

THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.
JOSHUA.

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OR,

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

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

JOSHUA.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

THE TITLE OF THE BOOK.—This book, like several others of the historical books of Scripture, derives its name from its contents. It records almost exclusively the acts of Joshua in fulfilment of the commission laid upon him from God by the hand of Moses (*cf.* Deut. xxxi. 7, 8), and terminates with Joshua's death and burial. Hence it very appropriately bears in the Hebrew the simple title of Joshua: in the LXX that of 'Ἰησοῦς Ναυή or 'Ιησοῦς υἱὸς Ναυή. (*T. E. Espin, B.D.*)

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK.—The Jewish rabbins and early Christian writers all supposed this book to have been written by Joshua himself; but this is an impossible assumption, for besides telling of his death it alludes to a number of things that did not happen until long after that event (*see, e.g.,* xv. 63 compared with Judg. xix. 10–12; and xix. 47, with Judg. xviii. 7, 27 *seq.*). In fact, like the other historical books of the Old Testament, it is an anonymous writing, and when critically examined is seen to have been originally united to the Pentateuch, and to have been composed in the same manner. It is made up of extracts from various narratives, pieced together by a later hand in the manner of Eastern historians, and in its present form cannot be much earlier than the time of Ezra. Most modern critics are agreed that the documents used by the editor were mainly three—the Jehovistic (known to critics by the symbol JE), of the eighth or ninth century; the Deuteronomistic (D) of the seventh; and the Priestly (P) of the fifth. To the Jehovistic document belong in the main chapters ii. 1–viii. 29; ix. 1–xi. 9; xxiii., xxiv., and a few short fragments in other chapters. To the Deuteronomist are assigned chapters i.; viii. 30–35; xi. 10–xiii. 14; xiv. 6–15, and some other small portions; while the remainder, including the greater part of the account of the division of the territory, comes from the priestly writer. Its geographical details are characterised by great vagueness, except as regards the portion of the land which was held by Jews after the exile. (*Chambers's Encyclopædia.*)

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOK.—The chronological dates presented in this book are few. 1. We are informed (iv. 19) that the passage of the Jordan took place "on the tenth day of the first month." The year is not specified, but would seem to have been the fortieth after the exodus. Thus, if the date of the exodus be assumed to be B.C. 1490 that of the invasion of Canaan will be B.C. 1450. 2. The duration of Joshua's wars with the Canaanites is spoken of loosely in xi. 18, as "many days." Inferences can, however, be drawn from the words of Caleb (xiv. 7, 10), which enable us to determine this point with some approach to definiteness. Caleb speaks of himself as forty years old when he was sent by Moses from Kadesh to spy out the land. When he came before Joshua to prefer his claim to Hebron, the conquest of Canaan was accomplished, and he was then eighty-five. Since the mission of the spies took place in the summer of the second

year after the exodus (Num. xiii. 20)—and the whole period from the exodus to the crossing of Jordan is estimated at forty years—it would appear that Caleb was thirty-eight years old when he passed through the Red Sea, and seventy-eight when he passed through Jordan. Thus a period of seven years is left for the campaigns of Joshua. Josephus, indeed (Ant. v. 1, 19), speaks of these wars as lasting only five years. The difference, however, is not great. Josephus himself speaks of five complete years as occupied by the conquest, and Caleb probably employed round numbers after the Hebrew mode. 3. The duration of Joshua's rule, and consequently the number of years covered by the records of this book, is far more uncertain. We have no definite information as to the age of Joshua at the date of the exodus, or indeed at any other period previous to his death when he was an hundred and ten (xxiv. 19). If, however, we suppose him to be of the same age as Caleb, a supposition probable in itself and supported by the expression used of him in Ex. xxxiii. 11 ("a young man"), he will have been about seventy-eight years old when he invaded Canaan, and have been at the head of Israel not much less than thirty-two years altogether after the death of Moses. Or if we assume seven years for the wars against the Canaanites, he will have survived about twenty-five years after his retirement to Timnath-serah. This accords sufficiently well with the notice (xxiii. 1) which places the parting words and acts of Joshua "a long time after that the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about." Josephus, however (Ant. v. 1, 29), states that Joshua's rule after the death of Moses lasted for twenty-five years, and that he had previously been forty years associated with Moses. This would fix Joshua's age at the time of the exodus at forty-five, an age perhaps hardly so suitable as thirty-eight to the language of Ex. xxxiii. 11. Ewald, Fürst, and others regard the statement of Josephus as probable, and as in all likelihood of ancient authority. Others (*e.g.*, Clem. Alex. "Strom." i. 21; Theoph. "Ad Autolyc." iii. 24) name twenty-seven years as the length of Joshua's government; while Eusebius ("Præpar. Evang." x. 14) states that some assigned thirty years to it. (*T. E. Espin, B.D.*)

THE OBJECT OF THE BOOK.—The object of the book is to magnify the inviolable covenant faithfulness of Jehovah in the fulfilment of His promises (xxi. 43-45), by the historical information as to the conquest by the covenant people of the land of Canaan promised to their fathers, and their inheritance of it (i. 2-6), through the Almighty assistance of Jehovah, under the guidance of Joshua, Moses' minister, who had been called to effect the accomplishment of the Divine promise, according to an appointment recorded in the law itself (Deut. xxxi. 7). (*Prof. C. F. Keil.*) The Book of Joshua is one of the most important writings in the Old Covenant, and should never be separated from the Pentateuch, of which it is at once both the continuation and completion. Between this book and the five books of Moses there is the same analogy as between the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The four Gospels give an account of the transactions of Jesus Christ, the Christian legislature, just as the first five books of the Bible give, for the most part, of the doings of Moses, the Jewish legislator; and the Acts of the Apostles, as a book, bears the same relation to these Gospels as the Book of Joshua to the Pentateuch. (*Dr. A. Clarke.*)

THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK.—It falls into three great divisions:—1. The conquest of the land (i.-xii.). This part is historical, both in form and substance. It relates the main operations by which the people under Joshua obtained possession of Canaan. The chief points are: The sending of the spies and the crossing of the Jordan (ii.-iv.); the fall of Jericho (v. 13-vi. 27); the capture (after a reverse) of Ai (vii.-viii. 29); the treaty with the Gibeonites (ix.); the defeat of the leagued kings of the south at the battle of Beth-horon (x.); and the defeat of a similar confederacy in the north near the waters of Merom (xi.). It is obvious that many details are omitted, for a long list of conquered kings is given at the close (xii.); and it is stated (xi. 18) that "Joshua made war a long time with all those kings." Yet the narrator makes it particularly clear that it is a holy war he is describing, for he tells us of the miraculous manner in which the Jordan was crossed (iii.); describes the observance of the Passover (v. 2-12); dwells upon the sin of Achan as the cause of the reverse at Ai (vii.); and relates the confirming of the Covenant at Ebal and Gerizim (viii. 30-35). 2. The partition of the land (xiii.-xxii.). This part, while historical in form, is topographical and legislative in contents. Here the main points are: After a sketch of the land to be divided (xiii. 1-7), and of the

territory already assigned to the tribes east of the Jordan (xiii. 8-33), Hebron is given to Caleb (xiv. 6-15), and the three tribes, Judah, Ephraim, and half Manasseh, receive their portions in the western territory (xv.-xvii.). Afterwards, the Tabernacle being set up, the remaining tribes, except Levi, receive theirs (xviii.-xix. 48), a special inheritance being assigned to Joshua (xix. 49-51); the cities of refuge and the cities of the Levites are set apart; and the two tribes and a half who had assisted in the conquest are sent to their homes (xx.-xxii.). Here again, while the details are very unequal, the sacred character of all the proceedings is clearly indicated. The inheritances are distributed by lot (xiv. 2; xviii. 6, 10), the cities of refuge and the Levitical territory have a religious reference (xx.-xxi.), and the jealousy of the people for national unity of religion is shown in the matter of the altar Ed (xxii. 10-34). 3. The leader's farewell (xxiii., xxiv.). This part is mostly hortatory. Joshua warns the people against idolatry, renews the Covenant with solemn ceremony, and incorporates a record of the transaction in the Book of the Law. The book closes with an account of the death and burial of Joshua and of Eleazar (xxiv. 29-33). (*Prof. Jas. Robertson.*)

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CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1-9. Now after the death of Moses . . . the Lord spake unto Joshua.—*The death of the old lawgiver*.—I. THE DEATH OF MOSES WAS USHERED IN BY NO DECAY. In this respect it was a striking exception to the rule. His mental vigour was unimpaired when he passed away. We have evidence of this in that wonderful book of Deuteronomy, which Jesus loved to ponder and to quote. Witness also the grand swan-song into which he bursts before its close, pouring forth the sum and substance of all his warnings and exhortations in a flood of molten emotion. Witness the beatitudes that follow, wherein the seer pierces with prophetic eye the dark future and perceives the final consummation, when Jehovah shall remove all iniquity from Israel and write His law upon their hearts. Surely such exercises as these betoken a mind in a state of the highest vigour and activity. And as it was with the mind so was it with the body. Moses had no look of a dying man as he left the camp and climbed to Nebo's brow; no painful and protracted illness, no decrepit old age. What a blessed exodus was this; more a translation than a death. An active, useful, holy life; a speedy death—could there be a greater blessing if we have to die? II. THE DEATH OF MOSES WAS EMITTERED BY NO REGRET. Moses was not dragged up that hill unwillingly, like a malefactor to his doom. There was no indulgence in rebellious sentiment and anxiety; no nervous and fearful activity in winding up the affairs of life; but contrariwise, there was profound, calm, and courageous submission to the Divine will. In good time let us honestly face all the possible sorrow and disappointment, and learn, like him, to overcome through faith, obedience, and humility. III. HIS DEATH WAS DARKENED BY NO DISMAY. Of all the multitude in Israel that loved him, not one was with him. Alone, alone, alone, he has passed into the presence of his Maker. Yes, and we too, whatever the circumstances of our end, however tender and unsleeping the ministry of loving hearts and gentle hands that soothes our dying moments, alone must enter death's dark door and be ushered into the presence of our God. Alone, yet not unfriended, if we know Jesus who is there; alone, yet undismayed, if like Moses we trust in Him, for He has said, "I will be with thee." IV. THE DEATH OF MOSES WAS BRIGHTENED BY GREAT CONSOLATION. (*A. B. Mackay.*) *Death enters into God's plans*.—Joshua must succeed Moses and be God's servant as he was. He must aim at this as the one distinction of his life; he must seek in every action to know what God would have him to do. Happy man if he can carry out this ideal of life! No conflicting interests or passions will distract his soul. The power that nerves his arm will not be more remarkable than the peace that dwells in his soul. He will show to all future generations the power of a "lost will," not the suppression of all desire, according to the Buddhist's idea of bliss, but all lawful natural desires in happy and harmonious action, because subject to the wise, holy, and loving guidance of the will of God. Thus we see among the other paradoxes of His government how God uses death to promote life. The death of the eminent, the aged, the men of brilliant gifts makes way for others, and stimulates their activity and growth. When the champion of the forest falls the younger trees around it are brought more into contact with the sunshine and fresh air, and push up into taller and more

fully developed forms. In many ways death enters into God's plans. Not only does it make way for the younger men, but it has a solemnizing and quickening effect on all who are not hardened and dulled by the wear and tear of life. What a memorable event in the spiritual history of families is the first sudden affliction, the first breach in the circle of loving hearts! First, the new experience of intense tender longing, baffled by the inexorable conditions of death; then the vivid vision of eternity, the reality of the unseen flashing on them with living and awful power, and giving an immeasurable importance to the question of salvation; then the drawing closer to one another, the forswearing of all animosities and jealousies, the cordial desire for unbroken peace and constant co-operation; and if it be the father or the mother that has been taken, the ambition to be useful—to be a help, not a burden, to the surviving parent, and to do what little they can of what used to be their father's or their mother's work. Death becomes actually a quickener of the vital energies; instead of a withering influence, it drops like the gentle dew, and becomes the minister of life. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Death makes room for others*.—And some great names must be removed to make way for lesser names that have growing sap in them and real capability of beneficent expansion. Some great trees must be cut down to make room for lesser trees that mean to be great ones in their time. We owe much to the cutting-down power of death, the clearing power of the cruel scythe or axe. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Onward, through, and over*.—Moses was dead. His work was done. It was rounded off so far as he was concerned, and so he went to his reward. There is a lesson of no small importance to you and me. Our business is to do the duty that lies next us. That duty may only seem to be a fragment of what we desire to accomplish, but it is all we are answerable for, and to do our portion well is to stand clear with conscience and with God. In the construction of a door, one man makes the panels, another makes the frame, another fits it together, and a fourth hangs it by its hinges. The panel maker has a very imperfect portion of the work to show as the result of his toil, but he has done his part and fulfilled his mission whether the door ever swings in its place or no. Your business and mine is to fulfil the injunction, whether in our daily toil, in the training of our children, in the work of the Church or whatever other duty may fall to us—"Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Our hearts may find to do a good deal more; if our hand cannot find the opportunity to work out the heart's desire, we are accepted for what we have done and what we would do and cannot; and whatever and how-much-soever remains undone, we shall ascend, like Moses, to our own Mount Nebo and die in a flood of rosy light with Canaan before our eyes and God's "Well done" sounding in our ears. The man who carries the hod of mortar up the ladder does not lay a single brick, but in his measure his service is essential and as worthy as the architect that planned the building, or the mason that rears its walls. From this point of view, servant is a grander name than seraph or archangel, for what would these be if they did not serve or stand and wait? Their wings would droop and their celestial glory would be quenched in night. "Moses' minister." That is what Joshua is called. It is another word for servant. He ministered to, that is, he served Moses; and herein lies another lesson, for he was thereby a servant also of the Lord. He who well serves the Lord's servant serves that servant's Master, and He says, "Ye did it unto Me." Oh for a full and perfect measure of this rich interchange, this interlinking of lives and sympathies, servants of each other, vying in a holy rivalry as to who shall be the lowliest, readiest, willingest servant of the servants of the Lord! "Spake to Joshua." Joshua was born when Moses was an exile and a stranger hidden for his life among the wilds of Midian. There's another lesson of great value in this. It did not seem likely then, did it? that Moses should ever be a leader of men, the emancipator of a nation. Providence sees and plans for a long time ahead of our to-day, and holds in reserve agents and forces that we cannot see; and because we cannot see them we doubt and question and in the face of the unlikely we say, "It cannot be." That solitary pale-faced and half-starved monk in a German cell; how is he to shake all Europe and make the Pope tremble on his throne? There is nothing more unlikely: and yet Frederic, Prince of Saxony, is being placed by God upon his throne to be a ready and brave helper when the time came; and before Luther left his cell, Providence had sprung upon the world the printing press, which was to be Luther's deadliest artillery. God's plans are laid; His movements are in process, and for the fulfilment of every purpose that He cherisheth there shall come the hour and the man. Now mark, that this is true in our own individual history and experience. Every humble and

trustful disciple of the Lord Jesus is the ward of Divine Providence. Listen: "The God of my mercy shall prevent me"; that is, shall go before me. You look forward with an anxious eye and heart to some possible contingency, and say, "It is sure to happen." Time passes, and perhaps it does happen; but you find that meanwhile God hath stationed at that point something or somebody that acts as a buffer to the blow, and although your Moses may fail you at your need, some Joshua comes in to fill the gap and meet the need of the moment to the full. "Therefore arise." There is an old saying that there is much virtue in an "if"; it appears to me that there is much virtue in this word "therefore." Moses is dead, therefore arise. Remembering who Moses was and how entirely Moses was depended on, it would seem more natural to say, "Therefore lie still; this is a blow from which you cannot recover." When he was alive you often asked him to take you back to Egypt for safety's sake. Now that he is dead, you had better take yourselves back, for if you are not drowned in an attempt to pass the river, the Canaanites will dig your graves on the other side. Now is not that the kind of "therefore" with which the Church of God is sadly familiar, and with which those who have relationship with faint-hearted people have a saddening acquaintance? A stay and pillar of the Church dies or removes, "therefore nothing can be done; what can we do without him?" Here is a man who starts in business. Things do not advance as he wishes. He therefore must shut up his shop, be content to collapse. Surely that logic will be laughed at. Well, do not let us hear it in the Church; do not let us say it in presence of our obstacles. If the axe is blunt, grip it with both hands and put more strength into the blow. No fretting, no retreating, no conferring with doubts and fears. Is Moses dead? Therefore arise! Cross hands over the dead hero's coffin, and vow to Heaven to take his name as a new watchword, and to cross the Jordan while the earth is still fresh upon his grave. "Go over this Jordan." In measuring the chances of doing a thing you must take into account who orders it. It was Napoleon who said to the French army, "Go over the Alps." It would not have been done under anybody else's guidance. It was God that said to Joshua, "Go over this Jordan." Then though it be as deep as the sea, though it swirl like a whirlpool, though it rush like Niagara, he will go to yonder side. There is just one other lesson that I would fain gather from these suggestive words—"The land which I do give them." First, God had said to them while in Egypt, "The land which I will give them." Oh! what weary years of waiting followed! At last they had given it up. They said, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Then the lash of the taskmaster fell and silenced them. Now they are in sight of it, and He says, "The land which I do give them." The promise is in the very act of being fulfilled. By and by the waters parted and let them through, and, as they stand on the plains of Sharon, or lie at rest under the shadow of the hills of Lebanon, God says, "The land which I have given them!" Mark the tenses, how they change: "I will give, I do give, I have given." Men and brethren, that is God's order. He is faithful that promised. (*J. J. Wray.*)

Dignity of God's service:—The first graveyard which meets the eye in the Moravian cemetery of Herrnhut bears the inscription, "Christian David, the servant of the Lord." This was in life the high distinction of the humble and apostolic colleague of Count Zinzendorf, and was even recognised by the Imperial Council of Russia when the Moravian carpenter had occasion to appear before it. *Moses and Joshua*:—Moses' work ended at Jordan—Joshua's began at Jordan. History is vested in the life of its representative men, and has in it no gaps. The mantle of Elijah falls on Elisha, and the next generation was provided for before Moses went up into Nebo. Moses wanted to go over Jordan. It seemed to him, most likely, that he died before his time. And yet his work, as we can see it now, was a completed and a nicely-rounded one. His commission was to bring the Hebrews to the Jordan; Joshua's commission was to bring them over the Jordan and establish them in Canaan. We are to learn from such representative instances that when a man is interested in nothing but to do the work that God sets him, he will never die till the work is done thoroughly and successfully. Among the little servants of God there are no fallen buds, and among the adult servants of God no broken columns. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*)

The new leader:—It has been said, "Great men have no successors." But if we mean by successor one who takes up the work where his predecessor has left it, and develops it according to the Divine ideal, then all men, great and small alike, have successors. As Pascal puts it, "You cannot produce the great man before his time, and you cannot make him die before his time; you cannot displace nor advance him, nor put him back; you

cannot continue his existence, and replace him, for he existed only because he had his work to do; he exists no longer, because there is no longer anything for him to do; and to continue him is to continue a useless part." A worthy successor to the great leader had been found. The Divine choice, a choice which had been revealed to Moses before his death, and which greatly gladdened his heart, had fallen upon Joshua. There were reasons for this choice of Joshua which we do well to consider; for if his preparation for this high place was not so romantic or so miraculous as that of Moses, it was none the less effective and Divine. His training was, like ours, of a more homely pattern. I. It can scarcely be doubted that JOSHUA'S LINEAGE had something to do with God's choice. His parents were slaves, and though the bloody edict enacted in Moses' infant days had long since been repealed, these serfs had felt to the full the bitterness of bondage. But notwithstanding all, they had not lost faith and hope in God; and we get a glimpse into their souls' state through the significant name they gave their firstborn. They called him "Hoshea," that is "Salvation." Surely their infant's name is the very echo of their father Jacob's dying words to Dan, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord." We can well believe that Joshua was brought up in an atmosphere of hope. It is more than likely, from what we know of the habits of the ancient Egyptians, that in a corner of his father's lowly dwelling stood an object which often excited his childish wonder and curiosity. It was a mummy case, painted all over with strange devices and curious figures, which with its somewhat faded richness presented a strange contrast to the mean furniture of the dwelling. "Within it," we can easily imagine his mother telling him, "are preserved the bones of Joseph." "But why do you keep Joseph's bones?" "Because when he lay dying he gave commandment concerning them," &c. The child would listen and ponder, and look with new solemnity on that sacred trust; then he might ask, "Mother, was that true which Joseph said when he was dying?" "Yes, my boy." "Then why do we not go at once—

"Mother, oh where is that blissful shore,
Shall we not seek it and weep no more'?"

"We must wait God's time. We are His people, and He knows what is best." "Will it be long till that day comes?" "I cannot tell, but I do not think it will be very long, for God said to our great father Abraham that we would go back to it in the fourth generation, and the time must be near." Thus the influences that surrounded Joshua in his youth must have moulded his character and prepared him for the place he took, first as Moses' lieutenant, then as leader of Israel; and the assurance of the truth of Joseph's dying words must have mollified the bitterness of that cruel bondage. Every visitation of judgment would be a confirmation of his faith, and every trial a purifying furnace to remove his dross. He would hear from his father and grandfather, who were elders of the important tribe of Ephraim, the precise particulars of the Divine commission, and while they, with the other elders, were under Moses and Aaron attending to the more difficult and important matters in connection with the proposed Exodus, it is very likely that, following his natural bent of mind, he would be actively employed in attempting to organise the people and prepare them for a simultaneous movement. Thus while this champion first steps into the arena when Israel confronts Amalek, we may well suppose that he had done yeoman's service before, and his fitness and aptness for his life's work must have depended in great measure on home surroundings. II. JOSHUA'S CHARACTER had also to do with this choice. Its constituent elements were noble and simple, easily understood and readily appreciated. He was every inch a soldier, brave and manly, simple in habit, straightforward in speech, cool-headed, warm-hearted, energetic, swift in thought and action. He was firm as a rock, true as steel. Nothing could exceed his fidelity. How true was he, above all, to his God! So was he with his master. He never failed Moses. At all times he was jealous for his honour, and would tolerate nothing derogatory to his dignity and authority. He was even true to his enemies. He kept his word and carried out his engagements, in the spirit as well as the letter, though trapped by guile into the making of them. His courage also was of the loftiest kind. It could face not only enemies, but, harder far, misguided friends. Like all noble natures, Joshua was also unselfish, humble, and modest. He had learned to obey, and was therefore fit to command. His patience and hopefulness were also very marked, and much needed in the leader of such a people as Israel. He was able to endure the fatigues of the march as well as the rush of battle, not fainting under the hardships of the weary campaign, but ever

on the alert to push every advantage to its utmost limit, and always, by his cheerful bearing and cheery words, keeping up the hearts of the people. He was a leader alert, circumspect, prudent, leaving nothing to chance or the chapter of happy accidents, but doing everything that foresight could suggest for the attainment of the end in view. III. JOSHUA'S TRAINING had also to do with this choice. When he was put at the head of the people he was no novice. Joshua was the oldest man in the camp with the single exception of Caleb; therefore he was a man of experience and ripened wisdom. We have already spoken about that home school, in which his parents were the teachers. This was the granitic foundation of all his subsequent greatness. He was also taught in the grand and stirring school of the Exodus. Here God Himself was Joshua's teacher. Great national events have a high educational value. The stimulus of stirring times is deep, formative, and all pervasive. Still another school furnished Joshua with valuable instruction, and that was the camp of Israel. If by the wonders of the Exodus he was taught to know God, by the conduct of Israel he would learn to know man. Day by day he would be learning how to command and lead. And without doubt the crowning lessons in this long preparatory course would be imparted in the tent of Moses. Moses' tent was Joshua's college. And the very fact that he had been associated so long with Moses as his lieutenant would not only prepare himself but also the minds of the people for this change. IV. This choice of Joshua had also reference to the CHARACTER OF THE WORK that had to be done. The great work now before Israel is to conquer and divide the land. This was a kind of work most congenial to Joshua, and for which he had received special preparation. He is the right man for the present work, as Moses was the right man for the past. V. Also, this significant choice had reference to the GREAT PLAN of God in the economy of redemption. "Moses My servant is dead." Thus said Jehovah. Therefore Moses brought no one into the inheritance. Israel lost sight of him for ever, before they put down a foot in Canaan. If they are to pass over that Jordan, and possess the land, it cannot be under Moses. This act of leadership is deliberately taken out of his hands by God Himself. Surely the lesson is plain to all who know the essence of the gospel. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight." The law brings no one into God's heritage. But what Moses could not do Joshua was raised up to accomplish. If we would enter into God's inheritance we must turn from Moses and look to Joshua. Who was he? A man in all points made like his brethren; not nurtured in Pharaoh's palace like Moses, but born with them in Goshen, sharing their burdens, labouring side by side with them, afflicted in all their afflictions, bearing their griefs and carrying their sorrows. Who cannot see here a picture of God's own Son, "made of a woman, made under the law"? Turn from the law to the gospel. What is your hope of glory, Moses or Jesus? Yet we must never dream that Moses and Joshua are antagonistic. There is no quarrel in God's economies. Just as Moses and Joshua wrought together for the same great end, so is it with the law and the gospel. (*A. B. Mackay.*) *Whom do I succeed?*—Every age succeeds an age marked by greatness peculiarly its own. We are born now into a grand civilisation; it admits of no indolence, or reluctance as to work, and it cannot be satisfied by what is petty, perfunctory, and inexpensive as to the strength which is laid out upon it. History brings its responsibilities. To be born immediately after such and such leaders have played their part in the world's theatre is itself to have a cross of no mean weight laid upon the shoulder. We may close our eyes and think nothing about these things, but we do not thereby make them the less realities, nor do we thereby destroy the standard of judgment which they force upon us and by which our life will be tested. Every man should say, "Whom do I succeed? Whose are these footprints near the place whereon I stand? Has a giant been here—a great leader, a noble sufferer, a patient student, a father great in love, a mother greater still?—then my responsibility begins with their greatness and goodness; what I have to do," the soliloquist should say, "is to go on: where they have been great, I must try to be greater still—or if not along their line, along some line of my own—so that the ages may not stagger backwards, but with steadiness and majesty of strength advance from one degree to another as the light increases to the perfect day." (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Promotion:*—When a merchant has a vacancy in his establishment, he promotes to it that one of his servants who in the post which he has been occupying has displayed the greatest measure of fidelity and perseverance; and, when a youth applies for a situation, the success of his application will depend on the report which his former employer gives regarding him or on the record which he has written for himself in school. But it

is not otherwise in the providence of God. Those who fill best the spheres in which they have been placed are, in general, those who are in the long run advanced to higher positions; while they who despise the small things of their present duties are left to sink into still deeper obscurity. (*Christian World Pulpit.*) *Death and its lessons*:—The man to whom the charge is addressed is the inferior, in every way, of his master. A good man, a brave soldier, a disinterested head of the State—this he is. But the zest and the sparkle has gone out of the history with Moses; the passage of the river is a feeble repetition of the passage of the sea; and the scene to which it admits Israel is one, for the most part, of comparatively "common day"—alternations of fighting and resting, victories imperfectly followed up, acquiescences, languid and faithless, in a virtual partition of Canaan between Israel and Israel's foe. It is the more lifelike as a picture of the fortunes of our race. It is thus that earth's history is written, it is thus that the stream of time flows on. The Moses is followed by the Joshua, the morning of promise by the noonday of disappointment, both alike pointing onward, onward still, to a sunset long delayed, and an evening time which shall at last be light. The hero of strategy or prowess—the genius of discovery or imagination—the prophet of earth or heaven—lives not to reap, leaves the harvest to another, looks abroad from his Pisgah upon worlds unconquered, feels at last that he rather stops the onward march of a generation whose turn is come. It is well. Man must be little if he would be great—must see himself but an atom in the universe of life if he would do anything that is real in the work which is all God's. And he has his reward. The man that "knows the blessedness of being little" is disembarassed of the self-consciousness which is battling to be great. That energy is all free for action which loses no time in contemplating itself. That "ability" grows apace in vigour which remembers that it is of "God's giving." It was so with Moses. His one prayer was, "Let the God of the spirits of all flesh set a man over His congregation." Upon him, when he was found, he laid his hand, presented him instantly to the congregation as the man of the future, and "put some of his own honour at once upon him, that the congregation might understand and be obedient." He has his reward. This it is which eases life of its carefulness. This it is which makes greatness endurable as well as possible—the thought that God has no need of it, can raise up even from the stones a workman and a patriot, metes not with man's measure and reckons not by man's years. "I am the Lord, I change not"; therefore ye sons of men can both quietly serve and peacefully fall on sleep. "Moses My servant is dead." Yes, "My servant," though he once "spake unadvisedly"; yes, "My servant," though he was refused his heart's prayer; yes, "My servant," though he might not go over Jordan. "Moses My servant is dead": even when we are judged, we are but chastened; yea, if we not only suffer for our sins, but even sleep! "Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan." The work of God is not ended. Rather are we always on the brink of a river that must be crossed, and in sight of a land that has to be conquered. Who can look around him on the face of this earth, and so much as dream that Jordan is crossed, that Canaan is occupied? Who could live this life if he did not feel and know that effort, that progress, is its law? What we look forth upon, from the spot which is "this present," is a work, and it is a warfare. With our guides or without them, it is quite evident that there rolls a deep and a rapid river between us and rest, between us and a land of promise, which is that new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. We cannot pretend to say that intelligence such as we possess, that civilisation such as we have attained, that religion such as a Christendom realises, is satisfactory, is successful, is victorious, whether in the aspect of happiness or in the aspect of good. Everything is in conflict, everything is in struggle, everything is (at best) in a condition of movement and in a condition of hope. The plain of Moab is our world—a cold, broad stream divides us from anything that we can call rest, from anything that we can call possession. "My servant is dead, now therefore arise, and go over." There is a vacancy, which you must fill. That is one lesson of death. It is a summons to the living. God has lost a workman—will you take his place? Terrible would it be for this nation if either growing luxury or spreading vice should diminish the supply of strong men for the carrying on of the work of God in England. It is not the decay of genius which is formidable—it is the decay of strength. Joshua was (in many senses) the inferior of Moses, but that inferiority was no loss, on the whole, to his country; he had his work, as Moses had his—and, like Moses, he did it. "My servant is dead; therefore arise and go over." If there is a call in death, there is also an

encouragement. See, it says to us, what life is. See the blessedness of God's service. Hear Him say of the departed, "My servant" still. The man who has served God in his generation shall never die. He is in the hands of God, though it be out of the sight of the living. "My servant is dead; arise therefore, and go over," whither he, we trust, is gone. In the words of the historic parable of Ascension Day, "Take ye up the mantle that fell from him, and with it smite the waters—that, like him, and after him, you in your turn may pass over dryshod." (*Dean Vaughan.*) **Arise, go over this Jordan.**—*The campaign commenced.*—I. WHAT

THE LORD SPAKE UNTO JOSHUA; OR, THE ISSUE OF THE ORDER. Never was a mightier task assigned to any man than to Joshua; and yet never did any man start forth better equipped than he, for observe, the Lord gives him—(1) An express warrant; (2) glorious and gracious promises; (3) hearty encouragement; (4) clear directions.

