character to embrace. For let it not be thought that in matters of religion, those laws that regulate intelligent natures are reversed, or that any such strange anomaly can exist in the spiritual world as a soul that believes, yet neither feels nor acts. But instead of general language,

behold the genuine effects of faith exemplified in her to whom our Lord addressed the words before us. My brethren, the graces observable in this woman are the natural fruits and proper evidences of faith, wherever it is found. The peculiarities of her situation could affect only the mode of expressing them. Is not penitence a natural and necessary effect of faith? In order of time, they are coincident and inseparable; for as there can be no impenitent believer, so neither can there be any unbelieving penitent; but in order of nature, since the discoveries of Divine truth are the means of awakening repentance, it is manifest faith must precede it, to give these discoveries effect. And faith, ushered in by contrition, has love for an inseparable associate. "Thy sins are forgiven thee"; and, in spite of the cavils of unbelief, to add, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." My brethren, it is the glory of the grace of the gospel, that it enfolds the chief of sinners; and blessed are those who are enabled, as chief of sinners, to embrace this gospel grace. (*H. Grey, D.D.*) **In peace.**—*Peace:*—Peace is twofold. 1. There is a bad and appearing peace. 2. A true and sincere peace. Bad peace is threefold. 1. A defiled and polluted peace, as is that we find mentioned (Psa. ii. 1, 2; ix. 21; lxxxiii. 4–6), so Ephraim against Manassah, Manassah against Ephraim; and both against Judah: Herod against Pilate, Pilate against Herod; and both against Christ. *Est dæmonum legio concors*, there is such a peace as this amongst the devils; seven could agree well together in Mary's heart, yea a legion we read of were in another. "If a house be divided against itself it cannot stand." 2. A dissembled and counterfeited peace, when a man pretends peace, but intends mischief. So Joab spake peaceably to Abner when he stabbed him; Absolom invited Ammon to a feast when he intended to murder him. 3. An inordinate peace, which is when the greater and better obeys the less and inferior. So Adam obeyed Eve; Abraham yielded unto Lot, &c. None of these kinds of peace are here meant. That peace which our Saviour speaks of is true and sincere peace, which St. Bernard thus tripleth. 1. External. This is that peace we have with men for the time we live in this world (Rom. xii. 18). (1) In the commonwealth, as when we are free from civil wars within, and foreign enemies without (Jer. xxix. 7). (2) In the family, or special places where we live, of which peace St. Peter (1 Pet. iii. 12), and our Saviour (Mark ix. 50). 2. Internal, which is the peace of conscience, proceeding from the assurance we have of God's favour through Christ. 3. Eternal, which is that perfect rest and happiness, which the saints shall enjoy in heaven with God hereafter (Isa. lvii. 2). The peace that our Saviour here speaks of to this woman is, that internal or pectoral peace, that stable and comfortable tranquility of conscience. Peace of conscience is the fruit of justification by faith. (Col. i. 20; Ephes. ii. 21; Rom. v. 1.) These texts of Scripture make strongly for the truth delivered. Alas for sinners! the misery of such as are not reconciled unto God, "there is no peace to the wicked, saith my God" (Isa. lvii. 21). No peace, none with God, none with angels, none with men, none with the creatures. They are like unto Ishmael, whose hand was against every man, and every man's hand against him. They may well fear with Cain, "Every one that findeth me will slay me." All creatures being God's executioners, and ready pressed to do His will. In no place peace: what Solomon speaks of an ill wife may aptly be applied to an ill conscience. At no time peace. But how doth this seeming or false peace of sinners differ from that peace which ariseth from assurance of God's favour through faith in Christ? 1. The conscience of a sinner is quiet, for that it hath no sight nor sense of sin. 2. A benumbed conscience, though it be quiet yet it comforteth not. 3. A dead or benumbed conscience feareth not sin, nor God's wrath for sin. But a good conscience is very fearful of giving God the least offence. As it was said of Hezekiah, that "he feared God greatly," so is it with the godly. 4. From the unspeakable benefits that true peace brings along with it. What is it that can make a man happy, but attends on peace? It comprehends in the very name of it all happiness, both of estate and disposition. That mountain whereon Christ ascended though it abounded with palms, pines, and myrtles, yet it carried only the name of Olives, an ancient emblem of peace. So though many mercies belong unto a Christian, yet all are comprised under this one little word which is spelt with a few letters, peace. (*N. Rogers.*)

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