II. WHAT JOSHUA COMMANDED THE PEOPLE; OR, HIS PROCLAMATION OF THE LORD'S ORDER. 1. His obedience is prompt and unquestioning. No "wherewith" is interposed; no sign asked. He does not pause or procrastinate, but "then" (ver. 10) and there, like a man of activity, he issues the order to the tribes through their officers, bidding the people at once prepare them victuals for the journey; yea, strong in faith, and full of the Holy Ghost, he announces that "within three days" they are to cross the Jordan. 2. As Joshua's obedience was prompt, so was it thorough. He will not do God's work by halves, nor go to war without all the army. III.

WHAT THE PEOPLE ANSWERED JOSHUA; OR, THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THE LORD'S ORDER. "Only be strong, and of good courage"! They indicate that Joshua had rehearsed in their ears the charge that God had given him. The key to their import is found in the clause, "thou and all this people" (ver. 2). They recognise their union with their captain. Thus their exhortation may be regarded as an echo, and an acceptance of the call to effort and endurance. Lessons: 1. There is great encouragement here for all who, like Joshua, are called to occupy posts of authority, responsibility, or difficulty. 2. The same consolation belongs to every Christian. We all have a warfare to accomplish, a Jordan to pass over, an inheritance to seek. The call of God, the promises of God, and the presence of God are our warrant.

3. A deeper lesson remains, respecting the office of Jesus. He is the Captain of the Lord's host. (*G. W. Butler, M.A.*) *Joshua successor to Moses.*—I. Every man who is doing anything worth working at is some one's successor, and in time must be succeeded by some one. Alas for the man who succeeds only to a place to occupy, and not to a work to do! Joshua was successor to a grand man in a wonderful work. 2. Every man's work is a continuation. "The workmen die, but the work goes on." 3. Every man's work is his own. It differs from that of him who went before, and of him who will come after. Moses had been trained in Pharaoh's court and among Jethro's flock; Joshua in the brickyards of Egypt and in the army of Israel. Each had been fitted for the work he was to do. And every man's work is shaped by that of his predecessor.

I. GOD GIVES MEN DEFINITE WORK TO DO. It is important that you know your vocation. God has called you to His likeness and His service; to be as Christ was in the world, with His mind in you and His work upon your hands; to manifest the Father to men, and to lead men to the Father. It is your definite work, your one great aim as Christians, as God's children, whether you accept it or not—your only worthy aim. II. A DEFINITE WORK DEMANDS AN EQUALLY DEFINITE LAW. If the work be given, the law for its prosecution must be given also from the same source. God has been good to His people in perpetuating for them the written Word, enlarged and modified for their changing conditions. The object-lessons, which were needed in the childhood of the race, gave way to the precepts which might better guide its youth; and these in turn yielded to the statement of the great principles of all right feeling and conduct, with the declaration of which the canon is closed, and which need no addition, because they are adaptable to every variety of condition and culture.

III. A DIVINE HELPER. When the Lord gives a man a work to do which is beyond his power, He always promises the needed aid. "Go over this Jordan, and divide this land among My people," says the Lord; but God says also, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." But, beside the promise of a Divine Helper, Joshua had both the vision of His person and the experience of His aid. We, too, may listen, and hear the promise coupled with the command. We also may look up and see, not in vision, but in the mirror of His Word, the Captain of our salvation, the Lord of war and righteousness, armed for our defence, at hand for our deliverance. No life is worth the living unless it gets before itself a work worthy to be done. No life can do a worthy work save as

it recognises the Divine law, and avails itself of the Divine Helper. With these three outward conditions of his success, there needed one quality on Joshua's part to make it sure, and that was—IV. A BRAVE HEART. But the courage came from his confidence in the Divine mission, the Divine law, and the Divine Helper. So, too, may it be for us all. If we know that the Lord our God is with us, we shall not be afraid nor dismayed; but we too shall be prospered, and shall have good success. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *The commission of Joshua*:—I. THE DIVINE COMMISSION IS GIVEN TO MEN WHO ARE PECULIARLY FITTED FOR THE WORK. In one respect all men are weak; but in their weakness they must not be weaklings. God can use all men; but He never calls one to a burden that is beyond his ability to carry. Man must become worthy or willing before God will commission him to any work. God cannot make much of any man who does not make much of himself. We too often speak as if God gives man his character; it is all wrong. By Divine help every man makes himself and develops his own powers, for the exercise or misuse of which he alone is responsible. It is every man's privilege to be worthy of receiving the Divine call. II. THE SOURCE OF ALL STRENGTH IS GOD. 1. God wants strong men. There is no strength without symmetry. Samson's strength was counterbalanced by his moral weakness. Benedict Arnold ranked among the nation's heroes at Ticonderoga, but the lurking perfidy of his heart betrayed the traitor at last. The intellectual brilliancy of an Aaron Burr could not raise him to any greatness so long as his moral nature was corrupt. Washington was as great a power in national affairs on account of his moral nature as from his civic deeds; so of Lincoln and Grant. 2. All strength springs from within. You cannot make any man stronger than he is. Place him in favouring circumstances, but these cannot control him, except as they mark his weakness. You may bolster men, but this gives no manhood; may extol them above their deserts, but all the puffs of adulation make them no stronger. The whole world cannot make any man to be worth more than he is in himself. This strength is possible to all. Take away bodily fear, or timidity as to others' opinions, and every man can be strong. There is no sight more sublime than man enduring the flames that scorch him in the path of duty; mightier than the mighty rebukes of millions as he walks alone; undismayed, as Christlike he stands with some repentant child of sin, for Christ's sake. The "image of God" can surpass in sublimity and divinity all else the world has ever seen, because the measure of the obstacles he overcomes marks the heroism of his own soul. 3. God promises help in thus gaining strength. What power in the words: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee," &c. Stronger yet the promise: "The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." There is no strength without God. Power comes only when the watchword is "Immanuel." "I can do all things," &c. There is no truly great man who is ungodly. It takes a great hope to give great courage. III. THEY WHOSE STRENGTH IS IN GOD ARE INVINCIBLE. There is no such bulwark as the truth; no such power as comes from the consciousness of doing right. There is no such strength as the man possesses whose conscience is clear. One such man can chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. It is not necessary for men with truth on their side to take up the world's methods in their plans and plottings. Men in whom God dwells are as truly unharmed by evil as they are by the storms that can do no more than wet their cheeks. The world cannot crush God's children; it can crown with thorns, but it cannot, with all its might, cast off from memory the crown of the just. It can build bonfires, make dungeons, and sharpen sabres, but it cannot weaken the joys that count all these only as symbols of their swift entrance upon a better life. IV. THE BOUNDS OF ALL SUCCESSFUL SERVICE ARE IN THE WRITTEN WORD. So far as history has a voice, God has never left Himself without a witness of His truth. Sinai's law was but the expression of principles long before partially known. Twice in the record of this commission of Joshua the condition of prosperity is given as obedience "to all the law" made known through Moses: "Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left," &c. It was this same law that should never depart out of his mouth; day and night he should meditate upon its precepts, and watch closely "to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous," &c. The truth of this grand principle has been stamped upon the world wherever civilisation has gained a hold. (*David O. Mears.*) *Taking possession of our inheritance*:—I. TAKE A SURVEY OF THE INHERITANCE. 1. I would say of this inheritance which God has prepared for His saints, and has

given to them by a covenant of salt, that it is exceeding broad. All that we can think or desire is ours in the covenant of grace. There are immeasurable breadths and lengths, but we confine ourselves to close quarters. Truly "there is very much land yet to be possessed"! Some graces you must have, or you are not saved; some sins must at once be driven out of your life at the sword's point, or you are not the Lord's. As for the choicer graces, you are foolish indeed if you think of doing without them; and as for the less violent sins, you err greatly if you spare one of them. 2. This heritage is exceedingly desirable. When sin is driven out, and we come to live in God's own land, then we find precious treasure; we dig, and we are enriched. We have all things in Christ; yea, in Him we have all that our utmost want can require. 3. This heritage, upon which we are now looking down from the summit of our faith, is full of variety. Here are Hermons of experience, Tabors of communion, Jabboks of prevailing prayer, and Cheriths of Divine providence. The revelation of God is a blessed country, full of all manner of delights. They that live in Christ dwell in spiritual realms, which for light and joy are as heaven below. Above all things, it is "Thy land, O Immanuel"! II. GLANCE AT THE TITLE DEEDS OF OUR INHERITANCE. I would not mind exhibiting our title before the whole bench of judges, for it has no flaw in it, and will stand in the highest court. 1. First, notice its covenant character: "I have given it to you." You will find the full conveyance in Gen. xv. 18-21. Each believer may say, "He hath in Christ Jesus made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; and therefore do I possess all spiritual blessings, and shall possess them world without end." 2. Observe, next, that this deed of gift is notable for its graciousness. How does it run? Which I do "sell" to them? Ah, no! It is no sale, but a free gift. 3. Note well the righteousness of our title: "Which I do give to them." The Lord God has a right to give what He pleases, for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein." Of His own has He given unto us. In the great sacrifice of His dear Son He has satisfied all claims of justice, and He acts justly when He blesses largely those for whom Jesus died. 4. Do not fail to see its sureness: "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." "I do give," saith He, and thus He stands to His act and deed. Oh, children of God, what do you think of your title-deeds? You stand possessed of your kingdom by the gift of Him who has a right to give what He pleases. The kingdom is given you because it is your Father's good pleasure to give it to you. Not only was it His good pleasure, but it remains so. What great simpletons we are if we do not take possession of the brave country which is ceded to us! III. LET US MAKE A MOVE TOWARDS OUR POSSESSIONS. There is your land, but Jordan rolls between. 1. The first thing to do in this matter is to go over this Jordan. Come out from the world, and be separate. The land of gracious experience is meant for you to dwell in, so that you may be recognised as the Lord's peculiar people, separated unto the Most High. Oh, for that decisive step by which, like Abraham, you come out from your father's house that you may be a sojourner with God in the land which His grace will show you! 2. Having decided for the Lord, you are next to take possession by an act of simple faith. Every place in the grace country upon which the sole of your foot shall tread is yours. You will remember that the Red Indians agreed to sell to William Penn as much land as a man could walk round in a day; and I do not wonder that at the end of the day they complained that the white brother had made a big walk. I think I should have put my best leg foremost if whatever I could put my foot upon would be mine; would not you? Why, then, do you not hurry up in spiritual matters? Do you value earthly things more than spiritual? Mark, then, that if you put your foot down upon a blessing, and say, "This is mine," it is yours. What a very simple operation is the claim of faith! (C. H. Spurgeon.) **Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.**—*The commission for the conquest*.—I. IT WAS DIVINE. It is important to bear this in mind, otherwise we shall misunderstand not only the whole teaching of this book, but the whole history of Israel as a nation. "Deus vult" is written on every page, however stained with blood. Joshua was no bandit or freebooter, eager for plunder; no Alexander or Napoleon, consumed by the lust of power and the greed of empire. He was simply a servant, carrying out the commands of a superior. And in truth there was a Divine necessity for this commission. If the Divine purposes are to be carried out, if He is to keep His place as the Judge of all the earth, some such commission was a necessity. Is there anything analogous to this in the spiritual sphere? There is. God does not

in these days call the Christian to any war such as that to which He called Joshua ; yet there is a holy war, a glorious crusade, in which He would have us all warriors. Before every one of us He places a double battlefield. There is an outer fight, and the field of battle is the whole world, according to the gospel commission, "Go ye into all the world," &c. There is also an inner fight, and the field of battle is the heart, according to that holy exhortation which urges us to bring every thought into subjection to the Lord Jesus. III. IT WAS CLEAR IN ITS TERMS. No doubt could arise in the mind of Joshua as to what God desired him to do. "Arise"! The wilderness journey is at an end; the time to take possession has come. Arise from these weary disciplinary wanderings to high and heroic achievements. Even so our commission as Christians for our twofold fight is clear as day, and as emphatic as the Divine lips could make it. Therefore the removal of every valiant soldier of the Cross should be a mighty stimulus to those left behind. We best revere the memory of the good and great who have passed away by giving all diligence to the work which was so dear to them. III. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO CARRY OUT. "Go over this Jordan." Joshua is here put in as great extremity as was Moses at the Red Sea. Aye, and the crossing of the Jordan is only the first great difficulty among many. Often, in like manner, obedience to the gospel commission implies the facing of difficulties which to the eye of sense are insuperable. The fight of faith is never easy. IV. IT WAS TERRIBLE IN ITS CONSEQUENCES. When we think of its bearing on these Canaanites, we can conceive nothing more appalling. These nations were like the grass of the field, and Israel was God's scythe to cut them down. What a contrast to all this have we in the commission of the gospel and the present work of the Lord Jesus. When on earth He said, "I came not to destroy men's lives but to save them," and the work He has given His followers now to do is a work of salvation. Surely, then, we should be all the more eager to carry it out. V. IT WAS ALSO RIGHTEOUS. In this case nothing was done in undue haste. The Divine patience that had borne with these evil tenants for four hundred years was marvellous; and they grew worse and worse all the time. The gracious pause of forty years, after He had made bare His mighty arm before all flesh, by the wonders done in Zoan's field, and proclaimed that the time had come when He was to give this land to Israel, should have won submission. If now they resist His action, it is at their peril. If the war in which Joshua was engaged was righteous, how holy is that war by which righteousness and peace, joy and goodwill, are multiplied on the earth. The man who consecrates all his faculties to the downfall of evil, first within and then without, whose life is one long struggle against spiritual wickedness, acts according to the principles of eternal rectitude. VI. IT WAS BENEFICIAL IN ITS RESULTS. He who reads history cannot fail to see that impure and enfeebled races and nations have been the prey of those who have been comparatively pure and strong; and thus, by conquest, take it all in all, civilisation has been advanced, and the state of the race as a whole ameliorated. Better a bad limb be cut off than the whole body mortify. Such national surgery may be terrible, but it is beneficial. In like manner, by unflinching valour in the fight of faith, the children of God become the world's best benefactors. In conquering evil within and without, we not only do good to ourselves but to the whole human race. "Ye are the salt of the earth." Without this preserving salt of Christlike souls how soon would the carcase become corrupt and the eagles of judgment alight. VII. IT HAD ALSO A WIDE REFERENCE AND A NARROW APPLICATION. It spoke of the country which stretched "from the wilderness and this Lebanon." Thus the inheritance of Israel embraced a territory of great richness, beauty, variety, and compactness. Yet while Joshua's commission embraced the whole land, the land became the possession of Israel only as it was subdued acre by acre. These ancient warriors had not only to take the title-deeds, but also to enter into possession. To do the first was easy; to do the second was hard. Even so is it with the Christian. He has indeed a goodly heritage—a whole heaven of spiritual blessedness. "All things are yours." "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." But we cannot enjoy one of these blessings apart from the conflict of faith. (*A. B. Mackay.*) *Ownership and possession*:—Here is a great promise with a sharp limitation: "Every place is yours—but every place only as you tread upon it, occupy, subdue, possess it." A most instructive parallel might be drawn between the subjugation of Palestine by Israel and the settlement of America by the English. In both cases tyranny at home had much to do with the movement, for the Stuarts of England and the Pharaohs of Egypt held essentially the same views of royal prerogative. In both cases the country was

already occupied by aborigines, and the free, wild life of the Jebusites and the Amorites was not unlike that of the Iroquois and Sioux Indians. In both cases the land was parcelled out before it was actually possessed. In both cases possession was achieved only through long and obstinate struggle with an enemy continually defeated, but stubbornly refusing to submit. According to the royal grants, Massachusetts and Virginia reached through to the Pacific Ocean. It required five minutes to draw the long parallels on the royal map; it needed two centuries actually to push civilisation across the continent, and the work is not yet finished. Ownership comes before possession, and is useless without it. The Divine giving is always done along this line. In dealing with the fields and the forests, God pours out sunshine and rain unasked, and the earth can only lie helpless, now flooded and now parched with heat. But in dealing with men made in His image, God's giving is a far finer and more subtle process. There is in it a wondrous delicacy that seems to fear refusal, that is busied chiefly with finding a place in which the gift is wanted. He gives us the title-deed, the motive-power, the strength, the gladness, and then says, "Enter and possess." We are all familiar with this in the intellectual realm. You put into your son's hand a *Virgil* or a *Shakespeare*. "Now," you say, "he has the works of *Shakespeare*, or *Virgil*." Has that?—he has the possibility, the opportunity! It is a great thing to have that; thousands have remained ignorant for want of that. But when you possess an author, the book in the hand will be only a subordinate affair. You will know the man himself; lines will flash out upon you at your toil, great sweet thoughts will recur in dreams, passages will intertwine with all your daily task, and when you possess *Shakespeare*, he will possess you. You give your son teachers and schools—there your power stops. You seat your daughter at the piano, but for musical power, culture, achievement—she must enter into and possess these, or she will for ever stand outside. You buy a home. The papers are signed, the deed is recorded; instantaneously the house is yours. But then comes the process of moving into it. Every season you move a little further in; through days of birth and bridal when the joy bells ring, through days of grief when all the bells are muffled, you are growing into that house, and when men ask, "Why don't you move up town?" you say, "My heart is here; this place I love." So *Jesus Christ* comes to a man at the entrance of Christian life, and puts him into ownership. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." He bestows upon us the title-deeds unencumbered. He spreads before us a great territory, and says, "That is yours." Forgiveness for sins that are past, an inner quietness which naught can ruffle, a balm for life's hurts and bruises, a daily strength for daily needs, a courage that rises with obstacles and never knows defeat, all this is ours—if we will make it ours. Ours to possess, to enjoy, to experience. There is an old-fashioned phrase that had a deal of truth in it—"experiencing religion." A man has just as much religion as he has experienced; only when talking of our experience let us not go back twenty years—let us review the last twenty-four hours. How was it with me last evening? Was God last night in my soul, was I filled with serenity and courage and devotion to other souls, not twenty years ago, but last night? Our Bible is no larger than our reading of the Bible. Some men have a Bible consisting of a few Psalms and half a dozen chapters in the Gospels. Others have a Bible that is a patchwork of half-remembered texts, put together in childhood and now badly faded. A man with a rich, deep Christian experience cannot be content with a few threadbare chapters, he is ever reaching into new territory. So it is with the various great truths of the Christian religion—all are ours, but ours only as we possess them. The true use of a creed is not to set forth what men must believe, but to record what men do believe. And the man who is growing will find his creed growing too, growing indeed more simple, but growing stronger, and deeper, and broader. A grown man with a child's religion is like a man trying to content himself with nursery toys—he is soon disgusted with his attempt. But when a man is constantly moving onward, then one truth after another will reveal its inner meaning to his soul. We cannot expect that all truths will be equally precious in any one day. There is a rotation of crops in the spiritual life, and everything is "beautiful in his time." There is always one truth that shines brightest, as there is always one star on the meridian. Other stars will follow and culminate in their season. I think often with a strange awe of the first settlers of the Atlantic States, as they came across the sea, bearing the maps which gave them rights extending to the Pacific. This is just the conditions of some of us to-day. The boundless possibilities of Christianity lie before us

Jesus Christ comes to us saying, "It is all yours—a Christian life, a Christian death, a Christian heaven, it is yours if you will take it." And if we do not by voluntary act enter into what He offers, then the offer is to us absolutely worthless. The truth heard Sunday after Sunday is then only a genuine damage, making the heart each week less sensitive, less responsive—"it hardens all within and petrifies the feeling." But let us return to the text again. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon"—surely there is a hint here of the slow and toilsome process of spiritual acquisition. I do not hold out before any man a Christian life that is free from effort. Christianity at sight is always a delusion. At sight of Jesus we are indeed ushered into new relation and position. But then comes the path, sometimes winding through the shadow, sometimes leading straight uphill, always leading heavenward and always bright with an unseen Friend. So it is with the entire advance of the Church of Jesus Christ. Sometimes when we are impatient and fretful let us remember that here, too, walking is the normal movement. Why God doesn't convert India to-day is to us a mystery. That great movements should pace so slowly, and the advance be so measured and unequal, seems to us incomprehensible. One other suggestion is here—a hint that the farther a man travels the richer he becomes. Mountain range or lowly valley, forest or verdant meadow, whatsoever experience of God's love and grace we pass through, that is ours for ever. We learn more of man's weakness but more of God's power, and the more we truly know the gladder shall we really be. New experiences are to be ours, and the best is yet to come. (*W. H. P. Faunce.*)

Foothold:—There are many curious legends regarding the way in which land grants were given in former times. We read of one man who got from his king as much land as he could ride round while the king slept; of another who was granted as much land as could be covered by a bull's hide, which he cut into a continuous narrow strip, capable of enclosing a large area; of a third who was promised as much land as a bushel of barley would sow, which he was careful to sow as sparsely as possible, so that it might extend the borders of his farm to the utmost limits. At an annual fair, held in August, at the village of Carnwath, in Scotland, a foot-race is run as the tenure by which the property in the neighbourhood is held by the Lockhart family. The prize is a pair of red hose or stockings, and the proprietor used to have a messenger ready whenever the race was run to tell the result to the Lord Advocate of Scotland. In conformity with these ancient methods of land-measuring, God promised to Moses first, and renewed His promise to Joshua after the death of Moses, that He would give the Israelites every place that the sole of their foot should tread upon. It was a primitive custom to measure out the land that was to be cultivated or built upon by the foot; and a foot is still one of the terms of measurement among us derived from the human member. By primitive people the footprint was regarded as the symbol of possession, denoting that the land had been marked out by the foot of the individual, and so acquired as his own property. Some scholars derive the origin of the word "possession" itself from *pedis positio*, the position of the foot; and it was a maxim of the ancient jurists that whatever a person's foot touched was his. On the tombs of the ancient Romans, Christians and pagans alike, is often sculptured the symbol of a foot, to indicate that these tombs were the property of the persons who reposed in them. This primitive ceremony will also explain the allusion in Psalm cviii., where God speaks of dividing Shechem and meting out the valley of Succoth, casting His shoe over Edom, and triumphing over Philistia, and in this way taking possession for His people of the whole land of Canaan, while the Book of Ruth informs us that taking off the shoe from the foot signified the transfer or renunciation of property or of rights. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

Something to be done to gain possession:—In all primitive methods of allotting land—strange as some of them may appear to the modern legal mind—there was something to be done by the possessor himself in order to get possession. His tenure was made valid only by some personal act in connection with the property. He could not own a tract of land which he had not seen, as you might do in Australia, or New Zealand, or in the backwoods of America, although you were never there. It was necessary, in order that the land should become his, that he should do something in connection with it which implied a personal appropriation on the spot. This is the true significance of the curious antique rites by which persons got possession of land. They measured it with their feet, not only in marking it off, but also by passing frequently to and fro over its surface in ploughing and sowing, and all the other labours required for its cultivation, and thus literally obtained a foothold in it.

And the same principle holds good still, although these quaint archaic customs have long been discontinued. As regards the new lands in the colonies bestowed upon emigrants by Government, it is absolutely necessary that the persons to whom they are allotted should cultivate the ground and erect buildings on it in order to secure their right of possession. They cannot hold their lands merely upon paper, without ever coming near them, or doing anything to reclaim them from the wilderness. It is thus a universally recognised principle that the right of ownership of the earth is acquired by human labour, man bringing himself in some form or other into direct personal contact with the soil. This is the ultimate ground of ownership to which all can appeal. God gave Abraham the promise of possessing the Holy Land, but Abraham did not get the fulfilment of that promise by remaining in Ur of the Chaldees. He had to leave his home, journey over the wide intervening desert, and traverse on foot the land of promise from end to end. God intended the Israelites to measure out with their feet, and so take possession, according to immemorial custom, of the whole region from Lebanon to the desert, and from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates. But they stayed their feet, and actually measured only a little strip of land, which was parcelled out among the twelve tribes; while the Canaanites, the Philistines, and the Syrians, and all the desert tribes, were allowed, by the easy terms which the Israelites made with them, to possess in peace by far the largest part of the heritage of the chosen people. Even in the palmiest days of David and Solomon, when the possessions of the Israelites were most extensive, they never reached the limits which God had intended for them. The great lesson, then, which the text conveys to us is that the Israelites owned only as much of the land of promise as they actually trod with the sole of their foot. They had a large promise, but it was to be made good by their own exertions. It is God's law, true of your spiritual inheritance as of the ancient literal inheritance of Israel, that only as much as you measure out with the sole of your foot is truly your own. You have the Bible, and you think you know it well; and yet of this vast religious literature you only really know a mere fragment. You confine your reading to your favourite passages, while you leave the rest unstudied; and yet it is in these neglected parts that new truth is most often to be found. Then you have the privileges and blessings of grace! They are great and extensive, but they are conditioned by the same law that only what you live up to, appropriate, and realise of them is your own. God's superabounding grace is limited by the bounds you yourselves put upon it. If you are made straitly, God's blessing must needs straiten to you. Your salvation is just as much as, and no more than, you yourselves experience of it. Christ says to you in every case, "According to your faith be it unto you." Then there is your own individual Christian life. What a vast, unclaimed, untrodden land of promise it is! You have each a boundless capacity; "you are made to seek, to long for the infinite truth, the infinite good, the infinite love." How little have the greatest saints been able to fill up the grand outline which God sketched out at first when He made man in His own image! How far short have you all come of God's design for you, and even of your own ideal! You have contracted the bounds of your being and the bounds of your world to the smallest dimensions by your devotion to the petty and passing things of earth. And then there is the heavenly Canaan, the true land of promise, towards which you profess to be walking day by day as pilgrims and strangers on earth. God has given it to all His true Israel; but they shall only possess as much of it as they shall tread with the sole of their foot. You will only get as much of heaven as you are fit for; and in the case of many I fear that will be but a very small bit. (*Ibid.*)

All the land of the Hittites.—*The land of the Hittites*:—One geographical expression, in the delimitation of the country, demands a brief explanation. While the country is defined as embracing the whole territory from Lebanon to the Euphrates, it is also defined as consisting in that direction of "all the land of the Hittites." But were not the Hittites one of the seven nations whose land was promised to Abraham and the fathers, and not even the first in the enumeration of these? Why should this great north-eastern section of the promised domain be designated "the land of the Hittites"? The time was when it was a charge against the accuracy of the Scripture record that it ascribed to the Hittites this extensive dominion. That time has passed away, inasmuch as, within quite recent years, the discovery has been made that in those distant times a great Hittite empire did exist in the very region specified, between Lebanon and the Euphrates. The discovery is based on twofold data: references in the Egyptian and other monuments to a powerful people, called the Khita

(Hittites), with whom even the great kings of Egypt had long and bloody wars; and inscriptions in the Hittite language found in Hamah, Aleppo, and other places in Syria. There is still much obscurity resting on the history of this people. That the Hittites proper prevailed so extensively has been doubted by some; a Hittite confederacy has been supposed, and sometimes a Hittite aristocracy exercising control over a great empire. The only point which it is necessary to dwell on here is, that in representing the tract between Lebanon and Euphrates as equivalent to "all the land of the Hittites," the author of the Book of Joshua made a statement which has been abundantly verified by recent research. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) **There shall not any man be able to stand before thee.**—*Joshua on the march*:—"There shall not any man be able," &c. "Well," you say, "it does not require any great courage to go out with a backing like that." I reply, God promised Joshua no more than He promises you and me in our conflicts. The framer of the universe, the chieftain of all eternity, has pledged all His resources to see us through, and He promised no more than that to Joshua. His first undertaking was to cross the river Jordan in a spring freshet. You might as well talk of wading across the Hudson river at Yonken as to think of wading the river Jordan at the season of which I am speaking. The Canaanites on the other side felt perfectly secure. But one day Joshua orders out his troops, and tells them to fall into line. "Forward: march!" They pass on towards the river, and it seems as if the light armed troops, and the spearmen, and the archers, and all their leaders, must be swept down in the fearful flood. Let them prepare, you say, for a watery grave. March on. Come to the other bank. They reach the bank, and they pull themselves up its steep, thirty or forty feet in height—they pull themselves up the bank by the oleanders, and the tamarisks, and the willows, until they reach the top. No sooner have they climbed up this high bank than with dash, and roar, and terrific rush, the waters of the Jordan break loose from their strange anchorage. God never makes any provision for the Christian's retreat. He clears the path to Canaan if we go ahead; if we go back, we die. Victory ahead! Darkness, flood, ruin, and death behind! You say: "Why didn't those Canaanites destroy Joshua and his troops while they had a chance? Here they were, on a bank thirty or forty feet high. There were the Israelites under Joshua down in the bed of the stream. Why didn't the Canaanites fight back these invaders?" The promise had been given, and the Lord God keeps His promise. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." But we cannot stop here. It is no place for Joshua's troops to stay. What is that in the distance? At the end of a grove of palms eight miles long is the chief city Jericho, the great metropolis. Take it Joshua must. "Take it Joshua can't," say the unbelievers. Joshua rises up to his full stature, and he gives the command. He feels the right moment has come, and he says: "Shout! for the Lord hath given you the city," and the command is heard, and the people all together cry: "Down, Jericho! down, Jericho!" and that long line of solid masonry begins to quiver, and then crash go the walls, the temples, the palaces, until the earth quakes, and the heavens are blackened with the dust, and the shriek of the crushed city and the huzza of the victorious Israelites commingle. This is no place to stop. "Forward: march!" There is a city of Ai to be taken. "Oh!" says a scouting party just come back from that city, "you can take that very easily. Joshua, you need not go; you stay, and a few of us will go and take that city." They started out in pompous order to take the city of Ai. The men of Ai came out and gave one yell, and away ran the Israelites like reindeer. Our northern troops, at Bull Run, made slow time compared with those Israelites with the men of Ai after them. We have no right to go into the Lord's conflict having only half our force. Body, mind, soul, reputation, property—everything—must be marshalled, equipped, launched for God, and against our enemies. And soon the retreating army come up. They say: "Oh! general, we are all cut to pieces. Those men of Ai are awful people. We are all cut to pieces." Joshua falls down on his face in chagrin. But how did God arouse Joshua? Did He address him in some complimentary apostrophe? No. He says: "Get thee up. Why liest thou thus on thy face?" Joshua arose, I suppose, looking mortified; but his old courage came back again. He marshals all the Israelites, and he says: "We will go up *en masse*, and we will take the city of Ai." And as I see the smoke of the burning city curling in the sky, and as I hear the groans of the defeated men of Ai, and the victorious shout of the Israelites, Joshua hears something better than that: "There shall not any man

be able," &c. Joshua's troops cannot stop yet. "Forward: march!" says Joshua; for there is the city of Gibeon; it has put itself under the wing of Joshua's protection, and Joshua must defend it. Joshua makes a three days' march in one night. Prepare now to see the Gettysburgh, the Waterloo, the Sedan of the ancients. It is not yet quite sundown in Joshua's day, and we will have time for five royal funerals. Who will preach their funeral sermon? Massillon preached the funeral sermon of Louis XIX. Dr. Robert South preached a sermon commemorative of Charles I. Who will preach the funeral sermon of these five bad kings? Joshua. And what shall be his text? "There shall not any man be able," &c. "Oh," you say, "it is a pity to bury these five kings so ignominiously." No, sir; before that rock is sealed up I want to put in five more beings, first having them beheaded—King Alcohol, King Fraud, King Lust, King Superstition, King Bigotry. Have them all in. Cover them over with a mound of broken decanters and the *débris* of their miserable doings. Roll a rock against that cave so they never can get out. Then chisel for these last five kings the same epitaph you had for the other five kings; and let all the Christian reformers and philanthropists, before the sun of their protracted day of usefulness is ended, come up and read it. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*)

Victory assured:—There is no foe to your growth in grace, no enemy in your Christian work, no dreaded form of evil dominating and cursing the souls of men, which was not included in your Saviour's conquests. You need not be afraid of them. When you touch them, they will flee before you. God has promised to deliver them up before you. There shall no man of them be able to stand before you. Neither Anakim nor fenced cities need daunt you. You are one of the conquering legion. Claim your share in the Saviour's victory. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.—A great promise:—I. THE IMPORT OF THE PROMISE. 1. It includes in it more than that natural and essential presence of God which surrounds all beings and all things; for the essence of God is diffused through the trackless path of immensity. 2. It refers to God's special and gracious presence. (1) Friendship; (2) observation; (3) direction; (4) protection; (5) provision. 3. A more than ordinary communication of God's presence is vouchsafed to those who are called out to services of peculiar difficulty, to offices of high responsibility. II. THE CERTAINTY OF THE FULFILMENT OF THIS PROMISE. I feel assured of its fulfilment when I reflect—1. On the Author of this promise. "I will be with thee. I will not leave thee," &c. "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the Son of man that He should repent." 2. The terms in which the promise is couched. Repetition, but no tautology. 3. Experience. Was not God with Moses? III. THE ADVANTAGES WHICH THE FULFILMENT OF THIS PROMISE WILL THROW OVER YOUR WHOLE LIFE. Oh, let but this be fulfilled, and you are safe for both worlds, for time and for eternity! Mark its influence—1. On the hours of solitude. Every real Christian will wish to be alone: he will say, "I am never less alone than when alone." 2. On your intercourse with society. Others will take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus. 3. On your conduct. Prudence; benevolence; sanctity. 4. On afflictions and distresses. If God be with us, no weapon shall prosper against us, no trap shall catch us, no pit shall ensnare us. 5. On the days of life's decline, and in the immediate prospect of its conclusion. All earthly attachments are doomed to be dissolved; but God is ever with His servants, especially when most needed. Lessons: 1. Admire the astonishing condescension and grace of God, that He should thus address Himself to worms of the earth, to sinful worms, to such as you and I are! 2. Let me ask you if you have an interest in this promise. 3. Be very thankful for any measure of the fulfilment of this promise which you may have enjoyed. (*G. Clayton, M.A.*)

God with us through life:—I. THE INTEREST WHICH GOD TAKES IN MEN'S LIVES. 1. Every event is closely observed by Him. 2. He often comes unsolicited and unthought of. Like the mother who, while attending to the duties of her household, still keeps her eye on the little one at play, that she may interpose in time of danger. II. GOD APPEALS TO HIS PAST CONDUCT TO ENCOURAGE HIS SERVANT TO TRUST IN HIM. 1. We are influenced more by the past conduct of a friend than by his promises. 2. There are degrees of manifested interest, care, and love. God was with Moses—(1) Continuously, from beginning to end. (2) Notwithstanding a variation of conduct on the part of His servant. (3) Under circumstances of great provocation. (4) As a Friend of infinite resources. (5) As an unerring Guide. (6) To uphold his position against any usurpation on the part of others. III. THE BESTOWAL OF THE BLESSINGS INCLUDED IN THIS DECLARATION WAS MADE DEPENDENT UPON JOSHUA'S OBEDIENCE. He

who will not keep God's law cannot have the presence of God with him. (*A London Clergyman.*) *A great promise* :—I. IT IS A GREAT PROMISE. For it includes everything. God's presence can supply wisdom, can give strength, and will insure success. II. IT WAS TO A GREAT MAN. 1. He was humble. 2. He was trained—had followed the Jews from Egypt. 3. He was good. Not one notorious sin or evil habit is recorded of him as there is of nearly every other noted character in Scripture. He was the only one who withstood the test of the wilderness journey. III. IT WAS IN REFERENCE TO A GREAT WORK. 1. The conquering the promised land. 2. The organising the people. 3. The vindicating the power and glory of God. (*Homilist.*) *Strengthening medicine for God's servants* :—I. THE SUITABILITY OF THE CONSOLATION WHICH THESE WORDS GAVE TO JOSHUA. "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." 1. This must have been very cheering to him in reference to himself. Joshua may possibly have been somewhat despondent under a very pressing sense of his own deficiencies; and this cheering assurance would meet his case. If God be with our weakness it waxes strong; if He be with our folly it rises into wisdom; if He be with our timidity it gathers courage. 2. The consolation given to Joshua would be exceedingly suitable in the presence of his enemies. Surely, in the presence of God, Anakim become dwarfs, strongholds become as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and chariots of iron are as thistledown upon the hillside driven before the blast. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" They that be with us are more than they that be against us, when once the Lord of hosts is seen in our ranks. 3. This consolation, too, was sufficient for all supplies. Perhaps Joshua knew that the manna was no longer to fall. "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" was a supply which would meet all the demands of the commissariat. When the Lord opens all His granaries none shall lack for bread, and when He unlocks His wardrobes none shall go bare. 4. Surely this word must often have brought consolation to the heart of Joshua when he saw the people failing him. Oh, what a blessed thing it is in a false and fickle world, where he that eats bread with us lifts up his heel against us, where the favourite counsellor becomes an Ahithophel, and turns his wisdom into crafty hate, to know that "there is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," one who is faithful and gives us sure tokens of a love which many waters cannot quench! II. AT WHAT TIMES MAY WE CONSIDER THIS PROMISE TO BE SPOKEN TO OURSELVES? 1. Surely it is when we are called to do God's work. Joshua's work was the Lord's work. Do you know that God has put you where you are, and called you to do the work to which your life is dedicated? Then go on in God's name, for, as surely as He called you to His work, you may be sure that to you also He says, as indeed to all His servants, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." 2. But I hear some of you say, "We are not engaged in work of such a kind that we could precisely call it 'work for God.'" Well, but are you engaged in a work which you endeavour to perform to God's glory? Is your ordinary trade one which is lawful—one concerning which you have no doubt as to its honest propriety; and in carrying it on do you follow right principles only? 3. We must, if we are to have this promise, take God into our calculations. A great many persons go about their supposed lifework without thinking about God. You must walk by faith if you are to enjoy the privileges of the faithful. 4. We must also be careful that we walk in God's ways. Observe that the next verse to the text runs thus, "Be strong and of a good courage," and then the seventh verse is a singular one, "Only be thou strong," &c. What for? To obey! Does it want courage and strength to obey? Why, nowadays, that man is thought to be courageous who will have no laws of God to bind him; and he is thought to be strong-minded who ridicules revelation. But let us rest assured that he is truly strong of mind and heart who is content to be thought a fool, and sticks to the good old truth, and keeps the good old way. III. WHAT THIS PROMISE DOES NOT PRECLUDE. 1. This promise does not exclude effort. If you want to succeed, use every faculty you have, and put forth all your strength; and if it is a right cause you may then fall back on this promise. 2. Neither does this promise preclude occasional disaster. Yes, and without the violation of any law, the best man in the world must expect in the most successful enterprise that there will be some discouragements. Look at the sea: it is rolling in, it will rise to full tide before long, but every wave that comes up dies upon the shore; and after two or three great waves which seem to capture the shingle there comes a feebler one which sucks back. Very well, but the sea will win, and reach its fulness. So in every good work for God there is a back-drawing wave every now and then. God will certainly test you, but He will not fail you, nor forsake you. 3. Nor, again, does

this promise preclude frequent tribulations and testings of faith. In the autobiography of the famous Francké of Halle, who built, and, in the hand of God, provided for, the orphan-house of Halle, he says, "I thought when I committed myself and my work to God by faith, that I had only to pray when I had need, and that the supplies would come; but I found that I had sometimes to wait and pray for a long time." The supplies did come, but not at once. The pinch never went so far as absolute want; but there were intervals of severe pressure. There was nothing to spare. Every spoonful of meal had to be scraped from the bottom of the barrel, and every drop of oil that oozed out seemed as if it must be the last; but still it never did come to the last drop, and there was always just a little meal left. God has not promised to take any of you to heaven without trying your faith.

4. This promise does not preclude our suffering very greatly, and our dying, and perhaps dying a very sad and terrible death, as men judge. God never left Paul, but I have seen the spot where Paul's head was smitten off by the headsman. The Lord never left Peter, but Peter, like his Master, had to die by crucifixion. The Lord never left the martyrs, but they had to ride to heaven in chariots of fire.

IV. WHAT, THEN, DOES THE TEXT MEAN, IF WE MAY HAVE ALL THIS TRIAL HAPPENING TO US? 1. Your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Press on. We have heard of a minister who added only one to his Church through a long year of very earnest ministry—only one, a sad thing for him; but that one happened to be Robert Moffatt, and he was worth a thousand of most of us. Go on. If you bring but one to Christ, who shall estimate the value of the one? 2. And then there shall be no desertion as to yourself, for your heavenly Friend has said, "I will not forsake thee." You will not be left alone or without a helper. You are thinking of what you will do in old age. Do not think of that: think of what God will do for you in old age. Oh, but your great need and long illness will wear out your friends, you say. Perhaps you may wear out your friends, but you will not wear out your God, and He can raise up new helpers if the old ones fail. Oh, but your infirmities are many, and will soon crush you down: you cannot live long in such circumstances. Very well, then you will be in heaven; and that is far better. But you dread pining sickness. It may never come; and suppose it should come, remember what will come with it—"I will make all thy bed in thy sickness." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"—so runs the promise. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God."

V. WHY MAY WE BE QUITE SURE THAT THIS PROMISE WILL BE FULFILLED TO US? 1. I answer, first, we may be quite sure because it is God's promise. Did ever any promise of God fail to the ground yet? 2. Rest ye well assured that if a man be called to do God's work God will not fail him, because it is not after the manner of the Lord to desert His servants. He will not push His servants into severe conflicts and then fail them. 3. Besides, remember that should God's servants fail, if they are really God's servants, the enemy would exult and boast against the Lord Himself. This was a great point with Joshua in after-days (chap. vii. 9). If the Lord raises up Luther, and does not help Luther, then it is not Luther that fails; it is God that fails, in the estimation of the world. 4. Besides, if God has raised you up to accomplish a purpose by you, do you think He will be defeated? Were ever any of His designs frustrated? 5. Besides, if we trust God, and live for God, He loves us much too well to leave us. It is not to be imagined that He will ever put a load upon His own children's shoulders without giving them strength to bear the burden, or send them to labours for which He will not give them adequate resources. Oh, rest in the Lord, ye faithful. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Be strong and of a good courage.—A great promise and a stirring exhortation:—What the heathen gods are fabled to have done with some of their favourite warriors, God here and now does to this His first soldier-saint, sending him forth to the fray invulnerable, invincible. By faith in this great promise, Joshua is more than conqueror. Poor and tame in comparison is the "*Veni, vidi, vici*!" of Rome's great hero. God's presence is pledged to Joshua unconditionally and unalterably. Oh, highly favoured Joshua! Yes, and also highly favoured saints, for even with a like great and precious promise do we go a warfare against evil. In regard to both the outer and the inner conflict in which we are engaged we should always remember that we are on the winning side. The battle is the Lord's. "Forward" is the Divine command. We are not to make up our minds for defeat, but to march in the assurance of victory. "My grace is sufficient for thee." This promise gives us power as we face error of every kind. The enemies of the gospel in these days are proud and boastful. If we were to judge by their shouts, we should think that the whole fabric of Christianity was

falling to pieces. Have we anything to pit against these enemies? Most assuredly. The Divine presence, as in the case of Joshua, is pledged to be with us. This great promise given to Joshua was followed up by a stirring exhortation. Courage! this peal of bells rings out in all its changes. Why? Because Joshua was a coward? Nay, he had the heart of a lion, but because courage is the fundamental virtue in every saint of God, in every soldier of righteousness, in every witness for the truth. One of the great wants of the day is courage, courage to confess Christ in every company and on all occasions; courage to hold fast to His every word; courage to do all His will; courage to follow wherever He leads. It is called a good courage, and no virtue better deserves the epithet, for it is good whether we consider its qualities or its achievements, the throne on which it sits or the crown with which it is adorned. It is good courage because it is obedient, not self-willed, obstinate, headstrong. Again and again the greatest exploits of courage have been summed up in the words, "I must obey God." Such courage is of the highest quality. It can never quail, because conscious of eternal rectitude. It is a good courage also because it is studious and humble. Its aim being to obey all God's will, in the spirit as well as in the letter, it gives all diligence to know God's will. Accordingly, the hero of Jehovah meditates in God's law day and night; takes counsel not with flesh and blood, but with the living oracles, and finds therein all his comfort, strength, and light. This good courage, being obedient and studious, is also intelligent. It observes with watchful care the hints of Providence and the checks of conscience. It learns better every day what God's will is in all things. Remember that such courage is the great secret of success. This above all things frightens our great adversary the devil. Satan has no dread of learning, or wisdom, or riches, but he does fear the courage of a soul resting in communion with God. And well he may, for this courage arms the soul with Divine might. (*A. B. Mackay.*)

The sources of Joshua's strength:—I. A FAITHFUL PAST. The aloe blooms but once in a hundred years, but every hour of all that century is needed to produce the delicate texture and resplendent beauty of the flower. The deed of a Grace Darling is not the sudden outburst of the moment that gives it birth, but the result of long years of self-discipline, courage, and ministry to others. And this summons of Joshua to the leader's place in Israel was the guerdon of more than eighty years of faithful service. None of us can tell for what God is educating us. We fret and murmur at the narrow round and daily task of ordinary life, not realising that it is only thus that we can be prepared for the high and holy office which awaits us. We must descend before we can ascend. God's will comes to thee and me in daily circumstances, in little things equally as in great; meet them bravely; be at your best always, though the occasion be one of the very least; dignify the smallest summons by the greatness of your response; so the call will come to you as to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' minister. II. A DISTINCT CALL. The supreme inquiry for each of us, when summoned to a new work, is not whether we possess sufficient strength or qualification for it, but if we have been called to it of God; and when that is so there is no further cause for anxiety. If it is in His plan that we should march through a river, or attack a walled town, or turn to flight an army, we have simply to go forward. Rivers will dry up, walls will fall down, armies shall be scattered as snow in summer. There is no such thing as impossibility when God says, "Forward, soul, arise, go over this Jordan!" III. THE SENSE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD. There have been generals whose presence on the field of battle has been the presage and guarantee of victory. Not only have they inspired the soldiers with a sense of confidence in their leadership, but they have encouraged them by their personal prowess and bravery. There is a marvellous sense of security and courage when a Christiana, a Mr. Fearing, or a Miss Much-Afraid is assured of the presence of a Greatheart, who has never turned his back on a foe. And a lonely, trembling soul dares to step bravely across the margin of life into the unknown beyond: to go down unabashed into the chill waters of death, because it can sing, "Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." IV. THE INDWELLING OF THE WORD OF GOD. Coal contains within its texture the strength absorbed from the sun in bygone ages; so words will pass on to men the heroic thoughts which thrilled the souls of those who spake them first. There are words, as there are strains of music, which cannot be uttered without nerving men to dare and do, to attempt and achieve. A woman will be strong to wait and suffer for long years in the strength of a sentence spoken by her lover as he parted from her. An army has before now forgot sleepless nights and hungry marches in the stirring harangue of its general. And is not this what

the prophet meant, when he said, "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and Thy words were unto me a joy, and the rejoicing of my heart"? and what Jesus meant when He said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"? We can do all things when Christ is in us in unthwarted power. The only limit lies in our faith and capacity, or, in other words, in our absolute submission to His indwelling. Little children can overcome when there is within them a Stronger than their foes. Weaklings may do exploits when the Mighty Conqueror who travels in the greatness of His strength makes them the vehicle of His progress. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The strength and courage needed for common life*:—"Be thou strong and very courageous." What to do? To lead the army? To batter down strong walls and enter into the imminent, deadly breach? Nay, all this is left out of sight; the exhortation to be "strong and very courageous" is given solely with a moral application. A man shows himself more brave in an inflexible adherence to the law of God as the rule of his life in all things than in any feats of arms or deeds of daring. I. A SUFFICIENT RULE OF GUIDANCE FOR LIFE. Joshua had; we have. Our law is the whole gospel, as requiring from us a practical and loving and continuous obedience. To be "strong" is to make endeavour to go forward and grasp something in the Divine life; it is to take up a certain position in practical obedience, and say (not ostentatiously yet clearly), "I am here, I stand by this." To be "of good courage" is to maintain that position against the force of temptation and opposition of every kind; is to say firmly, "Here I shall abide, I cannot go back from this." Well, but a life that consists of gaining new positions, and grasping new things, and defending all that is thus attained, is of necessity a life of enterprise and progress. And such a life, in this world, will certainly meet with a great deal of opposition, silent and declared, and will require a great deal of strength and courage in those who seek to lead it. 1. Indeed, we might truly say that strength and courage are needed at home, and with ourselves, before we meet the world at all. The critical point of the struggle is within. Let me be strong, then, against my inferior self! Let me grip him hard, and wrestle with him, until he is overthrown! Let me be very courageous against his withering and insidious suggestions. 2. Then also, strength and courage are needed constantly and much in the Church, *i.e.*, among Christian people. One Christian needs to be strong against other Christians—in this way as well as in others—that every Christian has his own inner thought of what he ought to be and do; his own ideal, as we call it. 3. Then still more is courage needed, and strength, when you go more fully out into the world. Here are certain principles in the law of Christ, as the regulative system of a Christian's life, principles of honour and honesty, of purity, sobriety, love, and self-denial, of humility and gentleness, which are clearly different from the principles that obtain in the world generally. Not that contrary principles are professed openly in the world except by a few; but that contrary, or at any rate far inferior, principles are acted upon, through the world, in its different spheres, commercial, political, literary, social, is just as certain as it is that there is a world at all. One great point of duty with Christians just now, I think, ought to be the endeavour to live simple lives, so as, if possible, to pull back this drifting society of ours towards the simplicity it has lost. 4. Again, it is sometimes necessary to speak frankly and boldly in condemnation of the action or in opposition to the speaking of others. II. HOW WE MAY ATTAIN THIS TEMPER AND HABIT OF CHRISTIAN COURAGE. It is fed by truth, by the law, or the revealed truth of God. What men call "spirit," the mere dash and effervescence of nature, will soon evaporate; but when the soul has found the flowing fountains of strength, and drinks of the same day by day, her courage will be day by day renewed. Again, not only must we take the Word of God into our daily thought and meditation, but believing the wonderful assurance it gives us of the actual presence of the speaker, the Lord, with those who serve Him, we must make room for Him in our daily life, and lean upon the almighty arm, and even in the darkest and most unsuccessful moments sit silent to hear the great reviving words, "The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The charge to the soldier of the Lord*:—1. THE DUTY OF COURAGEOUS STRENGTH. Christianity has altered the perspective of human virtues, has thrown the gentler ones into prominence altogether unknown before, and has dimmed the brilliancy of the old heroic type of character; but it has not struck those virtues out of its list. Still, there is as much need in the lowliest Christian life for the loftiest heroism as ever there was. All Christian progress is conflict, and we have to fight, not only with the evils that are within, but if we would be true to the

obligations of our profession and loyal to the commands of our Master, we have to take our part in the great campaign which He has inaugurated and is ever carrying on against every abuse and oppression, iniquity and sin, that grinds down the world and makes our brethren miserable and servile. Be strong! Then strength is a duty; then weakness is a sin. Then the amount of strength that we possess and wield is regulated by ourselves. We have our hands on the sluice. We may open it to let the whole full tide run in, or we may close it till a mere dribble reaches us. For the strength which is strength, and not merely weakness in a fever, is a strength derived. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Let Christ's strength in. Open the heart wide that it may come. Keep yourself in continual touch with God, the fountain of all power. Trust is strength, because trust touches the Rock of Ages. But courage is duty, too, as well as strength. Power and the consciousness of power do not always go together. In regard of the strength of nature, courage and might are quite separable. There may be a strong coward and a weak hero. But in the spiritual region, strength and courage do go together. The consciousness of the Divine power with us, and that alone, will make us bold with a boldness that has no taint of levity and presumption mingled with it, and never will overestimate its own strength.

II. THE DUTY OF IMPLICIT OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD OF COMMAND. Courage and strength come first, and on them follows the command to do all according to the law, to keep it without deflection to right or left, and to meditate on it day and night. These two virtues make the perfect soldier—courage and obedience. But the connection between these two is not merely that they must co-exist, but that courage and strength are needed for, and are to find their noblest field of exercise in, absolute acceptance of, and unhesitating, swift, complete, uncomplaining obedience to, everything that is discerned to be God's will and our duty. For the Christian soldier, then, God's law is his marching orders. The written Word, and especially the Incarnate Word, are our law of conduct. Christ has given us Himself, and therein has given a sufficient directory for conduct and conflict which fits close to all our needs, and will prove definite and practical enough if we honestly try to apply it. The application of Christ's law to daily life takes some courage, and is the proper field for the exercise of Christian strength. If you are not a bold Christian you will very soon get frightened out of obedience to your Master's commandments. Courage, springing from the realisation of God's helping strength, is indispensable to make any man, in any age, live out, thoroughly and consistently, the principles of the law of Jesus Christ. No man in this generation will work out a punctual obedience to what he knows to be the will of God, without finding out that all the Canaanites are not dead yet, but that there are enough of them left to make a very thorny life for the consistent follower of Jesus Christ. And not only is there courage needed for the application of the principles of conduct which God has given us, but you will never have them handy for swift application unless, in many a quiet hour of silent, solitary, patient meditation, you have become familiar with them.

III. THE SURE VICTORY OF SUCH BOLD OBEDIENCE: "thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest"; "thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success," or, as the last word might be rendered, "then shalt thou 'act wisely.'" You may not get victory from an earthly point of view, for many a man that lives strong and courageous and joyfully obeying God's law as far as he knows it, and because he loves the Lawgiver, goes through life, and finds that, as far as the world's estimate is concerned, there is nothing but failure as his portion. The success which my text means is the carrying out of conscientious convictions of God's will into practice. That is the only success that is worth talking about or looking for. The man that succeeds in obeying and translating God's will into conduct is the victor, whatever be the outward fruits of his life. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Strength and courage:—Joshua must be strong and very courageous. But are strength and courage really within our own power? Is strength not absolutely a Divine gift, and as dependent on God in its ordinary degrees as it was in the case of Samson in its highest degree? No doubt in a sense it is so; and yet the amount even of our bodily strength is not wholly beyond our own control. As bodily strength is undoubtedly weakened by careless living, by excess of eating and drinking, by all irregular habits, by the breathing of foul air, by indolence and self-indulgence of every kind, so undoubtedly it is increased and promoted by attention to the simple laws of health, by activity and exercise, by sleep and sabbatic rest, by the moderate use of wholesome food, as well as by abstinence from hurtful drinks and drugs. And surely the duty of being

strong, in so far as such things can give strength, is of far more importance than many think; for if we can thus maintain and increase our strength we shall be able to serve both God and man much better and longer than we could otherwise have done. But in Joshua's case it was no doubt strength and courage of soul that was mainly meant. Even that is not wholly independent of the ordinary conditions of the body. On the other hand, there are no doubt memorable cases where the elasticity and power of the spirit have been in the very inverse ratio to the strength of the body. By cheerful views of life and duty, natural depression has been counteracted, and the soul filled with hope and joy. "The joy of the Lord," said Nehemiah, "is the strength of His people." Fellowship with God, as our reconciled God and Father in Christ, is a source of perpetual strength. Who does not know the strengthening and animating influence of the presence even of a friend, when we find his fresh and joyous temperament playing on us in some season of depression? The radiance of his face, the cheeriness of his voice, the elasticity of his movements seem to infuse new hope and courage into the jaded soul. When he is gone we try to shake off the despondent feeling that has seized us, and gird ourselves anew for the battle of life. And if such an effect can be produced by fellowship with a fellow-creature, how much more by fellowship with the infinite God!—especially when it is His work we are trying to do, and when we have all His promises of help to rest on. "God is near thee, therefore cheer thee," is a perpetual solace and stimulus to the Christian soul. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

Christian fortitude:—1. Fortitude in bearing. 2. Fortitude in attempting or assailing. (*D. Featley, D.D.*)

God's strength made perfect in human weakness:—What! must all they whom God uses be strong? Is it essential that there should be strength of limb and muscle in the physical and moral constitution of those who are called to do the Divine biddings in the world? Because, if that be so, we who are like Ehud, left-handed, like Gideon, least in our father's house, or like Saul of Tarsus, painfully conscious of weakness, can never get beyond the rank and file in the army of the Lord. And yet, may not this reiterated appeal indicate that the heart of Joshua misgave him, and that he was conscious of his utter inadequacy to fulfil the great commission that was thrust upon him? Probably he had never dreamt of so high an honour, so vast a responsibility. When, therefore, the call came to him to assume the office which Moses was vacating, his heart failed him, and he needed every kind of encouragement and stimulus, both from God and man. "Be strong" means that he felt weak; "Be of good courage" means that he was affrighted; "Be not thou dismayed" means that he seriously considered whether he would not have to give up the task. He was a worm and no man; how should he deliver Israel? It is when men are in this condition that God approaches them with the summons to undertake vast and overwhelming responsibilities. Most of us are too strong for Him to use us, too full of our own schemes and plans and ways of doing things. He must empty us, and humble us, and bring us down to the dust of death, so low that we need every straw of encouragement, every leaf of help; and then He will raise us up, and make us as the rod of His strength. The world talks of the survival of the fittest. But God gives power to the faint, and increases might to them that have no strength; He perfects His strength in weakness, and uses things that are not to bring to nought things that are. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Courage necessary:—It is said of Cromwell that when he had gathered some raw troops, being much in doubt about their courage, he determined to put it to the test before employing them in active service. He therefore placed a number of soldiers in ambush, in a wood through which he had occasion to lead his new regiment, and when these rushed out suddenly upon the new levies all the timid among them turned and fled. These Cromwell sent to their homes as unfit for his service, and so commenced the training of the men who became known to history as his "Ironsides."

A dauntless spirit:—Pleopidas hearing that his enemy was coming to give him battle with double the number that he possessed himself, replied to his informant, "So much the better for us: we shall beat so many the more." So should the Christian view the trials and sorrows of this life; be they never so many. Through Christ they may all be overcome. (*Handbook of Illustration.*)

Unto this people shalt thou divide . . . the land.—*The right people for the land*:—First of all, the land had to be conquered; and there is no difficulty in seeing how necessary it was for one who had this task on hand to be strong and of a good courage, and to meditate on God's law. Then the land had to be divided, and the people settled in their new life, and Joshua had to initiate them, as it were, in that life; he had to bind on their consciences the conditions on which

the land was to be enjoyed, and start them in the performance of the duties, moral, social, and religious, which the Divine constitution required. Here lay the most difficult part of his task. They had not only to be planted physically in groups over the country, but they had to be married to it morally, otherwise they had no security of tenure, but were liable to summary eviction. It was no land of rest for idolaters; all depended on the character they attained: loyalty to God was the one devotion to the book of the law and success in the great work of his life—"thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." No doubt he would have the appearance of success if he simply cleared out the inhabitants who were so degraded by sin that God was compelled to sweep them off, and settled His people in their room. But that, after all, was but a small matter unless accompanied by something more. It would not secure the people from at last sharing the fate of the old inhabitants; so far at least that though they should not be exterminated, yet they would be scattered over the face of the globe. And so at all times, in dealing with human beings, we can obtain no adequate and satisfying success unless their hearts are turned to God. Your children may be great scholars, or successful merchants, or distinguished authors, or brilliant artists, or even statesmen; what does it come to if they are dead to God, and have no living fellowship with Jesus Christ? (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) Turn not . . . to the right hand or to the left.—*Joshua's obedience*:—I. OBEEDIENCE IS THE HIGHEST PRACTICAL COURAGE. The world counts obedience to be a mean-spirited thing, and speaks of rebellion as freedom. We have heard men say, "I will be my own master; I shall follow my own will." To be a free thinker and a free liver seems to be the worldling's glory. Take the world's own martial rule. Who is accounted to be the boldest and the best soldier but the man who is most thoroughly obedient to the captain's command? There is a story told of the old French wars which has been repeated hundreds of times. A sentinel is set to keep a certain position, and at nightfall, as he is pacing to and fro, the emperor himself comes by. He does not know the password. Straightway the soldier stops him. "You cannot pass," says he. "But I must pass," says the emperor. "No," replies the man, "if you were the little corporal in grey himself you should not go by," by which, of course, he meant the emperor. Thus the autocrat himself was held in check by order. The vigilant soldier was afterwards handsomely rewarded, and all the world said that he was a brave fellow. Then surely it is not a mean and sneaking thing for a man to be obedient to Him who is the Commander-in-chief of the universe, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. II. THE EXACTNESS OF OBEEDIENCE IS THE ESSENCE OF OBEEDIENCE. The world saith, "We must not be too precise." As one said to an old Puritan once, "Many people have rent their consciences in halves; could not you just make a little nick in yours?" "No," he said, "I cannot, for my conscience belongs to God." "We must live, you know," said a money-loving shopkeeper, as his excuse for doing what he could not otherwise defend. "Yes, but we must die," was the reply, "and therefore we must do no such thing." We are probably better dead if we cannot live without doing wrong. The very essence of obedience lies in exactness. Probably your child, if sometimes disobedient, would still, as a general rule, do what you told him. It would be in the little things that thoroughgoing and commendable obedience would appear. Let the world judge of this for itself. Here is an honest man. Do people say of him, "He is such an honest man that he would not steal a horse"? No, that would not prove him to be very honest; but they say, "He would not even take a pin that did not belong to him." That is the world's own description of honesty, and surely when it comes to obedience to God it ought to be the same. If I profess to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, the crucial test will not be in great actions, but in little ones. III. THE PATH OF OBEEDIENCE IS GENERALLY A MIDDLE PATH. There is sure to be a right hand, there is sure to be a left hand, and both are probably wrong. There will be extremes on either side. I believe that this is true in ten thousand things in ordinary life, and also true in spiritual things in very many respects. With regard, for instance, to our words; the course of speech generally is, on the one hand to say too much, or on the other hand to say too little; to be silent when the wicked are before us, or else to be rash with our lips and betray a good cause through our rashness in defending it. There is a time to speak, and there is a time to be silent, and he that judgeth well will mark his opportunities and take the middle course. He will neither be garrulous with advice that is not required, nor will he be cowardly and dumb when he ought to bear testimony for his Master.

The same holds good with regard to zeal. We have some abroad nowadays whose heads are very hot. They talk as if they would turn the world upside down, whilst it is their own brains that need first to be turned into a right condition. Theirs is a fire which burns down the house instead of burning in the grate and warming the household. But shall we therefore not be zealous? God forbid! There is a middle course of true, sensible, prudent zeal—adhering to the truth, and never believing that people can be converted by lies, however earnestly bawled into their ears; walking within the bounds of God's truth, and being persuaded that the best seed to sow is that which God puts into the basket of His Word, and that sinners are not to be saved by rash statements nor by extravagant declamation, but that they are brought to Christ, as they were of old, by the simple telling out of the story of the Cross affectionately, and by the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Here, again, "turn neither to the right hand nor to the left." IV. THE PATH OF RIGHT IS THE PATH OF TRUE PROSPERITY. God does not invariably make the doing of the right to be the means of pecuniary gain to us. On the contrary, it frequently happens that for a time men are great losers by their obedience to Christ. But the Scripture always speaks as to the long run; it sums up the whole of life—there it promises true riches. If thou wouldst prosper, keep close to the Word of God, and to thy conscience, and thou shalt have the best prosperity. The thief, though he takes a short way to get rich, yet takes such a dangerous way that it does not pay; but he who walks straight along the narrow road shall find it to be the shortest way to the best kind of prosperity, both in this world and in that which is to come. If not, if we get no outward prosperity here, I trust you and I, if we love Christ, and are filled with His Spirit, can do without it. Well, if we must be poor, it will soon be over, and in heaven there shall be no poverty. Let us, then, run all risks for Christ. He is no soldier who cannot die for his country; he is no Christian who cannot lose life itself for Christ. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Obedience the condition of victory*:—Yes, the Lord will be with us in our holy war, but He demands of us that we strictly follow His rules. 1. Our victories will very much depend upon our obeying Him with all our heart, throwing strength and courage into the actions of our faith. If we are half-hearted, we cannot expect more than half a blessing. 2. We must obey the Lord with care and thoughtfulness. 3. We must obey with universal readiness. We may not pick and choose, but must take all the Lord's commands as they come. 4. In all this we must go on with exactness and constancy. Ours is to be a straightforward course, which bends neither to the right nor to the left. (*Ibid.*) *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein.*—*A good working Bible*:—Rare botanical specimens are found by diligent searching. It is by earnest and prayerful study of the Bible that we discover truths that we may call our own. We have a brother who has been working in the gold mines of California for many years. He has a watch-chain that he greatly values because the gold in it is what he searched and dug out of the mountain himself by hard labour and much sacrifice. Truths discovered as the result of hard study are very precious to us. The Bible should be an every-day book to us. A very handsome and expensive Bible on the parlour stand, covered with a bric-à-brac, is of little value as compared with a good working Bible. A well-known Sunday-school worker tells of going into a house in North Wales. As he sat by a table talking with a little girl, he picked up a Bible, when she instantly said, "That's my mother's every-day Bible, sir; I'll give you the Sunday Bible if you want to read." We all need an every-day Bible, one that can be handled easily and conveniently—a Bible with every precious promise and every verse that has been especially helpful to us marked. The Jews were commanded to read the Scripture all the time, to write it upon the door-posts; to have it as frontlets between their eyes; to talk of it by the way, and teach it to their children and children's children. (*Home Messenger.*) *God's revealed will the only safe rule for all individual guidance, and the only legitimate foundation for all national law*:—I. IT IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT EVERY MAN SHOULD HAVE A SURE GUIDE FOR THE DIRECTION OF HIS STEPS. 1. If you consider the character and condition of man, the truth before us must claim universal acknowledgment. Man is the creature of God. His being, powers, and blessings are all derived from his Maker. He is therefore bound to please Him in all his ways and works. But how is this to be done? By what measure, so to speak, or after what manner, is this love to be expressed, and this obedience to be rendered? 2. If you consider man not only as the more creature of God, but as a creature endued with an immortal soul, the truth before us will be still more apparent. 3. If you consider man as a sinner

before God, exposed to all the dreadful consequences of his rebellion, and utterly without ability to help himself, the truth of this position must still more strikingly appear. 4. If you consider man as exposed to all the vicissitudes of this life—as subject to sorrow, suffering, and pain, as liable to sickness, affliction, and all the other evils incident to our present existence—the truth of this position must claim the approbation of all. 5. If you consider man in reference to death, judgment, and eternity, no voice can ever be lifted up in opposition to this truth. II. WHERE IS THIS SURE GUIDE TO BE MET WITH? 1. Is man capable of furnishing himself with such a rule? Evidently not; and that not merely as the negative applies to him as he now is, but even supposing him to be what he once was. 2. Consider the greatness and importance of the matters at stake, and it must be confessed that it would not be safe to trust in any provision coming from such a human source, even supposing it possible that it could be provided. 3. A provision of this kind, coming from any human source, would fall below the circumstances and condition in which we are placed, and therefore could never meet the exigencies of our case, nor, consequently, answer the end proposed. 4. The law, or revealed will of God, is the only safe rule for all individual guidance, as well as the only legitimate foundation for all national law. No man's ways or works can be acceptable in the sight of God who throws aside that rule and walks by the light of his own fire. III. THE BENEFIT AND ADVANTAGES OF FOLLOWING THAT RULE AND ABIDING THEREBY. 1. We shall have a sure guide for the direction of our steps. 2. We shall find everything plain before us. 3. We shall avoid the grievous mistakes and blunders into which others have fallen. 4. We shall find abundant provision for every emergency. 5. We shall be safe and prosperous here, and happy and blessed hereafter. Conclusion: 1. What an invaluable deposit are the sacred Scriptures as committed to any nation or people! 2. How widely have we departed from these sacred rules! 3. How needful it is that we should make these Holy Scriptures our constant study and daily counsellors! (*R. Shittler*.) *The Christian's law*:—"This book of the law," saith God to Joshua. And both in our text and in the verse preceding it is set forth as a rule claiming his observance and obedience, from which he may not swerve. In a peculiar sense we apply this term to the five books of Moses, and in a yet more limited one to the Decalogue. And since the New Testament contains so fully and so peculiarly the revelation of the gospel of the grace of God, and thus abounds with the language of invitation, promise, and privilege, it may seem as though to us the oracles of God had no other voice, and that the Bible is not to us the "book of the law" of God. But while we are jealous of God's grace, let us beware of a dangerous error. The Bible does propound to us a law—the very law of the two tables is unrepealed. Not the Jewish law as our code of worship or practice, not any law as the means of our justification, but the laws of Christian holiness and virtue. Our Bibles must be our lamps, our lights, our counsellors—our oracles of duty no less than of comfort. And while the Cross furnishes the motive, while the Spirit is the Teacher, the Author and Giver alike of will and power, the precepts and prohibitions of the Bible must be our guide, as the by-paths of sin and ruin present themselves on the right hand and on the left. We are not to go to this book of God for our creed or system of theology alone, but for our code of morals and practice. For the Bible is neither all doctrine, nor all promise; it has its rules, its precepts, its prohibitions. Its precepts based upon its doctrine, yoked graciously with its promises, but precepts still. You are placed from day to day amid duties and temptations. Your God, your fellow-men have many claims upon you; you stand in many and varied relationships. You are a pilgrim in a road bestrewn with pitfalls and beset with by-paths of sin and error; a soldier amid many and subtle and mighty foes, with a hard field to fight; a voyager over a stormy sea, amid shoals and rocks and quicksands. Your Bible is your guide, O pilgrim—your sword, O soldier—your chart, O seaman! What else shall preserve you even in sound doctrine in these dangerous days but that ye be "mighty in the Scriptures," and so reject another gospel, though its preachers wore the garb and semblance of angels, yea, though (were it possible) they were angels of light? Or what, in reference to your practice, shall secure you against the workings of sin's deceitfulness—against the deep devices of your arch-enemy, the tempter—against the false and unscriptural principles of the world around, the spurious morality which passes current among men—what but "this book of the law"?—this book which in its revelations is pure, unerring, truth—which in its precepts is all pure in holiness, all perfect in virtue. But draw near to it ever as remembering that you are listening to the voice of God. Bow down to its revelations therefore as unerring, to its

requirements as authoritative and supreme. (*J. C. Miller, D.D.*) *Meditation and obedience*:—Many devout Christians tell us that they find it profitable to take even a single verse and make it peculiarly the subject of their thoughts throughout each day—to make it the little vein in the mine which they more particularly work out. There can be no doubt that many of the vain and sinful thoughts which pass through our minds and grieve the devout Christian might thus be shut out were the thoughts and memory preoccupied with Divine truth. And if any particularly mourn that their thoughts, when left to themselves, are so discursive and unprofitable, that they know so little of religious meditation, it may be well for them thus to choose one verse of their daily portion and make it, so to say, the text of their day's thoughts. Let them endeavour to fix its meaning, let them follow out the train of thought to which it leads, let them pray over it in a special manner. And all this with a view more particularly to self-application. But our duty ends not here. The seaman studies his chart and has his compasses on board, not for mere scientific experiments, but that he may voyage in safety to the haven whither he would go, amid the rocks and shoals and quicksands which beset his track. We may not then imagine that all is done when our verses or chapters, our portion, however long, is again punctually gone through. There is a danger of this, as there is a danger of a mere formal lip-service in our prayers. For, as to say prayers is not necessarily to pray, so there is a reading of the Word of God with the mind and the lip only. Our hearts must be the readers, as our hearts must be the petitioners. And then throughout the day the duties here enjoined must be practised, the sins denounced forsaken and shunned, the tempers here set forth as unchristian struggled with, the promises here given lived on, the heaven here proffered sought, the Saviour and the God of whom we read glorified. (*ibid.*) *Meditation*:—When the impious King Antiochus entered the temple of Jerusalem to lay it waste, his first act was to remove the golden altar and the candlestick, which was also of gold. The devil acts in the same manner when he intends to deprive of spiritual good that soul which is the temple of the living God: he takes from it the altar—that is, fervour of mind; he removes from it the candlestick—that is, the light which makes known the eternal maxims. **Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous.**—*The prosperous way*:—God's blessing is ever upon His people, and He will ever cause that the way of His commandments shall be found the way of happiness and good. Therefore it is true that His people's way is a prosperous way, that they "have good success." The Old Testament promise is—"whatsoever thou doest it shall prosper"—the New, "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Is not such a man prospering? All may be disappointment and failure to flesh and blood, and in the estimate of sense. He may not know or see or feel his prosperity at this moment, and while "all things" are working together. But when they have worked and their end is seen, that end shall be found an end of blessing and prosperity. For in the emphatic language of the Psalm, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." His path with them may be dark, and hard, and thorny, but it is right; for their path towards Him is obedience and holiness. In what but blessedness can that path issue "which the Lord approveth"? Would ye know, then, whether God's blessing is at this moment upon your path? Is it a path in which you are guided by His Word, in which you are taking it as a lamp to your feet, as your counsellor and your delight? If so—let it be hard—it is blessed! Let it be tedious—your Father's face of love is shining full upon it. Or if at this moment some cloud is casting over it its gloomy shadow, that cloud will soon be gone, having burst in mercy upon your head. (*J. C. Miller, D.D.*) **The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.**—*God with the good*:—The Lord, whose command is universal; God, whose power is invincible; the Lord thy God, whose mercies are incomprehensible, is with thee whithersoever thou goest. If the Lord thy God be with thee, His wisdom is with thee to direct thee, His power to protect thee, His strength to support thee, His goodness to maintain thee, His bounty to reward thee, His word to encourage thee, and if thou die under His banner, His angels presently to carry thee into heaven. Where the Israelites lamentably deplore their ill success in war, they attribute it to God's absence. "Thou goest not forth," say they, "with our armies." The Lacedæmonians, being overtaken by the Persian horse and overwhelmed with great flights of arrows, did notwithstanding quietly sit still, without making any resistance at all, or defence, till the sacrifices for victory were happily ended; yea, though many were sore hurt, and some slain outright before any good sign appeared in the entrails; but as soon as their general,

Pausanias, had found good tokens of victory, and persuaded his soldiers of the Divine approbation of their war, they arose, and with excellent courage first received the charge of the barbarians, and after charged them afresh, and slew Mardonius, the Persian general, and many thousands of the rest, and got the day. If the conjectural hope of the aid and assistance of a sainted deity put such courage and resolution into the Lacedæmonians, shall not faith in the true God and confidence in His help breed better blood, and infuse nobler spirits into the hearts of God's warriors and Christian soldiers? God can save His, and overcome the enemy as well with small forces as with great, but all the forces in the world without Him have no force at all. (*D. Featley, D.D.*) *An inspiring presence*:—When Napoleon first started to fight our country and Austria, do you know what our soldiers called him? It was "Wee One-hundred-thousand-men." That was a fine name. It was a grand testimony to the power of the little Napoleon in the midst of his army. They asked one another, "Is 'Wee One-hundred-thousand-men' in the army to-day?" He was worth that number of men. Please tell me at what figure you rate the Son of God. Is He in the battle to-day? (*J. Robertson.*) *The presence of the Master*:—Bacon has well said, that a dog is brave and generous when he believes himself backed by his master, but timid and crouching, especially in a strange place, when he is alone and his master away; and a human master, says the philosopher, is as a dog to the dog.

Vers. 10, 11. **Within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan.**—*Three days' pause*:—I. WHAT THIS PAUSE MEANT. "Three days" is a recognised period in Scripture for death and resurrection. But there was another and deeper reason for the delay, which closely touches one of the greatest principles of the inner life. When Israel reached its banks, the Jordan was in flood, and overflowing the low-lying lands on either side of its bed. Across the river stood Jericho, embosomed in palms and tamarisks, in a very paradise of exquisite vegetation, its aromatic shrubs and gardens scenting the air. But as the people beheld it, all their cherished hopes of taking it by their own energy or courage must have been utterly dissipated. What could they do in face of that broad expanse of rushing, foaming, turbulent waters? Multitudes have come to the brink of that river, and have been left there, waiting on its banks, that they might consider the meaning of those impassable waters, and carry away the sentence of death in themselves. Abraham waited there for more than twenty years face to face with the apparent impossibility of ever having a son. David waited there for almost as long, and it must have seemed that the kingdom foretold to him as a youth lay on the other side of insurmountable difficulties. Many a saint since then has been brought down to these same banks, and has stood to witness these flowing streams. What though the promise of God has offered all manner of blessedness and delight! That river! That flooded, fordless, bridgeless, boatless river! Are you there now? Do not hasten from it. Stand still and consider it until the energy and impetuosity of your self-life lies down. You can never reach the blessed life by resolutions, or pledges, or forms of covenant; your good self is as powerless now as your bad self was formerly; you must learn that your strength is to sit still, and that the rich blessings of God stored in Christ for you are an absolute gift to be received by the outstretched hand of faith. II. HOW THIS PAUSE WAS SPENT. During this space of three days events transpired which are both interesting and typical. Amongst other things Jericho was entered by the two spies. 1. Jericho may fitly stand for the world of men over which judgment is impending, but which goes on its way unheeding. Rahab, the poor outcast of Jericho, who had such strange faith in God, entered in with the people to possess the land that flowed with milk and honey. She is thus the type of Gentile-sinners who are permitted to share in the unsearchable riches of Christ, to sit with Him in the heavenlies, to form part of that new race which is gathering around the true Joshua, the Lord from heaven. 2. During this brief pause Joshua also had an opportunity of ascertaining the feelings of the two tribes and a half. Are not these the type of Christians to whom the land of promise is as freely open as to others, and who make an incursion into it with no thought of remaining? They are willing to meet and measure their strength with the seven nations of Canaan, but they are not prepared to abandon the strong fascinations of the world, and to settle down to a life hidden with Christ in God. The end of such is but too clearly suggested by the fate of those Eastern tribes. They had their much grass, but they became gradually cut off from the corporate life of Israel. They gave few great names to the roll of saints and heroes emblazoned

on Israel's story. They fell first beneath the invasions of Assyria, and were swept into captivity, from which they never returned. III. **HOW THE PAUSE ENDED.** On the third day the hosts seem to have come nearer the river's brink, and their tents were pitched for the night within close proximity to the hurrying waters. It was then that Joshua said unto the people, "Sanctify yourselves," &c. From which it would seem that the wonder-working power of God is dependent upon the sanctification of His people. "Why art Thou as a mighty man that cannot save?" "He could do no mighty works there, because of their unbelief." We all want to see wonders wrought by God—in our own characters, that the fir-tree may replace the thorn and the myrtle the briar; in our homes, that the desert places may blossom with roses; in our Churches, that they may arise and put on their beautiful garments. Oh! for another Pentecost! Oh! to see converts fly as doves to their windows! And why is it that we strain our eyes for them in vain? Is it not because we have not sanctified ourselves? Sanctification means the cleansing of the soul, and the putting on of the white robes of purity and humility. We are not clean enough for God to use us. We are not humble enough to bear a great success. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.) *Crossing the Jordan*:—Many good people daily pray against sudden death, and there are legitimate reasons for so doing; but to a child of God it is of small consequence, for death will never find him unprepared if he is living in communion with God. We will enter into the joy of our Lord, and be for ever with Him. When God's children have their candle lighted for them, and they know that it is time to go upstairs, they feel glad to end their pilgrimage, and rest in Jesus. We are all of us much nearer home than we think. It will be greatly wise to talk with our last hours, and to anticipate that time when the message shall come, "Within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan." I. **OBSERVE THE TENOR OF THIS NOTICE.** Notice that there are three leading words in it: "prepare," "pass over," "possess." The first word that came to them was, "Prepare." Be in journeying order. The soldier carries his rations with him when he has to make a quick march: "Prepare you victuals." Children of God, be ready to go from this world. But inasmuch as he said, "Prepare you victuals" did he not mean "Begin to feed on food of that sort upon which you are henceforth to live"? The manna would cease in three days, and never fall again. After they crossed the Jordan, they would feed on the corn of the land. Feed on Christ, feed on spiritual food, feed on the pure truth of God's Word, and feed your souls on nothing else. Know the taste of what you eat, and let it be as clear and definite as that of butter and honey, that so you may steadily refuse the evil and choose the good. Joshua meant—Stand ready, for the time is getting very short. There is not long to wait. Soon you will have traversed the stream, and landed on the hither shore. How would you feel if you knew that within three days you must die? The exhortation given in ver. 13 is one which may be useful also to us: "Remember the word." It is a grand help for going over Jordan if we will remember the word of the Lord. Our faith enables us both to live and to die on the promise of God. But then he said also, "Sanctify yourselves" (chap. iii. 5). If we knew we were to die in three days, should we not wish to put our hearts, our thoughts, our families, into a better state? Since we may die suddenly, let us purify ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. The next word was, "Pass over this Jordan." They were not called to linger on the brink, nor to sit with their feet in the stream, but to cross over it. Israel had been forty years in the wilderness, and surely that was long enough. He who hath served his God with all his heart will not wish to linger a moment after his life-work is done. You are not called to linger on the bed of sickness for ages, but to pass over to your rest. And notice, the call was not to go down into the Jordan to stop there. Blessed be God, we are not going down into the grave to be lost there; but we make use of it as an opened door to paradise. The third word was "possess." They were to pass the river to possess the land which God had given them. We possess nothing here. Those goods which we think we possess melt away like an icicle from a hot hand. But we have on the other side of Jordan treasures worth owning. By a covenant of salt, God has given us in Christ Jesus everlasting rest, triumph, happiness, glory. II. **OBSERVE THE SEQUEL OF THIS NOTICE,** or what followed upon the summons. The first thing that happened to Israel was this, a singular faith was bestowed. I can hardly believe that the people under Joshua were the children of those unbelieving Jews whose carcasses fell in the wilderness; for throughout the early chapters of Joshua it is recorded that they believed Joshua, whatever he said to them. He had strange and strong things to utter, but they did not doubt or demur. Now,

when the children of God come to die, those of them who have been poor, trembling things before, receive new courage and unwonted strength, and even minister comfort to those who are stronger than themselves. It is brave to see how Mr. Ready-to-halt puts his crutches away when he is going over Jordan. Mr. Feeble-mind bids them bury his feeble mind in a dunghill, for it would be of no use to anybody. The Lord will give us more grace, and we shall wonder at ourselves that we could have been aforetime so distrustful. "At eventide it shall be light." Next, a special assurance was given: "To-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you" (chap. iii. 5). The Lord is always working marvels; but when we come to cross the Jordan we shall see His wonders in the deep. Next, note that the people had with them a conquering leader. Joshua was at their head, to encourage and direct them. When you and I shall pass over Jordan we shall have Jesus with us. He says, "Be of good cheer. Because I live, ye shall live also." But what next? The Israelites had a clear guidance afforded them (chap. iii. 4). You have been through many experiences, but to die will be a new one. Once for all, you must cross this Jordan, therefore the Divine presence shall go before you, and show you the way. Oh, yes, you shall have Divine direction when the darkness gathers about you! With Israel a forerunner led the way. So our great High Priest has tasted death for every man. Nor did the forerunner quit the scene, for the Divine presence remained. The priests went on till they came to the river-bed, and descended the hollow, going on to the very centre of it. There they stopped till all the host had passed over. The Lord Jesus will go before you as your great High Priest, your propitiation and your covenant; and He will abide with you in the last solemn article until you are safe landed on the shore of the land of promise. In consequence of the priests going down into the river the stream was dried up. Wonderful sight it must have been to behold the waters roll back, and stand in a congealed heap. Thus there was a broad passage-way for the multitudes of Israel to go marching through, and to effect the crossing rapidly. Suppose, when you come to die, the Jordan should turn out to be no river at all. What if you should go over dry-shod? Why should it not be so? Death is a pin's prick to many. Death hath lost its terrors. "The sting of death is sin," and that is forgiven. "The strength of sin is the law," and that is fulfilled. The black waters have failed; we pass over Jordan dry-shod. Then notice, the people were very quick in crossing. Death is short work. After all, what is the act of death? "What!" cries one, "is there not a terrible amount of pain connected with death?" I answer, "No." It is life that has the pain; death is the finis of all pain. You blame death for a disease of which he is the cure. You imagine a thing called death which does not really exist. In the twinkling of an eye we shall be up and away! Therefore, because you will haste to pass over, you need not be alarmed at so short a trial, which will actually turn out to be no trial at all. We read in chap. iv. 9 that the Israelites in traversing the Jordan left a memorial behind. You also will bear your testimony in departing: you will set up your memorial for your children after you, and they shall say, "Our father died in sure and certain hope of being with Jesus." Even if your death-bed should not be so bright as some, even its clouds may not be without their effect. A holy man had prayed much for his boys and girls, but never saw them converted, and this, with the troubles which grow out of their waywardness, made his last hours to be sadly clouded. But mark how the Lord wrought! They buried their father, and when they were met together, the eldest son turned to his brothers and remarked, "If our father, who was so good a man, was so troubled in death, what will become of us when we die?" This most reasonable remark was the means of the conversion of the brothers. I would like to die in the dark if it would bring all my people to the Saviour. Would not you? One thing more: they also raised a memorial on the other shore. They piled twelve stones upon each other in Canaan. You and I, when we get to heaven, shall take our memorials with us, and pile them up. We will make known to angels and principalities and powers the manifold wisdom and goodness of God to us in life and death. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Jordan at hand:—I. THE FIRST FEELING EXCITED BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT MUST HAVE BEEN THAT OF JOY AND TRIUMPH. It was not alone on the contrast between its fountains and depths springing out of valleys and hills, and the arid desolation of the great howling wilderness, that the thoughts of the Hebrew rested, but on the contrast of its repose. The sorest trials of his life had not probably been the hunger and the thirst, the laborious journey and the tumult of the battle, but the ceaseless motion—the movement ever on and on. Rest, rest! rest anywhere,

but, above all, in the land that flowed with milk and honey, must have been the innermost desire of his heart. Is not all this applicable to ourselves? It is not the great sorrows of our experience that constitute, after all, the weariness of life; but it is its change, its sense of uncertainty, the consciousness that we keep nothing, call nothing absolutely our own. II. THERE MUST HAVE BLENDED WITH IT A GREAT TRIAL OF FAITH. The chosen land was indeed close at hand. It seemed as if they could almost touch the shore. Just beyond gleamed in the sunshine the towers of Jericho, and blue in the distance were the hills of Judæa. But, close as they seemed, Jordan rolled between, and they could not but ask how they were to cross it. What, then, of that other Jordan, which we all must cross? that death we must all die some time or other, and through which alone we can enter into our Canaan? Let us make sure that what awaits us beyond on the other shore is heaven, and not the darkness. With the act of dying we have nothing whatever to do. It is in God's hands, not ours, and there we must leave it. Has not the ark gone before? III. AN ACT OF PREPARATION NEEDED: "Prepare you victuals." There is nothing actually corresponding to this in the experience of the Christian when he is called to cross into the better land. Special preparation for heaven, the Christian needs none. If he be in Christ, that is enough; he is safe. If he be a believer, he can have no less; and though he were the highest of saints that ever caught the light of the face of God, he could have no more than to be "found in Him, not having his own righteousness," &c. For myself I can conceive nothing more blessed than for a saint to pass at once from the midst of his work for his Master into the enjoyment of his Master's presence. Yet I admit that the near sight of so great a change could not but very solemnly affect us, were the warning given to ourselves. There would be an intense revival of faith and hope, and in that close sight of heaven a flinging away of all earthly and temporal ties. (*E. Garbett, M.A.*) "*Prepare you victuals*":—Sometimes we have heard words like these fall from Christian workers: "I have faith to believe that God will provide the means necessary to carry on this work," and straightway they assume liabilities and enter into engagements, and incur debts, in violation of the plain command, "Owe no man anything"; yea, they even sometimes accuse their brethren of lack of faith because they cannot do God's work in this way. This is not good. To obey is better than to profess great faith; and to hearken than sentimental unthinking zeal. What would we have thought of Joshua if after he had received the Divine order to march forward he had said, "I have faith to believe that God will provide the food necessary for victualling the army all through the campaign; our commissariat is absolutely safe, for it is in Divine hands. God has promised to be with me as He was with Moses, I have no need to think of these things. All I have got to do is to hasten forward." Nay, nay! Joshua manifested his faith in a much more Divine fashion. "Prepare you victuals," he said; do not expect that miraculous supply which has been granted for forty years, now that you are in a position to do without it. You are no longer helpless children, but grown men able to provide for yourselves. The battle is the Lord's, and He will not fail us nor forsake us, but we must use all reasonable foresight in carrying on His work. We dare do nothing, we dare omit nothing, out of harmony with His ways. (*A. B. Mackay.*) *Self-help necessary*:—Joshua reminds us of the famous order attributed to Cromwell, "Trust in God, and keep your powder dry." His piety was very unlike that of a certain Duke of Parma, of whom it is written that, in a great crisis, "while he had been praying, and nothing more, the English had been praying, and something more." He acted in the spirit of the proverb, "God helps those who help themselves." (*T. W. M. Lund, M.A.*) "*Ye shall pass over*":—"Oh," but they might have said, "we cannot pass over Jordan, because there is Jericho right in front of us, and of course the inhabitants will call in the Jebusites, who are not far off, at Jerusalem, and these will fetch in the Hivites, and the Amorites, and all the other nations; and these will hotly dispute the passage of the river, and it will be out of the question to force our way through that torrent, and fight up the other bank against such foes." Such a fear would be most natural. When Cæsar tried to land in England, what did the Britons do? They rushed into the water off Dover to meet the Romans, and they fought with them in the surf of the sea. It was natural that brave men should fight the invaders in the water, and not suffer them to tread their soil. Do you suppose that the Canaanites were less brave than the ancient Britons? Had there not been a spell upon them, they would have pressed back Israel in the river itself, and would not have allowed them to enter the land. Yet Israel passed over Jordan

at the appointed time. God had said, "Ye shall go over," and they did go over; and no Canaanite, Hivite, or Jebusite dared to molest them. So the poor child of God sighs, "Alas! when I come to die, Satan will meet me, temptations and doubts and fears will rush upon me." We read in chap. iii. 16, "And the people passed over right against Jericho." Fear not, O trembling heart. God can so deal with evil spirits, and with the doubts of your own spirit, that they shall be still as a stone till you have passed over. No demon shall dare to peep or mutter. No doubt or fear shall venture near. We read, "All the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." Not an arrow or a stone came from over the walls of Jericho. Glory be to the name of the Lord, He made the hearts of Israel's enemies to melt, so that no more courage remained in them. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 12-18. Ye shall pass before your brethren armed.—*Joshua's demand for the services of the trans-Jordanic tribes*:—In making this demand he declares their duty plainly, supports it with reasons, and enforces it with firmness. The demand he made was authoritative. It was founded on a past transaction to which they had agreed. He showed that this was nothing more than the carrying out of an arrangement previously made. From this it would not be lawful to deviate, for the commandment of Moses in regard to this was the word of the Lord. The demand was also reasonable. The raw lads and the worn-out soldiers, as well as the inferior men, may stay at home to do garrison duty, the veterans must march with him. Surely this is sensible. It is always wise to put the best men to the most difficult work. In fulfilling this commission of the true Joshua, has the Church always acted with equal wisdom and fidelity? It did so in the purest and palmiest days of missionary effort, when, filled with the spirit of wisdom and love and power, it broke forth on the right and left and speedily overran the known world. Now it seems as if all the mighty men of valour should stay at home to nurse the feeble spark of the Church's vitality, while the striplings go to the wars. Yea, are there not some who, instead of evangelising among the heathen, expend all their energy in proselytising among Christians? The demand made by Joshua on the pastoral tribes was also equitable. "You have rest," he might have said; "your brethren have not. You got rest through their help, therefore you are bound to help them to the same blessing. The command of Moses in regard to this was acquiesced in by you, therefore truth and honour require its faithful carrying out." Moreover, what an unseemly picture it would have presented, to have seen part of the nation fighting hard, while their brethren sat still and looked on in ignoble ease. And how shortsighted would this policy of idleness have been. Only by the speedy and thorough conquest of all the land could the heritage of any tribe be kept in pleasant and unquestioned possession. To march with Joshua was the wisest, as well as the most seemly thing these tribes could do. Surely the same arguments could be urged with equal force as incentives to the grand work of world-wide Christian testimony. (A. B. Mackay.)

All that thou commandest us we will do.—*Brave responses*:—The response of the people was as noble in its way as that of their leader. There is a holy rivalry between Israel and Joshua. They stir each other up to the great work that has to be done. The outstanding feature in the response of the people is its enthusiasm. It is plain from their response that they are heart and soul in the work before them, that they are only waiting for their leader's command to march forth a band of heroes. To say that their reply to Joshua was hearty would be to do them injustice; it was enthusiastic. Every soul in the camp was stirred to its utmost depth. This is plain from the readiness with which they replied. They did not hang back, waiting for each other to speak out. Much less did they hunt up excuses why they should not march. They did not modify or minimise their responsibilities. They were as eager to follow Joshua as Joshua was to follow Jehovah. This enthusiasm was also manifested by their cheerfulness. These men had not only promised to put their hands to this work, but also made it plain that they felt it their highest privilege to be able to do so. Oh! for such holy enthusiasm in the work of the Lord in these days! The best of us are but half-hearted at the best, and some, alas! seem utterly unable to get up the least spark of enthusiasm for holy things. If we profess to be Christians, if we profess to do God's work, if we profess to respond to the call of the true Joshua, let us do it, not like galley-slaves, but like God's freemen; let us do it as those who think His service our highest honour. Joshua's followers

were also unreserved in acknowledging their allegiance. They kept nothing back and made no reservation. They asked no questions and imposed no conditions. Is obedience, prompt and unquestioning, the first duty of a soldier? See how splendidly it was possessed by these Israelites. They declare that it is not for them to make reply, not for them to reason why, but simply, constantly, to do all that was commanded them. And if such glorious allegiance was due to Joshua, much more it is due to our great Captain of salvation, Jesus Christ. Whatsoever He commands in His Word we should do. Wheresoever He sends us in His providence we should go. The response of the people was also humble, sincere, earnest, and hopeful. A slight transformation in the opening words of ver. 17 makes their meaning more clear. It should read thus: "According to all in which we hearkened to Moses so will we hearken unto thee." They do not here brag of their obedience to Moses. Though better than their fathers, they had nothing to boast of, and conscious of their own weakness they merely said, "We will try to make our best obedience to Moses the model of our obedience to you." And there is good hope that they will succeed in carrying out this promise, for it is plain that they make it in a prayerful spirit, inasmuch as they follow it up by saying, "Only the Lord be with thee as He was with Moses." This is no impertinent limitation, qualifying their full allegiance as already given; but an earnest prayer that Joshua might constantly enjoy the Divine guidance, protection, and blessing vouchsafed to Moses. Then they finish their response by words vehement and uncompromising: "Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, let him be put to death." What more could a leader desire than such a spontaneous manifestation of fidelity? How must this declaration have strengthened Joshua's heart, showing so clearly as it did that his appointment to the leadership by Jehovah was so heartily ratified by all the people. (*A. B. Mackay.*)

The moral advantages of good organisation:—1. Society must have leadership, and leadership must be a question of competence. There are three things about the true leader which are most notable—(1) He must be directly called of God. Moses was; Joshua was. (2) Being directly called of God, he will walk constantly in the Divine counsel: "This book of the law shall not depart," &c. (3) Walking constantly in the Divine counsel, he shall achieve the most distinguished success. This is God's promise. 2. Organisation is as much required in the Church as in the army. The mature thinker, the new-born Christian, the untried youth, the undisciplined mind, and the cultivated intellect, cannot be equal, and ought not to have equal authority in the Church. I. SUCH ORGANISATION WOULD FACILITATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUAL TALENT. In the absence of wise organisation, the modest man will be ignored or crushed. He will have no power and no disposition to cope with the self-asserting and blustering men who worship their own infallibility. For the moment insolence will vanquish genius, simply because genius disdains the rude weapons which insolence adopts, and cares not to fight where even victory would be disgrace. II. SUCH ORGANISATION WOULD CONSOLIDATE THE CHRISTIAN SOCIETY ASSEMBLING IN ONE PLACE. The army is a compact confederacy. Its consolidation is its strength. Break up its wisely arranged gradations, and its power is paralysed. The same principle has its bearing upon the Church. III. SUCH ORGANISATION WOULD PRESENT THE MOST FORMIDABLE FRONT TO THE ENEMY. Every man in his place, every man moving at the same word of command, every man living for the common good—let that programme be carried out, and no power can withstand the united influence of Christ's believers. Disorder is weakness; disorder is waste! IV. SUCH ORGANISATION WOULD PROMOTE A MOST HEALTHFUL SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE. The organisation which God appoints is calculated to train men to habits of self-dominion. The young man is held in check; the passionate man is subdued; the lethargic man is quickened; and each nature has the advantage of association with natures of a different type. The organisation thus commended is not merely mechanical; it is the order which comes of a living love, which is willing to do the most good in the least time. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Fidelity to engagements:—There was no going back from their word, even though they might have found a loophole of escape. They might have said that as the conquest of Sihon and Og had been accomplished so easily, so the conquest of the western tribes would be equally simple. Or they might have said that the nine tribes and a half could furnish quite a large enough army to dispossess the Canaanites. Or they might have discovered that their wives and children were exposed to dangers they had not

apprehended, and that it would be necessary for the entire body of the men to remain and protect them. But they fell back on no such after thought. They kept their word at no small cost of toil and danger, and furnished thereby a perpetual lesson for those who, having made a promise under pressure, are tempted to retire from it when the pressure is removed. Fidelity to engagements is a noble quality, just as laxity in regard to them is a miserable sin. Even pagan Rome could boast of a Regulus who kept his oath by returning to Carthage, though it was to encounter a miserable death. In Psalm xv. it is a feature in the portrait of the man who is to abide in God's tabernacle and dwell in His holy hill, that he "sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

The Lord thy God be with thee.—*Prayers for men in public offices*:—Rulers who answer the end of their office as guardians of civil and religious liberty are pillars of a land. They uphold and support it, and keep it from tottering and sinking. We should pray for them—1. That they may be endued with every grace and virtue which can animate to the faithful and diligent execution of the duties of their office. If piety, true patriotism, and zeal for the interests of religion are at present less conspicuous in many who hold civil or military offices than they have been in some former periods, there is the greater need to beseech Him, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, to pour out abundantly. 2. We should pray that all in offices, civil or military, may be endued with the gifts and talents necessary for the honourable discharge of their several offices. Capacity and genius, as well as good dispositions, are requisite for serving the public. It is from Divine influence that rulers diligently search what conduct is just and wise; hearken to salutary advice, from whatever quarter it comes; and have clear understandings to discern, and sound judgments to choose the right path, even in situations the most intricate and perplexed. 3. We should pray that, in consequence of good dispositions and eminent abilities, rulers may actually adopt the measures which best tend to promote the public good. It is not enough that a ruler avoids, in his own practice, whatever may embolden wickedness, and recommends, by an exemplary conduct, that righteousness which exalteth a nation. He must vigorously enforce and execute the laws already established for restraining wrong and wicked lewdness, and help forward the enacting of such new laws as may be needful for restraining them more effectually. 4. We should pray God to prosper the endeavours of all in civil and military offices for promoting the public good. (*John Erskine, D.D.*)

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1-24. Joshua . . . sent out . . . two men to spy.—*The spies despatched*:—I. THE POSITION IN WHICH JOSHUA AND THE ISRAELITES WERE PLACED. It was a difficult task that had been performed by Moses; did not a harder remain? It was something to lead such a host through the wilderness. Surely more is required now the armour is to be put on, active service entered, and they brought face to face with their foes. But was not Joshua specially called to the onerous duty? Certainly he was! We have been called to a work individually, collectively. God has promised success in it; the work is that of dispossessing before possessing. We are to enjoy the companionship of God in it. Still, like Joshua, we have to depend on that word of promise. The comparison is in our favour. We have the example of all the generations from Joshua till the present. These have been strengthened by the life of Christ. In Him we have a volume of testimony confirmatory of our highest hopes. II. THAT ALL THESE PROMISES DO NOT PRECLUDE THE USE OF PROPER MEANS. What are the feelings of a child when receiving a promise from an earthly parent? Does not the promise heighten affection, induce carefulness, and prompt to obedience? Who ever knew a child made neglectful by a well-timed promise? Is not man the same in all his relations—is he not still a man, though dealing with God? What are the effects of His promises—do they not in every way stimulate to increased affection and zeal? To expect without working is to tempt God—to work without expecting is to dishonour Him. In all that has been and is now doing in the world for God, we find the principle of co-operation prevailing. God works out His purposes by human instrumentalities—men, organised into Churches, in their collective or individual capacity, work, and God crowns with success. Man

without God can do nothing. God without man does nothing, and although we have the assurance that through our instrumentality the fortresses of sin shall be vanquished, and the flag of our Master float upon the ramparts, we are bound carefully to consider our steps, and to use all our God-given powers to accomplish the object. We have our Jericho in the world. Adult world—juvenile world—spy the land, call into action all your powers; God will surely give you the land to possess.

III. THE WILLINGNESS ON THE PART OF THE MEN TO UNDERTAKE THE DIFFICULT WORK. They respond at once to the call of their leader, and trusting in God are honoured with success. With this spirit thoroughly in our Churches, what a large amount of work we should do. We seem to think the time for special workings and special deliverances has past. Nay, this is the time; that army on the east of Jordan is but a picture of ourselves. The work is before us. There runs a river between us and our work; yes, and we thank God for it. If we could, we would not on any account remove it. It is the right order of things. He that would do any work must cross it, and we may take it for granted the width, depth, and swiftness of the stream will be proportioned to the value of the work. Earnest workers will cross it, manfully trusting in God, and these are the only successful workers. (*J. H. Snell.*) *Beginning at the right point*:—From military wisdom we may learn the moral wisdom of always striking first at the right point. Everything turns upon the first stroke in many a controversy and in many an arduous battle. Why do men come home at eventide saying the day has been wasted? Because their very first step in the morning was in the wrong direction, or the very first word they spoke was the word they ought not to have uttered. With all thy getting, get understanding of how to begin life, where to strike first, what to do and when to do it, and exactly how much of it to do within given time. If you strike the wrong place you will waste your strength, and the walls of the city will remain unshaken. A blow delivered at the right place and at the right time will have tenfold effect over blows that are struck in the dark and at random: however energetic they may be, and however well delivered, they fall upon the wrong place, and the result is nothing. That is what is meant by wasted lives. Men have been industrious, painstaking, even anxious in thoughtfulness, and the night has been encroached upon so that the time of rest might be turned into a time of labour; yet all has come to nothing: no city has been taken, no position has been established, no progress has been made. Why? Simply because they did not begin at the right point. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Rahab*.—*An unexpected ally of the Lord's host; or, Rahab and her faith*:—Imaginative writers have pictured Rahab as attired in gaudy costume, going about the city with her harp (*Isa. xxiii. 16*), and at this very time in pursuit of her evil trade. Others, following Josephus, have adopted so charitable an estimate of her profession as to suppose her to have been simply a tavern-keeper. May we not, perhaps, take a middle line, and venture to believe that one who had become a believer in the God of Israel had also, ere this, repented of and forsaken the infamous life which her title imports. She appears from the narrative to be supporting herself by her own industry, in the preparation and dyeing of flax. One thing is certain, and that is that pure and saving faith cannot exist with foul and deadly sins. In reference to Rahab's faith, observe—I. THE WONDER OF ITS EXISTENCE. Here dwells an unfortunate woman. She has had no spiritual advantages—no Sabbaths, no Scriptures, no teachers—and yet in the base purlieus of a Jericho, in the heart of that poor harlot, like a fair pearl that lies within a rough shell among the weeds and rocks at the sea bottom, there is found precious faith, faith that finds utterance in a good confession (*ver. 11*). Here is encouragement for those who are called, in the providence of God, to minister where worldliness and frivolity, and pride and bitter opposition to the truth prevail. Here, too, is encouragement for those who minister in uncouth regions, where sin and ignorance seem to shut out hope of blessing. Let missionaries and visitors in alleys and courts, in attics and cellars, which seem like nests of blasphemy and impurity, take heart. The unholy atmosphere of gin palaces, and even of houses like that in which Joshua's spies sought refuge, cannot exclude the Holy Ghost, or nullify the Gospel message. II. ITS PRACTICAL OPERATION. A poetic faith may lift its possessor to the heavens in ecstasies. A talking faith may delight the hearers with glowing descriptions of supposed experiences and imaginary prospects. But the faith that saves is known by its works. Such a faith was Rahab's. Her faith wrought with her works, and by works was her faith made perfect. III. ITS SAVING TENDENCY. The characteristic of true faith is ever to tend towards salvation. Faith accepts the warnings of the Word of God as true, and leads men to flee from the

wrath to come. Now we shall find this to be a marked characteristic in the faith of Rahab. It inclines her to seek salvation both for herself and for her kindred.

IV. ITS RICH REWARD. Vain are man's promises of help except God approve the pledge. The oath of the spies to deliver Rahab and her house had availed her nothing had not God Himself, by a notable miracle, confirmed their word. Joshua held himself bound by the covenant of his representatives; but what was more, the Lord accepted Rahab's faith and spared her house, or, when the walls of Jericho fell down, her house had fallen too, for it abutted on the wall. But it fell not, but stood unscathed amid the overthrow, a monument of Divine faithfulness and mercy. Nor will that faithfulness and mercy fail to save any, even the most unworthy, who has entered into the covenant of grace. "Our life for yours!" may every ambassador of the gospel say. If the conditions of salvation be observed, thy house and thy hope shall stand, though a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand. (*G. W. Butler, M.A.*)

A parenthesis of grace:—Let us look at Rahab's faith, and meditate on a few of its phases.

I. Consider the HINDRANCES of her faith. 1. There were hindrances which arose from herself. She was the harlot Rahab. Her character was exceptionally evil. She belonged to a class than whom there are none more hardened, inaccessible, and hopeless. Moreover, she had found her calling profitable, and therefore, naturally speaking, would be the more firmly wedded to her evil ways. Moreover, Israel is coming to Jericho for the purpose of executing the Divine vengeance on the very evils of which she is guilty. The cry of the Canaanites has ascended to heaven; in long-suffering patience God has waited till now, but at last He has sent forth His hosts to consume them utterly. How much, then, was there, in herself, to keep Rahab from trust in Jehovah!

2. There were also hindrances to Rahab's faith arising from her natural friends. The example of all her neighbours would encourage her in a path of unbelief. Her faith would make her an oddity in Jericho.

3. There were hindrances to her faith arising from her natural enemies. Israel, the people of Jehovah, were arrayed against her and her people, and were even now marching onward to their destruction. The mission of Israel is not one of mercy, but of judgment. Their feet are not beautiful upon the mountains, bringing good tidings of peace. They bring no gospel to the Canaanites, but war, disaster, and death are in their invincible path. How black was the outlook for Rahab.

II. Consider the OPPORTUNITY of her faith. Faith always finds, or rather God always gives to faith, an opportunity for its manifestation. As in the day of Sodom's doom, the Lord delayed till righteous Lot had escaped to Zoar, saying, "I cannot do anything till thou be come thither," so now, if there is a single soul in Jericho groping after Him in the darkness of vice and heathenism, He will delay the march of His destroying hosts, to give that soul the opportunity which it requires and for which it longs. He can do nothing in judgment till that one soul in the doomed city is brought into a place of safety. Thus this pause in the Divine and just act of judgment, this parenthesis of grace, this long-suffering of God, is salvation.

III. Consider the OPERATION of her faith. Rahab showed her faith by her works. We cannot, and do not, defend the deliberate falsehood by which she misled her fellow citizens in search of the spies; but we must remember that her whole training from childhood had been in lies, and that this was a sudden emergency. She was no well-instructed saint, walking under the light of God's countenance, but a great sinner groping after Him. There is sufficient in her conduct to manifest a heart truly sincere and anxiously solicitous for the welfare of God's people, willing to risk her own life to save theirs.

IV. Turn now to the CONFESSION of her faith. He that believes with the heart confesses with the mouth. All the believing add to their faith virtue, boldness in confessing the truth; all are witnesses. To the spies Rahab said, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land," &c. She does not say, "I think," "I suppose," "I fear," but "I know." She believes as firmly in the promises of God as any in Israel. And as she believes in the promises of God, so she believes in the God of the promises. How clear and unmistakable is her confession of the name of Jehovah; how high, and exalted, and spiritual; how wonderful, in the mouth of one trained from infancy to worship stocks and stones, trained to think that the power of the different deities was local and circumscribed: "The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath"!

V. Next let us ponder the TRIAL of her faith. Faith is always tested, that it may be manifested as Divine. Had Rahab sought to add anything to the instructions of the spies, had she consulted her own ideas as to the best means of ensuring her safety, she would have manifested her folly, and would have miserably failed.

So trust in any other means than those which God has provided, trust in anything but the blood of the Lamb, is a manifestation of folly and a sure cause of failure. VI. Consider also *THE SOLICITUDE* of her faith. She was anxious not only about her own safety, but about that of those who were dear to her. She was not selfishly absorbed in looking after her own welfare, content if she herself escaped; but, with true affection, arranged for the rescue of her relatives. The work of Rahab, in bringing in others, is similar to that of every saved soul. After we ourselves are saved we are not to rest content; we are not to sit down in idleness and ease because all is well with us for ever. We are to bear on our hearts those who are still exposed to the Divine judgment; we are to be up and doing, instant in season and out of season, if by any means we may save some. VII. Consider *THE REWARD* of her faith. When the dread day of Jericho's judgment came, what a joy must it have been to Rahab to know that all dear to her were safe. But who can tell the rapture of those who have saved a soul from eternal death, and covered a multitude of sins? Surely such a glorious reward, such a monument of everlasting renown, is worth labouring for, worth living for, worth dying for. But turning again to the case before us, why did the multitudes in Jericho thus perish without pity? Was it because the cup of their iniquity was full? Yes, truly, for they had fearfully corrupted their ways. But, while many sins characterised the Canaanites, the Holy Ghost selects one sin as emphatically that which caused their destruction. Which sin? Unbelief. That which distinguished Rahab from the rest was not superior morality, higher intelligence, a more exemplary life, a better natural disposition, but faith in God. She believed; they believed not. Because she believed, she was saved; because they believed not, they perished. Even so, many sins may characterise you, and each one is like a millstone round your neck, fitted to drag you down to endless destruction, but your great, culminating, condemning sin is unbelief (Mark xvi. 16). But Rahab was not only rescued from the judgment of Jericho, she was also received into the number of God's people. Even so the sinner who believes in Jesus is not only saved from wrath to come, but is received into the Church, the house of the living God, there to be instructed more fully in the ways of God; there to learn all the lessons that the grace of God can teach; to deny ungodliness and worldly lust; to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (*A. B. Mackay.*) *Rahab's reasoning*:—The woman had an eye to see and an ear to hear. She knew better than to suppose that a nation of slaves by their own resources could have eluded all the might of Pharaoh, subsisted for forty years in the wilderness, and annihilated the forces of such renowned potentates as Sihon and Og. She was no philosopher, and could not have reasoned on the doctrine of causation, but her common sense taught her that you cannot have extraordinary effects without corresponding causes. It is one of the great weaknesses of modern unbelief that with all its pretensions to philosophy it is constantly accepting effects without an adequate cause. Jesus Christ, though He revolutionised the world, though He founded an empire to which that of the Cæsars is not for a moment to be compared, though all that were about Him admitted His supernatural power and person, after all was nothing but a man. The gospel that has brought peace and joy to so many weary hearts, that has transformed the slaves of sin into children of heaven, that has turned cannibals into saints, and fashioned so many an angelic character out of the rude blocks of humanity, is but a cunningly devised fable. What contempt for such sophistries, such vain explanations of facts patent to all, would this poor woman have shown! How does she rebuke the many that keep pottering in poor natural explanations of plain supernatural facts instead of manfully admitting that it is the arm of God that has been revealed and the voice of God that has spoken. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Gradual enlightenment*:—If we ask, How could Rahab have such a faith and yet be a harlot? or How could she have such faith in God and yet utter that tissue of falsehoods about the spies with which she deluded the messengers of the king? we answer that light comes but gradually and slowly to persons like Rahab. The conscience is but gradually enlightened. How many men have been slaveholders after they were Christians! Worse than that, did not the godly John Newton, one of the two authors of the Olney hymns, continue for some time in the slave trade, conveying cargoes of his fellow-creatures stolen from their homes, before he awoke to a sense of its infamy? Are there no persons among us calling themselves Christians engaged in traffic that brings awful destruction to the bodies and souls of their fellow-men? That Rahab

should have continued as she was after she threw in her lot with God's people is inconceivable; but there can be no doubt how she was living when she first comes into Bible history. And as to her falsehoods, though some have excused lying when practised in order to save life, we do not vindicate her on that ground. All falsehood, especially what is spoken to those who have a right to trust us, must be offensive to the God of truth, and the nearer men get to the Divine image, through the growing closeness of their Divine fellowship, the more do they recoil from it. Rahab was yet in the outermost circle of the Church, just touching the boundary; the nearer she got to the centre the more would she recoil alike from the foulness and the falseness of her early years. And yet, though her faith may at this time have been but as a grain of mustard seed, we see two effects of it that are not to be despised. One was her protection of the Lord's people, as represented by the spies; the other was her concern for her own relations. (*Ibid.*)

Rahab's faith:—Faith in the human heart is a Divine work and a Divine wonder. Jesus wondered when He beheld the witness of it in the message of the centurion, and in the cry of the Syro-Phœnician, and sometimes it occurs among circumstances so strange and unlikely as to compel the wonder even of our hard hearts and dull minds. The faith of Rahab is of this class—strange, unaccountable on merely natural grounds. That this plant of heavenly renown should take root and spring up in such uncongenial soil is what we do not naturally look for. Her faith reminds us of a tree we have seen in the Highlands of Scotland. At the bottom of a wild glen stood a huge boulder, which towered high above those which had toppled with it from the mountain side, and it had a strange crown. On its summit, as if rising out of the rock, grew a young tree—green, vigorous, and healthy. From its peculiar position, it attracted the notice of every passer-by; it was the only tree for miles around, and there, in that wilderness, and on that rock, it grew, planted as it were by the finger of God. Even so the faith of Rahab is a great wonder, a tree of paradise, planted by the hand of God, in the midst of a wilderness of moral and spiritual desolation.

A mixed character:—They are mixed characters and mixed actions in the moral sense; and just as we may take a conglomerate mineral and single out one ingredient for remark, so we may fix our minds upon one aspect of a complex action, disregarding all other aspects for the time, with admiration or condemnation. It is what we do continually. We speak highly of an author's genius—without approval of his principles; we praise the skill of some diplomatist—whose policy we strongly condemn; we do not grudge our admiration to the powers of Napoleon—though we may believe him to have been a monster of iniquity. In a famous essay John Foster illustrates decision of character by a number of striking instances. He refers to the untameable soul of Milton as portrayed in "Paradise Lost"; to the sublime height to which Pompey was raised by his ambitious spirit; to the constancy of purpose with which a Spaniard pursued and at last accomplished his revenge; to the indefatigable industry with which a ruined spendthrift regained his fortune and died a miser. But none is so foolish as to accuse the essayist of commending obstinacy, ambition, revenge, or miserliness. Now, the same principle must be applied to an interpretation of Scripture. The unjust steward, *e.g.*, was a bad man: he was selfish, unprincipled, a downright rogue. But withal he was prudent; he forecast the future; he directed his energies towards providing for it; and he succeeded. In his prudence, then, is he set forth as an example for us. (*Sunday School Times.*)

Our hearts did melt.—*The powers of evil in terror*:—I think that testimony stands yet. We, who are fighting Joshua's battle to-day, should take to heart this word that has leaked out from the headquarters of the devil's army; and the word is this, that with all the devil's swagger, and bravado, and bluster, he is a bigger coward than we are, and that is big enough. He is really not so bold as he is trying to pretend. He knows that the doom is coming, and Rahab is the testifier; and she ought to know: she has been near him and is intimate with the latest information on that side. I say, I think that we should all take this. It stands here. This is a bit of the Word of God that "liveth and abideth for ever." And its great value to you and me who are fighting to-day in the wars of the Lord under the heavenly Joshua is that, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the fear of us and the terror of us are working yonder before we arrive. God is making a way for His conquering purpose before we thunder at the enemy's gate. Therefore let us nerve ourselves. Therefore let us be strong. Therefore do not let us be daunted by the colossal and seemingly impregnable powers of evil. There is a trembling and a quivering in the devil's

host. "Your terror is fallen upon us." Who would think it, to read the secular press? What nonsense clever men talk about religion, as if it were a feeble kind of thing, such as they would call in Scotland "a fozy turnip"—a half-rotten, effete, useless thing. "We are going to have reforms, and we are going to make things a great deal better, but we will have no religion." Did ever anybody hear such addle-headed talking by clever men? No religion! Oh, indeed! You are going to bow out Jesus Christ? You ought to have been born a long while before you were, if you are going to do that. You have come into the world much too late to put it right without Christ. He is here, and He means to be here, and I trust we are all with Him. Oh, what encouragement there comes to us out of this! What encouragement—that the kingdom of darkness in all its domain is tottering to its fall, and it knows it! Strange it is that we who are serving under the heavenly Joshua, and have all these things to fortify us and to infuse strength into us, are so nervous and womanish. Oh, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and to be strengthened by what we read here as to the condition of things in the enemy's camp! They are just about to surrender if we would put on a bold front. (*John McNeill.*)

The Lord your God, He is God.—*Our God, God over all*:—I. **THE LORD YOUR GOD.** I am aware that "our Lord" and "our Saviour," and so on, are phrases that are frequently employed thoughtlessly, ignorantly, and profanely; but this does not render their value less. Whatever faith is in exercise, so that the believer can really claim his affinity, his relationship, it is most blessed so to do. Nay, more; there is no solid happiness and permanent peace for any child of Adam until that child of Adam can claim this relationship: "the Lord our God." But oh! "wonder, ye heavens, and be astonished, O earth," at this amazing condescension: that the great Eternal—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—should give to His elect family each of the Persons, and all the perfections and attributes of self-existent Deity, as the Church's portion and inheritance. II. **HE IS GOD IN HEAVEN.** As for myself, the fact that Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, is "my God," makes me look up to heaven and think of heaven with the utmost confidence; aye, without a scruple; aye, upon scriptural assurance of calling it my home. Now, mark two or three things arising out of this fact that "He is God in heaven above." All the records of heaven written and kept by Him; all the enjoyments of heaven bestowed, communicated, imparted, in His presence; all the inhabitants of heaven His own choice, His own redemption, His own workmanship. He is absolute Sovereign "in heaven" of the fixed decrees of heaven; absolute Sovereign "in heaven" of all the glories of heaven; and absolute Sovereign "in heaven" of all the inhabitants of heaven. Oh! what security is here! "The Lord your God is God in heaven above." III. **HE IS GOD IN EARTH BENEATH.** Here we have a solution of the mystery of His providence. He is God in earth, as well as in heaven; tell Him all about it. Go with thy sorrows, thy cares, thy domestic woes, thy bodily afflictions, thy circumstantial trials, thy matters of business, thy little things as well as thy great things; for "He is God in earth." "The Lord your God is God in earth beneath." Oh! I had saved myself a thousand sorrows if I had always lived upon this principle. I had saved myself a thousand woes, if I had lived as if there was "a God on earth." (*J. Irons.*)

Bind this line of scarlet thread in the window.—*The scarlet line*:—In Scripture we find the blessing of God and the curse of God concentrated not only in individual souls, but also in cities. Thus Jerusalem is constantly set forth in Scripture as the city of blessing (Psa. xlviii. 1-3, l. 2). On the other hand, Jericho is the city of the curse (chap. vi. 17). These two cities, then, are evidently representative cities. Jerusalem, the city of blessing, represents the Church of God, destined to eternal life. Jericho, the city of the curse, represents the world, alienated from God, and destined to destruction. And then what will Rahab represent but those who are gathered out of the one into the other, not on account of anything good in themselves, any natural excellencies or attainments, but by the grace of God, and according to His good pleasure. And specially does she, herself a Gentile, seem to represent those of the Gentiles who are brought to God. Rahab's faith showed itself in this, that she recognised God. She looked above second causes. It was not Israel's power and prowess, but God's hand, which she saw (vers. 9-11). All this throws much light on the nature of true faith. It shows us, first, that living faith carries us straight to God. Our hearts are very prone to get entangled in second causes—to look at the hand of man, and forget the hand of God. The language of faith is, "It is the Lord." It elevates the heart above second causes, and enables it to rest, not, it may be, without many struggles, on the will and arm

of God. Again, we see in this history that faith is the principle of a new life. Rahab's life had been an unhallowed one, and she had sunk lower than many others in Jericho. But now through Divine grace she rises higher than all (Heb. xi. 51). And faith is always the same; the same in its object, which is God; the same in its principle, which is His grace; the same in its result, which is holiness of life. Rahab believed in the approaching doom of Jericho; she felt that its days were numbered. The true Christian now believes that a more awful and universal judgment is coming upon the world, and he flees from the wrath to come—flees to the only Refuge from the storm. But Rahab went further. She wished to have some assurance that her life, and the life of her family, would be spared. It is not wonderful that she should have desired this token; and we may well imagine what comfort she must have felt when the scarlet line was floating in the air at her window. Very solemn thoughts must often have weighed upon her heart—thoughts of the awful destruction which awaited her fellow-townsmen; but she felt no anxiety about herself and family. The scarlet line silenced every fear. And if it was natural in Rahab to desire a token of her safety, is it not even more natural in the true Christian to desire it? And one there is which is granted sooner or later to those who walk with God. It is not always given at once; often it grows up by degrees. But yet, sooner or later, it is given. The blood of Jesus secures pardon, and also produces assurance. But notice that there is a wide difference between the two. Forgiveness is one thing; the knowledge of forgiveness is another. Forgiveness of sin we must have, to be Christians. Assurance is a privilege which Christians should seek, and seek until they find, and then watch, that they may retain it. If, then, you would have the scarlet line floating at the window of your hearts, you must trust simply in Christ. This of itself is enough to bring, and does often bring, assurance; but if not, endeavour to walk with God. Be diligent in doing His will and work, and perhaps God will meet you then, and will crown some act of faith and self-denial and devoted service with a true token, a scarlet line of His assurance-love. Having proceeded thus far with the history of Rahab, we must say a few words about its conclusion. What a difference that little piece of scarlet line made! It was not a mere token arranged between man and man; it was sanctioned in heaven. God's eye as well as man's was fixed upon the scarlet line, and Rahab was protected. And if that scarlet line made so great a difference in her case, and secured her protection, oh, how much more shall the blood of Christ secure that of the true Christian! Is it sprinkled upon your heart? Does God's eye see it there? Then all your sins, however many, are forgiven; all your enemies, however strong, will be overcome. But there is still one other point to be noticed in Rahab's history. You will find it stated in chap. vi. 55, where it says, "She dwelleth in Israel unto this day." So that from that time forth, though she had been a sinner of the Gentiles, she was put among God's children, reckoned as one of His own Israel; and even, we learn from Matt. i. 5, so honoured of God as to be one of the line from whom Jesus was descended. And do we not learn from this how completely the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin? how real a thing is the forgiveness of sins? how great and entire is the change which the grace of God makes in the heart? (G. Wagner.)

Rahab saved.—I. THE SOVEREIGN MERCY OF GOD WAS MAGNIFIED IN THE PREVIOUS CHARACTER AND POSITION OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO WHOM IT WAS VOUCHSAFED. II. THE ONENESS, THE PRIMEVAL, CONSTANT, AND CONTINUED IDENTITY OF THE WAY OF SALVATION, from the blood that flowed upon Abel's altar, and I doubt not upon Adam's also, to "the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." By that line—as with Rahab, so with the Church—the messengers that brought it to her and taught it to her had already escaped; it had borne their weight, proved its efficacy; and the Church knows it to be strong enough still. She knows it to be the cable-line which rivets her to the anchor of hope, "sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil." Ah! who that has ever tried it, who that has ever "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him," hath not found the promise fulfilled in his happy experience—"I will draw them with the cords of love, with the bands of a man"! Blessed Jesus! Thou art this "scarlet line," dyed with the blood of propitiating mercy. III. ANOTHER EXEMPLARY FEATURE IN THE ACT OF RAHAB'S FAITH IS ITS GREAT SIMPLICITY. What could be simpler than tying a scarlet line in a window? Had the gospel assumed a more scientific and imposing form—had its principles been more elaborate and philosophical—had it required years of study to comprehend it, and thereby attached some literary reputation to the ultimate adept in it—had it been like the rabbinical lore of the

Hebrews, or the mythological mysteries of the Greeks, beyond the reach of the vulgar, and a consequent badge of distinction to the initiated—had its prophet required us to do some great thing—were its peculiar privileges obtainable only by the pomp of a ritual, the costliness of sacrifice, or the toil of pilgrimage—then the evangelical Sion had never been destitute of its thousands of devotees and ten thousands of disciples; but when it appears in the guise of a system of which a child can appreciate the beauty, and which only requires the spirit of a child to learn and entertain it—when “the wayfaring man,” as he runs upon his business, may read it—when its elastic principles expand their comprehensive arms to the embrace of all men, and like the outstretched arms of its crucified Author upon the Cross seem to offer mercy on the right hand and on the left—when its whole system is summed up in a single sentence, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”—then the world turns its back upon the Church, is ashamed of the fellowship of children and vulgar and illiterate people, the simplicity of the truth is mistaken for vulgarity, and the house of God is eschewed and avoided, because, instead of the sumptuous drapery and tinselled garniture of the noble, the poetical, the dramatic, the speculative, and the vain, its only ornament and ensign is the Cross of Christ—its sole phylactery is “the scarlet line in the window.”

IV. RAHAB’S ACT OF FAITH EXTENDED A BLESSING, AS EVERY ACT OF FAITH DOES, TO THE WHOLE FAMILY. She gathered her father and mother and brethren and all her kindred into her house; and the emblem in the window spared them all. Yet I suppose it will scarcely be contended that it was the bit of thread that saved them, rather than the covenant of which that thread was the sign. But just as idle is the theory that the sacrament is salvation, instead of the sign of the Saviour; as inaccurate is the impression that faith itself saves, and not His blood and righteousness which faith appropriates. Why, there is no more saving merit in faith than there is in works—not a jot. I am not saved because I believe, but I am saved by Him in whom I believe. There is all the world’s difference between those propositions. (*J. B. Owen, M.A.*)

CHAPTER III.

VER. 1. Joshua rose early in the morning.—*Early rising*:—Why does Joshua rise early in the morning? He has important and responsible duties to discharge during the day, and this may be one reason. Perhaps this has been his habit during a long succession of years, and now it is as easy and natural to him as breathing. Much has been said by some in favour of early rising, and it has been the practice of many distinguished men. Franklin wrote these words, “The morning has gold in its mouth.” Dean Swift declared that “he never knew any man come to greatness and eminence who lay in bed of a morning.” Doddridge, Barnes, Wesley, Judge Hale, and others we could name, always rose before five o’clock in the morning. As we look upon these sayings, and consider these examples, should we affirm that early rising is the imperative duty of every man? There are certain persons who live to do evil, only evil, and that continually. The longer they remain in bed the better it will be for themselves and others. There are some who live a life of sheer indolence. Since their sleeping and waking hours are equal, so far as others are concerned, it is of no importance when they rise. In these times, too, when day is turned into night, there are multitudes, especially in our large cities and towns, who cannot go to rest till a late hour, and to whom early rising is therefore a physical impossibility. Besides, no hard and fast line can be drawn regarding measures of sleep, because some require more than others. We believe it would be highly beneficial to the bodies, the minds, and the souls of all, if the old custom—“early to bed and early to rise”—were constantly observed. Let every individual, however, endeavour to discharge every duty which is legitimately imposed upon him; and whether this is done by day or by night, he will fill up the outline of work which God gives to him, and find acceptance in His sight. (*A. McAuslane.*) They removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan.—“*Advance*” is the strong word that gathers up the teaching of the chapter. 1. The advance was from a notable past. “Finis” had been written to the first volume of the history of Israel; bondage its preface, vengeance its introduction,

mercy its continual illumination. Sin had made their forty years a wilderness, in which they wandered from one oasis to another of heavenly grace set as with palm-trees and wells of water. And the present was rich and satisfying. Eastern Palestine was overflowing with honey and oil and milk. The stately oaks of Bashan, its sheep and goats and mighty bulls waiting to be herded among their riches, its abundant pasturage and countless watercourses, quite outrivaled the land beyond the river. Here they were already in possession; while beyond, fenced cities and disciplined troops forewarned of hardship and blood. This new volume opened to-day will show no such lavishness of miraculous helps. Still the word is "Advance." If the leader is less, the people are more. If miracles and interventions are fewer, courage and skill and power are greater. God's helps are transferred from without to within the hearts of men. He works best for them by working through them. 2. The advance was a long step toward their destiny. God's purposes never turn back. His plan demanded the transfer of the people across the Jordan. Just because Eastern Palestine was broader and richer, they must go over. Their national growth and mission demanded a new type of life. Israel must set his feet by the shore of the great sea, and dwell upon the roads traversed by caravans and armies. Then Alexandria can supply its spiritual philosophy, Greece its culture and language, Rome its law and wide sway, to aid in recording and extending the gospel. Physical geography is potent in civilisation. 3. Advance requires spiritual preparation. It is not first for the sake of earthly reward. An eternal purpose, a holy destiny rules the progress. Before each Jordan is crossed, the people must be sanctified, the leader empowered. The past was no dead past to bury its dead, but was to live in remembrance of deliverance granted and mercies showered, of disastrous and destructive sins. (C. M. Southgate.)

Vers. 2-8. **When ye see the ark . . . go after it.**—*The good superseded by the better*:—Hitherto the Israelites had been led on their way by the pillar of cloud. But now that was to be seen no more. With the death of Moses, apparently, it had disappeared. So the ark is to take the place of the pillar of cloud. It is better that there should come sometimes these changes of form—changes in the method of the Divine communication with men, or their communication with Him, though we are apt to quarrel with them, and to be greatly afraid when they seem to be impending. For our disposition is so strong to regard the means as the end, and to exalt the human or the material at the expense of the spiritual, of which it is the symbol, that we need, in order to be kept from idolatry, to have these visible things, these material props, taken from us, so that we may be led to trust more fully in the unseen, and to lean only on the eternal arm of God. In the case of the Israelites it was a higher symbol that was now to take the place of the pillar. The pillar had answered its purpose. It had served to show the people the way they should go, and to remind them of the Divine guardianship; but in itself it had no special suggestiveness. But with the ark it was otherwise. It had a sacredness in public esteem, inasmuch as it contained the tables of the testimony. It was the repository of the law. The word of the Lord was enshrined in it. And it was not of the Divine law only that it spoke. It spoke of mercy also, of clemency, of God's forgiveness; for the lid of it was the mercy-seat. So that while it was a symbol of law, it was a symbol also of hope and of peace to those who might be mourning their inadequate fulfilment of the law. It was, then, an object to be regarded with reverence, and was in danger, indeed, of being regarded, as afterwards it was in fact, with superstitious reverence. But now, in our day, the ark has gone the way of the cloudy pillar. It too has disappeared. Are we then forsaken? Have we nothing to guide us in the strange and perilous way we have to go? It is only the voice of unbelief that can answer "No." God speaks to us, not as He spoke to our fathers, or to His people in ancient days, but not less truly than He spoke to them, and by a mightier though a gentler voice, and by a symbol infinitely more rich in meaning. To us in these later days He has spoken by His Son. And what is the Son? He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. It is He who is our Guide to lead us forward in the untrodden ways. Surely the pillar and the ark, yes, and the priest also, and all the forms and ritual of the old covenant, might well vanish away, if in their place the Christ, the Son of the living God, is to come. And notice this—that, like the ark which was a type of Himself, He passes over before us into Jordan, that we who follow Him may pass through it in safety.

Into Jordan—for between us, too, and the land of our hope and our desire, there rolls a deep and, as it seems to our fears at times perhaps, an impassable stream. Men of all times have had their hopes of a better world, into which they might enter at last. And we have had our hopes. Those especially who have had weariness and disappointments to bear, like the Israelites in their wanderings in the desert, have clung to the thought of a region of peace and joy which may be their inheritance when the strife is over. But who has not had thoughts of such a future? of such a destiny? of such a home? We have much here that is sweet—many of us—much from which it would cost us not a little to part. But we have not all that we need; and in how many ways are we thwarted! Why, the very fruition of our desires serves only to make it the more keen! Surely there are better things in store—a clearer vision, a larger life, a more perfect holiness. But between that bright world which our imagination paints and us there lies the dark and deep river. Not the stream of death merely. It is sin that has made the stream so alarming. We have done wrong. And how can we meet with God, and how can we enter into that holy Presence? Well, let us look at this picture. Here is the ark of the Lord, in the centre of Jordan; and while it rests there, the people by hundreds and thousands are able to pass over to the other shore in safety. Does not that remind us of another scene? “They took Jesus,” you read in one of the Gospel accounts, “and led Him away. And He, bearing His Cross, went forth unto a place called the place of a skull; and they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.” “In the midst”—the centre of all that terrible scene. What a scene it is! Death is there; and death the most shameful and agonising. And sin is there—sin the most aggravated and the most awful. But Christ has passed over before us into this deep gulf of iniquity and horror. “He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” “He tasted death for every man.” But, thanks be to God, the deep waters did not overwhelm Him. He entered into the midst of them, and they rolled back and acknowledged Him their Master. It was impossible for death to hold Him. He met it, and triumphed openly over it. And there He stands in the centre of that Jordan that we dread, that we, trusting in Him and sharing in His victory and His joy and His eternal life, may pass over in safety and peace. (*H. Arnold Thomas, M.A.*)

The ark of covenant:—I. THE LINE OF THE MARCH: “Ye have not passed this way heretofore.” The way was unknown, untried, danger-encompassed. Great conflicts lay in it. Great trials; trials of faith, trials of courage, trials of patience, trials of strength. II. THE LEADER OF THE MARCH along the unknown, untried, and danger-encompassed way: “The ark of the covenant of the Lord.” In other words, Jesus was the Leader of the march. He was with the Church in the wilderness—the true Joshua—the Captain of “the sacramental host of God’s elect.” III. THE MARCH ITSELF. 1. It was to be a prompt following—unquestioning, soldierlike. To the high summons, “Follow Me,” the response was to be, “Lord, we will follow Thee, whithersoever Thou goest.” 2. It was to be humble, reverent following. “Come not near unto it.” The following was to be far: far, and yet near. Near because far. Far, through a perception of the greatness of God; far, through a consciousness of unworthiness. Far in that sense, and therefore near. “For thus saith the High and Lofty One,” &c. 3. It was to be a trustful following. The ark of the covenant of the Lord was to stand out clear and distinct, that each and all might see it; that even the little children might see it. There was to be no crowding round the ark of the covenant of the Lord. Nothing was to intervene between the people and their guide, and the object of their trust; not even Joshua. They were to see “no man, save Jesus only.” (*W. Crosbie, M.A., LL.B.*)

Difficulty:—I. WE NEED NEW GRACE FOR NEW EXPERIENCES. Some trial which we have never before endured is to be borne by us. Some duty which we have never before discharged is to be performed by us. Some relationship that is entirely new is to be formed by us, and we know not how we shall bear ourselves. Let us take courage. He who gave these minute directions to His ancient people will not fail us; and though He may not come to us with such specific guidance, He will yet by His providence and Spirit give us the help we need. II. WHEN WE HAVE TO CROSS ANY RIVER OF DIFFICULTY, LET US PUT THE ARK OF THE COVENANT INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE STREAM. In simple phrase, when we come to a difficulty, let us see Christ in it, and then we shall be able to surmount it. He turns the water into dry land. He makes our difficulties stepping-stones to glory. We are never really in danger when we can see Him. III. THERE ARE NO DEGREES OF DIFFICULTY WITH GOD. All things are equally easy to Omnipotence. Let us not limit the Holy One of Israel by supposing that any of our

emergencies are too great for Him to help us through them. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

The influence of the ark :—The influence of the ark upon the popular mind finds an analogy in the middle ages. A recent writer, speaking of civil life in Siena, says : "In the centre of the Republican army was the famous Carroccio, a car upon four wheels, drawn by four pairs of oxen covered to the feet in rich cloths. A horn or "antenna" rose from the centre of the car to a great height, upon which floated the standard of the Republic. . . . Lower down, about the middle of the antenna, a Christ upon the Cross, with outspread arms, seemed to bless the army. A kind of platform in the front of the car was reserved for the most valiant soldiers, told off for its defence; behind was another platform for the trumpeters and musicians. An act of religious consecration and worship was celebrated upon the car before it left the city, and white-robed priests accompanied it to the battlefield. As the Carroccio of Siena, drawn by the large mild-eyed oxen of Tuscany, wound its way through the gates and down the sloping olive-clothed hills from the city, crowds followed its course with straining eyes, from the walls and ramparts and housetops. The loss of the Carroccio was to the Republic like the loss of the ark of the Lord to the Hebrews—the greatest public calamity; and all that each city possessed of the most valorous, the nerve and flower of the army, was chosen to act as the guard of the sacred car; the fiercest of the conflict was waged around it; and its presence often decided the fate of the battle." *Crossing the border* :—It was, you observe, the putting forward of their most precious, their priceless, inheritance to the very forefront of the camp, to which the people were summoned in the crossing over Jordan. About three-quarters of a mile, throughout the march, was to separate the ark and its bearers from the body of the travelling host. Why was this? God does nothing in vain. God does nothing without reason. Let us see, then, whether it may not have been in view of another journey and a mightier multitude of travellers that Joshua forbade the children of Israel to go within two thousand cubits of the ark. I. Now it certainly does appear to require some explanation, for it is a very strange and very improbable direction, that the most valuable of all the property the people possessed, that the very emblem of their character as the people of Jehovah, should be ordered to the most exposed of all places in the expedition, the thousands who would have rallied for its defence being ordered to remain nearly a mile in the rear. You recollect how God punished the successors of these pilgrims for exposing the ark in the battlefield in the eyes of the Philistines, who seized it and carried it away. And yet here you have that same consecrated treasure borne by a handful of priests, not only in the front, where the first shock from the Canaanites is certain to be felt, but left unprotected to the mercy of the enemy by this express decree. Verily, if I may not go so far as to reckon this transaction a typical one, at all events I am unable to make anything of the wisdom or prudence of the commandment, unless I see in it a picture of what has happened, again and again, not to the symbols of our modern Christianity, but to that Christianity itself. You can hardly read this chapter without being reminded of words written when ages and generations had gone by, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God." There may, no doubt, be a sense wherein the Church is the champion for the truth, contending earnestly for the faith. We are to wrestle against flesh and blood, and against spiritual wickedness, rather than abandon Christ's gospel to its foes. But there, nevertheless, are times when God determines to dispense with the valour even of the Church, and works the mightiest of His exploits by the unsupported majesty of the gospel itself. I see this in the whole history of Christianity, from the days of its Founder until now. The history of Christianity is not the history of men. It is the history of truth triumphing without men, and even oftentimes in spite of men; so that it has been, as if out of the mouth of babes and of sucklings, that the enemy and the avenger have been stilled, that God might have all the praise. We are Christians, not for God's security, but for our own. We were not converted as if He needed anything; we want the ark, not the ark us; and whensoever you find yourself tempted, in prosperous times, to boast of the Church as if she prospered through you, or whensoever, in adverse times, you find yourselves lamenting over a dead soldier of the Cross, "My father! my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," then remember that in that day, when all the godliness the world knew had laid up its symbols in the ark of the covenant, that ark, all alone, cleft in twain the waters of a river, and put to flight the armies of the alien, giving protection to thousands but receiving none. II. But now, this is not, you will observe, by any means the reason that was given by Joshua himself why the camp should not come nearer to the ark. The reason given is, that the ark was to

be the guide of the travelling host, and that certain very obvious advantages would be gained by the putting of an interval betwixt the leaders and the led. "Come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore." The command had been given to go over the border into the country of the Canaanites, but that border was a deep and a rapid, if not a very wide, river. Had the travelling host come up all together to the banks of the Jordan there might have been hard work to muster up the courage and the faith requisite for the crossing, and so the making way for the miracle. On the other hand, let the priests, the chief men of the congregation, not only go down themselves into that perilous river, but take into it the ark of the covenant whereof they are the appointed and responsible keepers; and let the vanguard of the people not come up to that river until the precious chest, with its bearers, appears in safety in the midst of the current, and until that miraculous channel has been cut, and remains waiting for them to follow in security and comfort, and by this means you get the Israelites into Canaan without loss, and, furthermore, without risking their disobedience or rebellion. I will not insist on the merely abstract position that there is a fitness in putting a guide at some distance from the guided in matters so lofty as religion; that you quicken the reverence of those who follow or obey when you put some interval, whether of nature or of time, betwixt the leaders and the led. This, indeed, might be illustrated by the crossing of the river with two thousand cubits between the ark and the congregation. "Come not near it." Follow it, but treat it with respect. Jesus, in a sense, still commands us, "Touch Me not." Our entire business consists in this—"If any man will be My disciple, let him take up his cross and follow Me." "He left us an example that we should follow His steps." Whereas it surely needs not that we urge it, as the cardinal defect in the piety of most of us, that we forget the cubits which will ever separate the disciple from the Master, the servant from his Lord. Recollect that it was when Iscariot came near enough, nearer than they all, to kiss the Saviour, that he sold Him to His enemies for "thirty pieces of silver." Therefore, as to the ark which hides from you and from your children the things which belong only to the Lord our God, follow it, but "come not near it, that ye may know the way by which ye ought to go." But, as we just now observed, this also is, though very instructive, wide of the mark. There was not merely a lesson on the ark's independence, not merely another lesson on the duty of reverence on the side of the Church, the chief thing was that the ark became a better guide by moving on in front, a thousand yards before the children of Israel. It must surely have struck you, again and again, that, however hard it is for us to live a life of faith eighteen hundred years after the Founder of our faith left the world, it must have been very much harder for those to live it who preceded the Saviour into the world. We speak not of the difference, though that is a great one, between the trusting to a past and an only future Redeemer; we refer rather to the fact that Old Testament Christians had no model, no pattern, by which to be strengthened and guided in their sojourn through the wilderness. Prophets might believe that Messiah would one day die; but prophets could scarcely know how Messiah before dying would live. Well might they "search what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when they testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ." Well they might. That was no mere curiosity. It was because they too had sufferings to endure, and knew well enough how much easier the bearing of them would be if they could bear them within sight of Immanuel's. Now, that is just what we can do. Eighteen centuries, like the two thousand cubits of the Hebrews, divide us in the rear from the living, moving man Christ Jesus, who, before tasting death for every man, tasted all the woes and the wants of life. The four Gospels are the eyes with which we keep Him in view who has gone on in front to mark out our way. If I exult in anything about the writings of the Evangelists, it is in this—that they contain my Master's anticipation of my little walk of faith. There lives not the believer of whose life there was not a rehearsal in Immanuel's. Not, perhaps, in the minuteness and exactness of its detail, but in character and in spirit. I can come into no strait out of which I may not be helped by some strait of my Master's. I can bear no burden which some burden of His will not help me to carry. Our enemies are the same—not that I have the Pharisees, or that He had Englishmen, to confound, but that the spirits of both are alike, and the weapons that must conquer both common to my Master and to me. The gist of this consolation is not that Christ bore what I have to bear: it is that He got through it all, that it did not destroy Him, that He is alive on the other side, and, which is better than all, has left that channel which His faith cut

wide open for me, that I, like my Lord, may go through that same Jordan on dry ground. That is the point: I am not with Christ in the middle of the river. For then how do I know that the waves will not engulf both the Master and the servant? But I see Him, mark you—just as the Hebrews beheld their priests—going down to every one of my sorrows. I see that faith piles up the waves in walls on either hand, and now before I have to touch that water I can catch the beautiful spectacle of that triumphant Forerunner awaiting me on the opposite bank, or else standing unhurt in the midst of the billows; and, having Himself “overcome the sharpness of death,” has also “opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.” (*H. Christopherson.*)

Yet there shall be a space between you and it.—*Divine guidance not to be obscured:*—Some have thought that this was designed as a token of reverence; but in that case it would have been prescribed long before, as soon as the ark was constructed, and began to be carried with the host through the wilderness. The intention was, “that ye may know the way by which you must go” (ver. 4). If this arrangement had not been made, the course of the ark through the flat plains of the Jordan would not have been visible to the mass of the host, but only to those in the immediate neighbourhood, and the people would have been liable to straggle and fall into confusion, if not to diverge altogether. In all cases, when we are looking out for Divine guidance, it is of supreme importance that there be nothing in the way to obscure the object or to distort our vision. Alas, how often is this direction disregarded! How often do we allow our prejudices, or our wishes, or our worldly interests to come between us and the Divine direction we profess to desire! At some turn of our life we feel that we ought not to take a decisive step without asking guidance from above. But our own wishes bear strongly in a particular direction, and we are only too prone to conclude that God is in favour of our plan. We do not act honestly; we lay stress on all that is in favour of what we like; we think little of considerations of the opposite kind. And when we announce our decisions, if the matter concern others, we are at pains to tell them that we have made it matter of prayer. But why make it matter of prayer if we do so with prejudiced minds? It is only when our eye is single that the whole body is full of light. This clear space of two thousand cubits between the people and the ark deserves to be remembered. Let us have a like clear space morally between us and God when we go to ask His counsel, lest peradventure we not only mistake His directions, but bring disaster on ourselves and dishonour on His name. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

Ye have not passed this way heretofore.—*The untrodden path:*—Frequently, in the course of a man's life, he is brought to a standstill before some new difficulty of which till then he has had no experience. Now at such an emergency here is the answer that is given by this ancient story: Put the ark of God in the river before you, and keep it fully in your sight, then though it be overflowing all its banks you shall go over dry shod. Let us take a few instances. There is the young person leaving the parental home and beginning independent life. The lad has known all the experiences of school, and has, perhaps, also made trial of business duties, while yet his evenings and mornings have been spent in the loved society of the family circle; but now he is to go forth a stranger to an unknown city, mayhap even to cross the ocean to a foreign land. Keep the ark clearly before you, young man, and you have nothing to fear. The mariner who can use his quadrant can always tell where he is if he can but get a glimpse of the sun at noon-day; and you may always know your way if you keep unclouded before your faith-eye the Sun of Righteousness. We may further apply this principle to the young woman, on the day when she leaves her father's house to be the centre of the home circle of another. What hopes have gravitated towards that day! what preparations have been made for it! what congratulations have been uttered regarding it! Yet now that it has dawned there is, at her heart, a fluttering of strange anxiety. It is not that she has any, the slightest, element of distrust in him with whom she has linked her lot, but rather that she distrusts herself, and is questioning whether she is equal to the new duties that devolve upon her. So on the very verge of the river she seems to stand with “reluctant feet,” as if she hardly dared to cross. Let her put the ark in the river and keep that in sight, and all will be well. Let her resolutely look to Jesus as her Saviour and sovereign, and the duties of her new life will become easy. The principle on which I am now insisting is also admirably appropriate to the case of those who find themselves face to face with a difficult duty such as has never before confronted them. In general every man's life, after he has fairly set out upon its labours, has what we might call an “even tenor.” There is an ordinary routine of work to be done. But now and then this tranquillity

is interrupted. Something comes that he has not forecast. He is distrustful of himself in the matter. He knows not what to do. Now here again our practical maxim becomes valuable. Send the ark before you and keep it in sight. Remember Jesus and His atoning death. Open your heart for the reception of the Holy Spirit, and then you will be guided as safely through your difficulty as were the tribes through the swollen river. Not for spiritual difficulties alone, not for religious duties merely, as men too commonly use these words, does our maxim hold. To the Christian every difficulty is a spiritual difficulty, and every duty is a religious duty, and so in every emergency he is warranted to look to Christ; nay, he is guilty of a sin not more against God than against himself, if he does not. The ark is as much in its proper place in the counting-house as in the family or in the Church; and if in your business perplexities you had more recourse to Jesus directly and immediately, without letting any intervening human element come in to hide Him from your thoughts, you would more frequently have deliverances to tell of, and would find yourselves singing "new Ebenezers" to His praise. Depend upon it, you will not soon lose yourselves if you keep Him in view. Some years ago a party of travellers were passing over one of the Swiss mountains. After they had gone a considerable way it began to snow heavily, and the oldest of the guides gravely shook his head, and said, "If the wind rises we are lost." Scarcely had he spoken when a gale arose, and the snow was whirled into multitudinous drifts, and all waymarks were obliterated. Cautiously they moved on, not knowing where they were, and almost giving themselves up for lost. At length one of the guides, who had gone a short way before them to search out the path, was heard shouting, "The cross! The cross! We are all right." And what had the cross to do with it? It was one of those religious memorials which we so frequently meet in Roman Catholic countries, and this one, set up at first by some private individual for a personal reason, had become at length a well-known and easily recognised landmark for the traveller. Hence the moment the guide saw it he knew where he was, and what direction to take. But what was true of that symbol in their case is true in all instances of the thing which it signifies; for we may always know where we are when, with our faith-eye, we can see Christ crucified. That reveals every peril, and pierces through every disguise of evil. That bars the way to every dishonour, and barricades the entrance to every pathway of iniquity. Keep that, therefore, in uninterrupted view, and you will never lose your way. But, taking another line of remark, the maxim to which I have referred may be applied to those who are called upon for the first time to bear some heavy trial. Sorrow, in some form or other, must come upon us in the world. But the commonness of it does not make its experience a whit less bitter to those who are required to drink its cup. No matter how many others have suffered before us, our first acquaintance with grief is ever keen and poignant. I shall never forget, while memory lasts, the strangeness of the experience through which I passed when first the reaper "whose name is Death" came into my home, and "with his sickle keen" cut down, at one thrust, two of my children. The stroke blinded me for the moment, and I was like one utterly forlorn; but when at length I opened my eyes, I saw the ark in the river, and that instantly steadied me. I knew then where I was. I remembered then that He who had done it was my covenant God, to whom I had given my little ones in baptism, and since He had chosen so to accept my gift, I asked myself why I should be dismayed? From my own experience, therefore, I can attest the efficacy of this consolation, and commend it to all who are in trouble, more especially to those who have been bereaved. Let the truth symbolised by that ark be but accepted in simple faith, and even in the moment of utter desolation there will come the calmness of resignation, and the confidence which only the hope of reunion with our loved ones can impart. This alone can avail us at such a time. This leads me naturally to remark that the maxim which I have been illustrating may be applied to our own death. However many we may have seen depart, the path to ourselves must be strange and untraversed. Oh, see to it that you then keep Christ in view, for He alone can then sustain you. Through death He has Himself delivered them who, through fear of death, have been all their lifetime subject to bondage. But there may be some who have never yet made Jesus their Saviour by simple trust in Him; and to them I must address one parting word. You have had many difficulties to confront in the past. You know how you failed before them. When your business went from beneath you, and you had no prop to lean upon, how dreary were you then without the Lord! When your child died, and all the world seemed to you draped in sadness, how utterly prostrate were you then in the con-

sciousness that you had no hold on Christ! When you were laid aside with serious sickness, and you thought that you should die, how was your heart filled with dread at the prospect of meeting God! Oh, let the experience of the past warn you for the future! If you failed under the lesser trials, how will you endure the greater? "None but Christ; none but Christ," said Lambert at the stake; and there is none else can be a real helper unto you, either in life or death. Put the ark before you, then, and keep it full in view. That only, but that always, will make the channel dry. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The untrodden path and the guiding ark*:—I. **THE UNTRODDEN PATH.** Our march through time is like that of men in a mist, in which things loom in strangely distorted shapes, unlike their real selves, until we get close up to them, and only then do we discover them. So for us all the path is new and unknown by reason of the sudden surprises that may be sprung upon us, by reason of the sudden temptations that may start up at any moment in our course, by reason of the earthquakes that may shatter the most solid-seeming lives, by reason of the sudden calamities that may fall upon us. The sorrows that we anticipate seldom come, and those that do come are seldom anticipated. The most fatal bolts are generally from the blue. One flash, all unlooked for, is enough to blast the tree in all its leafy pride. Many of us, I have no doubt, can look back to times in our lives when, without anticipation on our part, or warning from anything outside of us, a smiting hand fell upon some of our blessings. The morning dawned upon the gourd in full vigour of growth, and in the evening it was stretched yellow and wilted upon the turf. Anything may come out of that dark cloud through which our life's course has to pass. And there are some things concerning which all that we know is that they must come. II. **THE GUIDING ARK.** For us a similar thing is true. Jesus Christ is the true Ark of God. For what was the ark? The symbol of the Divine presence; and Christ is the reality of the Divine presence with men. The whole content of that ark was the law of the Lord. And Jesus Christ is the embodied law of the present God. The ark was the sign that God had entered into this covenant with these people, and that they had a right to say to Him, "Thou art our God, and we are Thy people." And the same double assurance of reciprocal possession and mutual delight in possession is granted to us in and through Jesus Christ our Lord. So He becomes the guiding Ark, the Shepherd of Israel. His presence and will our directors. The law, which is contained and incorporated in Him, is that by which we are to walk. The covenant which He has established in His own blood between God and man contains in itself not only the direction for conduct, but also the motives which will impel us to walk where and as He enjoins. And so, every way we may say, by His providences which He appoints, by His example which He sets us, by His gracious Word in which He sums up all human duties in the one sweet obligation, "Follow Me," and even more by His Spirit that dwells in us, and whispers in our ears, "This is the way; walk ye in it," and enlightens every perplexity, and strengthens all feebleness, and directs our footsteps into the way of peace; that living and personal Ark of the covenant of the Lord of the whole earth is still the guide of waiting and docile hearts. III. **THE WATCHFUL FOLLOWING:** "Come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye ought to go." In a shipwreck the chances are that the boats will be swamped by the people scrambling into them in too great a hurry. In the Christian life most of the mistakes that people make arise from their not letting the ark go far enough ahead of them before they gather up their belongings and follow it. An impatience of the half-declared Divine will, a running before we are sent, an acting before we are quite sure that God wills us to do so and so, are at the root of most of the failures of Christian effort, and of a large number of the miseries of Christian men. If we would only have patience! Three-quarters of a mile the ark went ahead before a man lifted a foot to follow it. And there was no mistake possible then. Now do not be in a hurry to act. "Raw haste" is "half-sister to delay." We are all impatient of uncertainty, either in opinion or in conduct; but if you are not quite sure what God wants you to do, you may be quite sure that He does not at present want you to do anything. Wait till you see what He does wish you to do. Better, better far, to spend hours in silent—although people that know nothing about what we are doing may call it indolent—waiting for the clear declaration of God's will, than to hurry on paths which, after we have gone on them far enough to make it a mortification and a weariness to turn back, we shall find out to have been not His at all, but only our own mistakes as to where the ark would have us go. And that there may be this patience the one thing needful—as, indeed, it is the one thing

needful for all strength of all kinds in the Christian life--is the rigid suppression of our own wills. Suppress your own wills, dwell near God, that you may hear His lightest whisper. "I will guide thee with Mine eye." What is the use of the glance of an eye if the man for whom it is meant is half a mile off, and staring about him at everything except the eye that would guide? And that is where some of us that call ourselves Christian people are. God might look guidance at us for a week, and we should never know that He was doing it, we have so many other things to look after. And we are so far away from Him that it would need a telescope for us to see His face. "I will guide thee with Mine eye." Keep near Him, and you will not lack direction. (*A. Maclaren. D.D.*) *The untravelled and irretraceable way* (with Deut. xvii. 16):—I. OUR LIFE, LIKE ISRAEL'S JOURNEY, IS BY A NEW WAY: "Ye have not gone this way heretofore." What others have felt and done is no sure chart of what we shall do and feel. The ship just coming in cannot predict what will be the voyage of the one just starting out. Like a journey in an unfamiliar, mountainous country, every step is into a new region; strange and unexpected scenes arise. II. LIFE IS ALSO BY AN IRRETRACEABLE WAY: "Ye shall no more return that way." Like Israel, we look for the first and the last time upon the scenery as we pass through it. We may change the direction of life, correct its tendencies, find pardon for its sins and follies, but we never can retrace the steps already taken. III. OUR EXPERIENCES, LIKE THOSE OF ISRAEL, ARE FOR PURPOSES OF DISCIPLINE. There is a moral strength, patience, perseverance, and trust, gotten by the valleys we traverse, the steeps we climb, and the magnitudes we see. One day Divine wisdom will be justified in all eyes for this uneven, circuitous path of life. IV. OUR JOURNEY ALSO LEADS TO THE PROMISED LAND, AND FIDELITY WILL BRING US THERE. We are not in doubt as to whither we go, however unforeseen the way may be. Calebs and Joshuas even now bring us marvellous clusters of fruit as foretastes. We climb, here and there, Pisgahs, to be refreshed by the prospect. We are sure that when our feet touch that "darkly flowing river" it will part, and we shall easily go over. However uncertain the future, some things are sure. A few great truths, sunk deep in the heart, are all we absolutely need for the journey. God never leaves the soul without some light. As Charles Kingsley said, in the London fog: "There is always light enough to get home." (*T. S. Scott.*) *Untrodden ways*:—I. Thoughts suggestive of CONSOLATION. 1. Remember, whether your way in providence be new or old, it is not a way of your own appointing. A higher power than yours has led you to your present standing-place. It must, therefore, be right. God has never erred yet, either in guiding a star in its orbit, or in directing the chaff from the winnower's hand, and He cannot err in steering the course of one of His people. "Say ye unto the righteous it shall be well with him"; for "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way." "My times are in Thy hand." 2. Note again, your present pathway is new to you, but it is not new to your God. All things are equally present to His eye. Nothing comes upon Him by surprise. 3. Remember, also, the trials which seem new to us are not new to God's people. Joshua said to the tribes, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore"; but then their forefathers had gone through the Red Sea, which was much the same thing, and perhaps on a greater scale still. Do not, therefore, say or imagine that your woes are peculiar. Others have suffered as much as you are enduring. If it be strange to you it is only to you strange, for the rest of God's saints have suffered the same. 4. But suppose our position should be new, the labour new, the affliction new, it is no sort of reason why it should be any the more dangerous. It is folly to be alarmed at new things because they are new. There may be less danger, after all, in the trial you dread than in that which you are bearing to-day. 5. And suppose that, being new, it were dangerous; one thing is very clear, namely, that fear will not diminish the danger. To fret, and worry, and mistrust, will that prepare you for what is coming? Will it aid you to die to begin this day to "feel a thousand deaths in fearing one"? No, if the worst come to the worst, nothing can sharpen your sword so well for battle as faith in the ever-living God. 6. Hitherto and up to this moment we have found our God to be faithful to us. These present crosses which are now upon our shoulders, we say we would rather always bear them than have new crosses, but is this wise? Do you not recollect when these very crosses were themselves new? To-day's grief will only be new for to-day and for a little time to come; it will soon grow old if we live long enough, and we shall become as used to the new trial as to the old. 7. Moreover, should we become distrustful whilst passing by a way which we have never trodden before if we recollected that progress

implies a change of difficulties and trials? Who wants to be like a blind horse going round a mill for ever and ever, feeling the lash of the same whip at the same place, and dragging the same machinery round without advancing? No, let us advance. And what if in going on we meet with sterner trials? Then so let it be, for we shall receive richer grace. 8. If there come new trials, they generally end the old ones. I do not know what my trials may be seven years hence, but I do know that the trials of this month will not then disturb me. When we bow beneath the infirmities of age, we may rest assured that we shall not be annoyed by the temptations of boyhood, nor molested by the vexations of middle life. In advancing, there are prospects of gain as well as of loss. 9. Moreover, although we have not passed this way heretofore, the path runs in the right direction. The children of Israel had their faces set towards the promised land. Courage, brothers and sisters! The way may be rough to us, but it is the King's highway, leading to the New Jerusalem. II. A few sentences of DIRECTION. Where-withal shall a man be guided when he comes to a way which he has not passed heretofore? When our way is devoid of familiar footprints, what shall we do? 1. Be most concerned to hear the word of the Lord, and obey it. Notice that this chapter seems taken up with "The Lord said unto Joshua," and "Joshua said unto the people of Israel." The chief point in every dilemma is to wait till you hear the Master's voice. 2. Distinctly recognise the presence of the covenant God of Israel with you. We never travel so sweetly over the rough ways of this life as when we see that God, the living God, the God of the covenant, the God of the mercy-seat, the God of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the God of the reconciliation by blood, is with us and fulfilling His promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." 3. Dismiss from your soul the anxiety which arises from the idea that you are the keeper of the Divine life within your soul. When Israel marched through the wilderness some tribes were before and some were behind the ark, as if they were guarding it; but on this occasion the ark went far ahead of them, as though God had said, "You My people are no protection to Me; I guard you." Now in the time of danger the priests who carry the ark advance into the very teeth of the enemy, and into the bed of the Jordan, and there they stand, as though the eternal God threw down the gauntlet to all the hosts of Canaan and said, "Come and contest it with Me if you can. I have left My people behind; I alone will meet you; I have come up alone, unattended, and I defy you all." God's grace will take care of him upon whom it lights. 4. As further directions let me briefly say, if you are now about to enter into a great trouble, do not hurry, make no rash haste. If the grace of God does not make us calm in the time of peril and suffering, we have some reason to question whether it is healthily operating upon our spirits at all. 5. But next, while you do not hurry, do not hesitate. Not one man of all the tribes said, "I must wait and see others cross, and know whether the road really is open." At the moment the trumpets sounded the advance they all went on, asking no questions. Be brave, also, and go straight on, though it were a river of fire instead of water. If Jehovah bids you, the way is right; hesitate not. 6. There is one direction which we must not omit, because it is put by itself for special observance—it is this, "Sanctify yourselves." Whenever we are in new trials a voice speaks out of them, saying, "Sanctify yourselves." I suppose the Israelites washed themselves with water and practised the ceremonial rights which made them clean; so the child of God should come afresh in time of trouble to the precious blood of Christ. He should also ask for grace that he may purge out the old leaven. III. A few sentences by way of exciting EXPECTATION. Before us rolls this river, full to its brim; beyond the river, contention and strife await us; let us lift up our hearts to God and trust Him, and what shall then happen? 1. Why, first, we shall discern the presence of the living God (ver. 10). Anything which gives us an opportunity to see our God is worth having. Even the light of the fiery furnace, if no other light can reveal that fourth who is like the Son of God, is a precious light. Thank God that trouble is coming, for now, as through a glass, shall you behold the glory of the Lord. 2. What next will happen then? Why, in all probability the difficulty in your way will cease to be; for while the children of Israel saw the living God, they also saw a totally new and wonderful phenomenon. God does interfere in ways which could not have been prognosticated by those who best understand the science of probabilities. God flings down the challenge every day to Satan and to sin, and says, "Here is My child; I put him in a new position to-day; see if you can overcome him now." To-morrow God will issue the same challenge, and so on to the end. Perhaps this new trouble has come

because Satan has said, "Put forth now Thine hand and touch his bone, and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face"; but God is saying, "Try him, try him," only with this view, that He may get glory by causing our weakness to overcome all the strength of hell through grace Divine. 3. Is this all that we have to expect? No, we shall see such deliverances that we shall be prepared for future trials. Sometimes a trouble, when we are marvellously brought through it, becomes a kind of stock-in-trade for us; we look back upon it when the next affliction comes, and we say, "No, I am not afraid; the God who helped me on that occasion can help me now." 4. Lastly, and this is best of all, and will please the children of God most—all that is coming to you will magnify Jesus in your eyes. Jesus is very dear to every child of God, but to the most tried He is the most precious. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The untrodden way:—Another year is numbered with the past. To each of us it has been marked by events materially affecting us for weal or woe. A new year, richly laden with golden possibilities, is now opening before us. What may transpire during it is concealed from our present view. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." Nor need we be dismayed by reason of this obscurity; indeed, we would not have it otherwise. All that we require in going forth to meet whatever may arise, is to realise the presence with us of the God of Israel, and to follow the pillar of cloud and of fire. Several important truths were pictured forth under the Jewish dispensation by the symbol of the ark of the covenant. 1. The recognition of the Divine presence. 2. The duty of striving after the honouring of the Divine law. 3. The privilege of communion with God through the Mediator. When the children of Israel were commanded to "go after" the ark of the covenant of the Lord, they were in fact urged, in all their future wanderings, to seek to live under a continual sense of the Divine presence, to strive to honour the Divine law, and to hold fellowship with Heaven. Even so let it be with you. Think of the eye of God as being upon your way; yea, be your spirit that which led one to say, "If Thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." Take the principles of God's own Word, and act upon them. Seek counsel and help from Heaven. Lift up to God "holy hands." Have a mercy-seat; some spot sacred to hallowed and refreshing communion with God. And, pursuing this course, the weeks and months of the year will pass happily along in your experience: new duties will be faithfully performed, new temptations successfully resisted; your witness to the truth will be decided in its character; strength, both for service and for suffering, will be secured; and "the beauty of the Lord your God" being thus upon you, He will "establish the work of your hands." There are two very plain reasons why it behoves us to take this course. (1) Our way in the future is unknown to us, and hence we need to be Divinely directed. The waters of doubt and uncertainty are flowing over the path we have to tread, quite obliterating it from our view. We stand to-day, looking on to the goodly land beyond, the land of light and love, of rest and peace, of beauty and blessedness, of eternal purity and uprightness, but we cannot tell by what way we are to be brought into its full possession. And the path before us being thus an unknown one, we do well to yield ourselves up to the guidance of our God; and, taking this course, we may rest assured that He will conduct us in safety, and bring us at length into the fulness of His rest. (2) The future is new to us. Events and experiences, totally different from anything we have had before, will occur to us. But, living as in God's presence, and in obedience to His will, and in fellowship with Him at His throne, arise what may, we shall be Divinely supported. (*S. D. Hillman.*)

New experiences:—It was the impressiveness of a new experience. A ship's company who have lived together for a few weeks, growing accustomed to their shipboard life, at last draw near the land towards which they have been sailing, and it is always striking to see how a quietness and seriousness seems to come over them in the last hours before they go on shore. New things are waiting for them there. They are going to exchange the familiar for the unfamiliar; so there is little of lightness and much seriousness. And this is the way in which life keeps its solemnity. Let us look to-day at this power of unprecedented things, and try to get some idea of the true way to approach them. Apply it first of all to the changes which are coming all the time in the circumstances of our lives. If you go and stand in the midst of London, or climb to the top of the pyramids, or set yourself in the middle of a snowfield of the Alps, it is a thrilling and delightful experience. What is it that makes it so? It is that you carry your old self there. Some accidental parts of yourself you have left behind in Boston, but your essential self, with your habits and your ways of thinking, you have carried

there; and the wonder is to feel this identity of yours standing among these unfamiliar things, beaten by the waves of this strange city life, frowned on by the hoary ages, or lighted by the glory of the everlasting snows. And now let it be the going, not from Boston to Egypt, but from wealth to poverty, from poverty to wealth, from health to sickness, from sickness to health, from one business to another business, from one home to another home. Oh, when any of the changes of life draws near to you, whenever God is leading you into new circumstances, clasp with new fervour and strength the old hand which you have long been holding, but prepare to feel it send new meanings to you as it clasps your hand with a larger hold. And since you are always entering into some new life, whether it mark itself by notable outward change or not, always hold the hand of God in grateful memory of past guidance and eager readiness for new—that is, in love and in faith. It is by this same principle that we are able to picture to ourselves the natural and healthy way by which men ought to pass from one period or age of life into another. A young man's life is full of novelty. Behind him, with a river rolling between, there lies that despised land in which he was a child, bound to obey what others commanded, and not knowing enough to doubt what others said was true. What shall we say about the progress which the boy seems to have made across the gap that lies between him and his childhood? Shall we not certainly say this, that the progress is natural and healthy and good, that the gap is unnatural and bad? I think there is no better condition of the human nature to contemplate than that of a young man dealing truly and seriously with the faith of his fathers which has been implicitly his childhood's faith. He finds new questions rising which he never dreamed of. The faith which is shaping for his manhood evidently is to not be wholly the same as that in which he was trained. He is to see more of God, he is to see God differently; but the essential thing is this, that it is to be the same God whom he has been seeing, that he is still to see. It is to be an enlargement of faith as he makes it his own, not a flinging away of faith with a mere possibility of finding it again some day. This is the meaning of a boy's or a young man's confirmation. It is the gathering up of all the faith and dutiful impulse of the past that it may go before the life into the untried fields. All this applies indeed to every change from period to period of life. The poetry of all growing life consists in carrying an oldness into a newness, a past into a future, always. Take what you believe and are, and hold it in your hand with new firmness as you go forward; but as you go, holding it, look on it with continual and confident expectation to see it open into something greater and truer. I think, again, that the picture of the relation between the old and the new which is seen in our story throws light upon the true method and spirit of all change in religious opinions. Men and women do go on, led by God, step by step, until they come where what has seemed to them to be true seems to them to be true no longer, and something which they once disbelieved has opened to them its soul of truth. Another spiritual prospect opens to them which they never saw before. God is different; the Bible is very different; Christ is profoundly different; and their own natures reveal to them sights which are all strange and unexpected. There is no sense of newness and inexperience in the world like that. No change of outward circumstances can for a moment match it. "You have not passed this way before" seems to be rung into the soul's ears out of every new application of the new-learned truth to everything. And then, just then, when all seems new, and we are bewildered and exalted with the opening spiritual prospect, then is the time to call up the ark of God, which may have fallen in the rear, and to set it clearly in the front. Then, when you are going forth into regions of spiritual thought that are new to you, then you need to put all the honesty and purity and unselfishness of your nature in the van of your life; then you need to review and renew your old covenant with God; then you want to have all your earnestness, all your sense of the value of truth, refreshed in you. The principle which we have been studying seems to furnish again the law of all more distinctly spiritual life and progress. It furnishes the law of the conversion-time, for there the new and old unite; we pass on into the new under the guidance and assurance of the old. If you want to make a man a Christian, how shall you begin? You will bid him open his ears and hear the voice of a Saviour who has been always pleading. You will call up, out of the past, signs of God's love which he has never seen, but which have been always there. You will set those signs of a love which has always been at the head of the progress which is yet to be. You will say, "I beseech you therefore, brother, by the mercies of God, that you present your body a living

sacrifice to Him." And so, as the host of the Israelites stopped by the Jordan's bank before they crossed, until the old ark of the desert had swept through their ranks and taken its true place at their head, the believer's new conviction and hope waits on the brink of the new life till the mercies of the past have swept on to the front, and stand ready to lead into the yet untrodden fields of God. All this does not apply only to the one critical experience of the spiritual life which we call conversion; it is true of all spiritual progress. Never let your Christian life disown its past. Let every new and higher consecration and enjoyment into which you enter be made real to you by bringing into it all that Christ has already trained within you of grace and knowledge. To the soul which dares believe the vast and precious truth of God's personal love, all life becomes significant, and no past is so dreary that out of it there will not come up some ark of God to lead us to the richer things beyond. I pass to one more application of our principle. It concerns our thoughts about the new life which awaits the soul in heaven. We think of the strangeness of that life into which they pass who have done with all the old familiar things of earth. Once, only once, for every man it comes. "We have not passed this way heretofore," men are saying to themselves, as they begin to feel their path slope downward to the grave. It is that consciousness which we see coming in their faces when they know that they must die. And beyond death lies the unknown world. "No man hath seen God at any time," said Jesus; but there the power of the new life is to be that "we shall see Him as He is." The highest, truest thought of heaven which man can have is of the full completion of those processes whose beginning he has witnessed here, their completion into degrees of perfectness as yet inconceivable, but still one in kind with what he is aware of now. Having this thought of heaven, all the deepest life of this world is leading the man towards it. When he goes in there at last, it will be his old life with God that leads him. It will be his long desire to see God which at last introduces him to the sight of God. It will be his long struggle with sin which finally prepares him for the world where he can never sin. The powers and affections which are training in your family, your business, and your Church, are to find their eternal occupation along the streets of gold. And so the long life of heaven shall be bound to the short life of earth for ever. (*Bp. Phillips Brooks.*) *Never this way before*:—1. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." Then it does now seem likely that the good Lord expects to give us one more chance. We are always entering upon new periods of time. Anniversary days mark the recurrence of events and afford opportunities for reflection. Birthdays and death days are full of meaning. What we ought to remember is the undoubted fact that in this twelvemonth to come we shall find ourselves travelling over pretty much the same route we went last year. There will not be anything extraordinarily surprising. Differences will be in the details. 2. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." Then, in the fresh chance God is giving, He offers Himself to be our helper and friend. Time, time—unused, unexhausted, and unknown—sweeps about our poor little seven decades of living, and will keep its course resistlessly on after the end is reached, just as it ran its course before we were born into its beginning. Thus all the songs we sing, the wails we utter, and the prayers we make must choose expression somewhere among the combinations of seventy years allotted to each creature, and they have but one chance at a time. We are marched up according to programme, and play our tune, like so many performers in a concert given in the presence of God. During this year the concert will be repeated. The programme remains in good measure unchanged. We failed last year. The chances of life are open again. God offers to help us along. Our parts are to be played over. Will we accept a teacher this time, or not? 3. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." Then, surely, the gifts of God's love on ahead of us have not been appropriated by others nor exhausted by ourselves. There comes a day in which any one can afford to be honestly simple and unaffected in all his surroundings, and relinquish this folly of labouring to keep up appearances for mere show. More pitiful folly still is that which jealousy engenders; for the man has ingeniously wasted his time in distancing others, who, when distanced, are dead. He has triumphed, but nobody is in the grand procession which he had imagined would immediately be formed in his honour. It makes a poor show to have no king dragging on behind the chariot. 4. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore," but it is well to remember that the ark has not passed this way heretofore either. It is significant here to notice that these people were told to accept God's guidance implicitly. The first time they had essayed to enter Canaan, their own folly had

hindered. Now they were to be led by the sign of God's unfailing love. Herein is instruction for wise men along the ages. It makes life a new thing to put the ark on before it. God's purpose, infolded in a human life, renders the life immortal. "The Christian cannot die before his time"; that time God fixes. 5. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." Now, with the ark on ahead, the joy of the Lord is your strength. Once, I remember, I picked up a small bird which had fallen on the pavement by my feet. I sought to reinstate it among the branches overhead; but the creature could not appreciate my generosity, and with passionate eagerness struggled to escape. I began unconsciously to talk aloud to it, "Poor, silly thing; why do you not trust your best friend? All I want is to get you up again in the fork of the tree. You are making it harder for me by dashing so against my fingers; for I am obliged to hold you firmly, and you do all the hurting yourself." Why is it we all struggle so, when the Lord is giving us help? We enter upon untrodden paths, but the skies are bright, and heaven is nearer, and the good God is overhead. It is likely most of us will recall the story of Longfellow in his romance. Paul Fleming entered that little chapel of Saint Gilgen. On the tomb above his head was the inscription, "Look not mournfully into the past, it comes not back again. Wisely improve the present, it is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear and with a manly heart." It was as if a voice came into his ear from the dead, and the anguish of his thoughts was still. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *The new year and the new way* :—

1. We begin the new year with anticipations, wondering what it hides in its hands for us. The limitations of human ignorance are most humiliating. We can tell where a comet will be in a thousand years, but not where we shall be to-morrow. We have plans, projects, purposes, but who knows aught of fulfilment, realisation, certainty? The providence of God is ever putting pressure upon us—the pressure of necessity, or that of desire and inclination, to go out and go on; but it is very much in the dark we have to go. To God the Lord belong the ongoings of life and the issues of death. The unknown journey ends in the darkening way of death. 2. The mystery of life is thus suggested by the text; it also teaches its newness. How many things are going to happen which never happened to us before! Old thoughts, eternal purposes of God, are ripening for us; and God never repeats Himself. Thus circumstanced, what charm, what spell will you take to your heart to bear you on and through to safety and home? Do you not need—I. THE LIVING PRESENCE? Amid a changing world there is a changeless God. Standing where we do, at the entrance to a new way, "we are like those who, waiting a new arrival, go out to the gate to look for one who is coming—to listen for a footfall." We feel there is One, without whom life could hardly be life, or bring content.

II. GUIDANCE. A guide knows and directs. He knoweth the way we take. The word means, not mere acquaintance with, but anxiety concerning; careful observation; to trouble one's self about the matter. It is thus God knows. He concerns Himself about our way through life. III. MERCIES. God knows all needs, and He provides. He will not leave nor forsake thee until He hath done that which He hath spoken to thee of. Bread shall be given—water shall be sure. Enough, by care and patient thrift, for living, for reasonable desires, for all; more for some. But unfailing mercies for every day, for always, for all. And this because "having loved His own who are in the world, He loves them to the end." (W. H. Davison.)

Religious help in new circumstances :—It is very wonderful how the element of novelty seems to penetrate our whole life, so that though we are surrounded by the old conditions we are always about to do something new. The things which we do may be like one another in certain broad features, yet they may be contradistinguished by fine lines of difference so minute and delicate as to be seen only by the closest attention. In the discrimination and right estimate of such lines lies the difference between a life that is lived roughly and a life that is finely balanced and critically calculated and arranged in every detail and bearing.

1. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore," therefore do not go until you be assured of the Divine presence and protection. What is the way? Is it a new year? Will you encounter unknown time in your own strength? Is it a new enterprise? Dare you challenge the secret resources of fortune without any help but your own? Is it a new discipline? It may destroy you if you have not bread to eat that the world knoweth not of. The great historical fact upon which you have to rest is that God has been with His people in every possible variety of circumstances, and that His love never changes (Exod. iii. 12; Josh. i. 5; Prov. iii. 5-6; Ps. xxxvii. 5; Isa. xxx. 21). 2. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore"; it is

quite right, consequently, to take new ways and untried paths in life. (1) Socially. New companionships, new alliances, new partnerships; opening up our friendly, conjugal, and commercial life. (2) Nationally. New compacts, new wars, new laws. We are bound by every consideration arising out of stewardship and responsibility to try new. 3. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore"; there are some particulars in which this must be true even of the least eventful life. (1) Is it an uneventful thing for a young man to leave his home that he may try to make his way in the world? "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." What a world it is! "Full of temptations and hidden snares," &c. (2) Is it an uneventful thing for a man to die? What is beyond? How do we become prepared for the world unseen? Is that world more sharply divided than this; for here the wicked have some enjoyments, and the righteous many pains? Is it true that in this world we really make the next? This is a journey we must all take; we may take it blindly, we may rush upon it madly, or we may so live as to become enabled to say, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit." 4. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore"—the suggestion is not human, but Divine; it is God Himself that proposes to guide and defend the lives of men. Before we pray, He answers! Consider how true it is that all the great proposals which have made our life richer and better have come from God, and in no degree from our own poor wit or genius. "It is not good for the man to be alone"—that is one. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore"—that is another. "Come now, let us reason together"—that is a third. And so on throughout all our life. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

The unknown year and the untrodden way:—We are entering now on a new year, and going up into new time territory. "We have not passed this way heretofore." And it becomes us to be more than usually solicitous to know the way by which we are led, and the whole will of God concerning us in the leading. It may be well, however, to take heed that an unprofitable curiosity does not usurp the place of a wholesome solicitude. It is as true now as it was when our Lord spoke the words, that "times and seasons," eras and epochs, are put in God's own power. Enough is revealed for the direction of practical conduct. Enough is conceded for the nourishment of childlike faith. We feel, then, as we stand on the margin of the year, at the portal of its days, that there can be no rehearsal in our knowledge of its coming events, either those of public importance or those of our individual lives. We know not what it is to bring forth; but we know well that it will bring forth something, and that that something will in all probability be important. When we know the parents, we can guess what the children will be. This year is the child of all the years, and especially of the last years that have sped. "We have not passed this way heretofore." The vista of the bygone years was never so long as it is to-day. Time never carried such a burden of events on his shoulders. History never held in her bosom so many mysteries not yet solved, so many explanations not yet given, so many germs for future flowering. God has never had so much on hand in the earth. In such a time, with what emphasis come the Saviour's words to us: "Watch: what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch"! "We have not passed this way heretofore." We may be going to pass a Jordan of our own in more respects than one. Nothing is more certain than that we are now in the very process of a great social revolution, affecting not merely this or that separate sphere or relation in human affairs, but touching the very basis of society, and all the laws under which men live. That we need a revival is certain. It is equally certain that we may have it for the asking. No doubt many are asking for it, unknown to us; and the thing asked for (God grant it) may be on its way! But we discontinue this strain of supposition, again reminding you that this year we are not far from Jordan, and that, in more senses than one, we may soon be crossing it. We are somewhere in the great army which is marching onwards, and not only ought we to be conscious of our own progress, but wisely observant of the changes that are going on around us. The times themselves are "put in God's own power." The "signs" of the times are held out for our instruction, that we may, in a measure, know what God is doing and what we ourselves ought to do. But it will be well to make a much narrower and more personal application of this principle. We, as individuals, we, as we now are, have not passed by any way at all. We have been journeying for years, but always changing; so that now, while the same in personal identity, we are yet morally and circumstantially different. Our letters come under the same address, but they are opened and read by men not quite the same. We have not sub-let our house, and yet the occupant is different. It is a strange, subtle process of change which is thus going on; but it is as certain

and as resistless as the flow of time itself. Keeping, then, in view these two things—the outward and the inward change—both of which are sure to go on during the coming year. I would venture to utter some appropriate watchwords for the year—“notes” of the life we must aim to live as the days go by. 1. Vigilance. Have the senses well exercised and ready for quick and true discernment of men and things. Without something of this sleepless vigilance, without the “inevitable eye,” we shall lose much of what is in the year, and in the year for us. We are travellers. But the time that carries us forward is not like an old stage-coach that goes lumbering along the same road by which it has run for many years, the passengers by which can tell exactly what objects and scenes lie along the line and will come into sight at a particular part of the road and time of the day. We ascend the chariot of the year, and it rolls where never chariot-wheels have left mark before, where scenes which have never been revealed to man or angel, or the actual sight of God, will unfold themselves. No one can tell how much we may miss by being asleep or only half-awake. 2. Promptitude. We watch for occasions, that we may seize them; for opportunities, that we may improve them; for friendly influences, that we may yield to them; for adverse powers, that we may resist them; for the morning, that we may answer “girded!” to its labour-call; for the evening, that we may enter within the shadow of its rest; for temptation, that we may vanquish or flee from it; for privilege, that we may embrace it; for the hour of prayer, that we may pray; for God in His manifold revealings and comings to us, that we may receive Him as our God, and that we may give ourselves to Him more than “heretofore.” 3. Courage will often be needed to do what the hand finds to do. The possession and cultivation of moral courage, therefore, is another very necessary preparation for this way that we have not passed heretofore. We know not what any day of the year may bring forth; but we know, just as well as we know that the days are coming, that, if we live to pass through them, we shall need to be morally brave, or fail. We know that the craven spirit, with which, alas! we are so ready to purchase a momentary ease, will cover us with shame, and bring defeat and dishonour quickly after us as pursuers, and that boldness and confidence will carry us through. 4. Gentleness is a good word to put under the shelter of courage, and a good thing to put among the preparations for the unknown year. We are not really fitted, in the fullest sense, for the journey of a year, unless we are full of tenderness, unless we are full of tears. The children will be around us wherever we are; for, like the daisies, like the sparrows, they are everywhere. The young will be rising into manhood and womanhood, and some of them will be looking Zionwards and sensitively watching to see if there be any who understand their look, so as to look back and help and welcome them. The sick will be suffering through their weary days and nights; and the poor will be struggling; and those who have seen better days will be coming down the hill in our sight, bearing themselves with dignity as in the former time, although now the wardrobe is but poorly filled, and the table scantily spread; and the sensitive will be shrinking, and the miserable will be praying; the hopeless wondering if any help will come to them. What a world to live in! and what need for a pitiful gentleness! Walk softly, then, and have a care! 5. We should be poorly furnished for the way we have not been heretofore, without filial confidence, which will easily, when occasion comes, pass into resignation. There will be much to try faith and patience, and love and loyalty. God knows all; there is but one way for us—to trust Him with a deep, filial trust, with a love that will cast out all fear, and to resign ourselves utterly, and in everything, to His most holy will. 6. For, whatever comes, there will always be, not only need and occasion, but ground and reason, for serene, invincible hopefulness. Good is better and stronger than evil. Greater is the world above than the world below! Greater is life than death. Greater is this year than any of its predecessors (whatever may be its particular events), as being nearer the end, when “life and immortality,” in the heavenly sense, shall “be brought to light.” (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) *The untrodden and unknown way.*—We may speculate and conjecture about what is to befall us, or to befall the Church and the world in the course of this year; but the sagacity of the wisest statesmen cannot forecast the events of the near future. Neither can the knowledge of the most learned inform us what shall be on the morrow. This is a thought that may humble our intellectual pride, and may prevent us from being puffed up by the little knowledge to which we have attained. But we are not in absolute ignorance of what will probably be the nature and character of some of the events of the future. We know that as the present leaves us the future will find us. We enter into this year with the

character, principles, and habits that marked our life in the past. Life is a continuous thing. Character becomes a continuous thing. Old things have not passed away from us with the old year, and all things have not, with the new year, become new to us. This is a solemn and an awful thought, because it indicates to us that not only do we enter on the new year with the character and principles of the past year, and that if we enter on the year without the love of God in our hearts, we cannot be happy, but it also indicates to us that as we pass from the days of time so shall we enter on the ever-revolving and endless ages of eternity. Let us give due consideration to this thought, and it may, through the grace of God, by destroying a most prevalent and fatal delusion—the delusion by which multitudes deceive and ruin their souls, that somehow or other to-morrow, or at least the time of death, will work a grand transformation of their state and character—awaken us now, in the precious passing present, to give heed to the things of our peace, that they may not at length be hid from our eyes. The statement, “Ye have not passed this way heretofore,” is not inconsistent with our knowledge thus far of the future that it will, to a great extent, take its colour, complexion, and character from the present. The connection between years as measurements of men’s lives is not that merely of antecedence and succession. It is more. It is a connection as between cause and consequence or effect, as between seed and fruit. Time, that develops the germ in the acorn into the stately oak; time, that developeth tares from their seeds, will gradually evolve what are the seeds from which our words and actions grow. The tree of character will be known by its fruits. But from the moral connection between past, present, and future, as related to our lives and characters, not only will the future be a developing time, but it will also be, because of this, a time of reaping, a sort of harvest time. If in the past year we have been sowing to the flesh, we may most certainly in the year to come expect to reap corruption. And if in the past we have been sowing to the Spirit, we may expect to reap in this year the fruits of the Spirit in love, joy, and peace. I may remark that the words, “Ye have not passed this way heretofore,” are not inconsistent with our certain knowledge that the days of the new year will introduce us to duties, trials, temptations, and, it may be, sufferings similar to those, if indeed not greater than those of the past year. As in the past, so in the future, we shall be called to serve and glorify the Lord—to love the Lord with all our heart, strength, soul, and mind, and our neighbours as ourselves. We shall be called to work the work of God, to believe in Jesus, and to walk as He also walked. We shall be called to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. “Study,” therefore, my brother, “to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.” The new year will bring with it new trials, new afflictions. But as in the past, so in the future, the child of God may appropriate for his comfort the words, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called, according to His purpose.” Nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.” We know that the new year will bring with it new temptations. The passions that war in our members have not become extinct, have not passed away with the old year. They go with us into the new year. And as in the past, so in the future, they will entice us into sin. Satan has not ceased with the days of the former year. He enters with us into the days of this year. And into this year he carries all his subtlety, all his malice, all his guile. We know, therefore, that new temptations, new seducements to sin, will be laid in our path. The world has lost none of its many powers—none of its many arts of deception. We may, therefore, expect that the world will attempt to ensnare us in the future, just as it attempted to allure us in the past. But we must listen to the word that admonishes us, “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.” The new year may bring with it new forms of trial, unexpected sufferings and bereavements. It may bear to us the summons, “The Master is come, and calleth for thee.” We cannot tell. But this we know, that preparedness to meet that summons—preparedness to meet the Lord, is a most blessed state of soul. But a fourth idea is involved in the words, “Ye have not passed this way heretofore”; it is that we may expect to witness or behold in this new way, in this untrodden path, new displays of the grace and power of the Lord, the leader and commander of His people. The way is unknown to us, but it is known to the Lord. And we are sure that He “leadeth His people by the right way, that they may go to the city of habitation—to that city whose founder and builder is God.” (*G. Macaulay.*) *Ye have not passed this way heretofore* :—We are travelling onward, but the future is hidden from our eyes. We are not as those

whose path lies across an extensive plain, and the boundary of whose vision is far away, but rather like those who are journeying in a deep valley, and who cannot see the storms that may be gathering behind the mountains. Our horizon is very limited. What Jordans we may have to cross we know not. But we have an ark, of which that which accompanied Israel is but a faint and feeble shadow—an ark that is a stronger pledge of God's faithfulness, a deeper manifestation of His love and power. The Christian's ark is Christ. Jesus journeys with him through all the wilderness into the land of promise. Every congregation is made up of a number of minds, no two of which would probably be found to be exactly alike. There are, indeed, many points of resemblance which ought not to be overlooked. But with all this resemblance there is much diversity. There is something peculiar to each mind, something in which it is unlike its fellows. Each has some peculiar adjustment of its natural powers; and this necessarily causes a peculiar and distinctive history. Just so far as our minds are similarly constituted, and we are infected with the same awful disease, and united to the same Saviour, and influenced by the same Spirit, we can sympathise with each other. Just so far as there is something distinctive in our minds, modifying our experiences, and stamping a peculiar character upon our history, will our path be lonely; and we shall feel that there is One only who "knoweth the way that we take." But He does know it, and adapts His dealings to our need. Some are comparatively free from trial, others are called to bear their yoke in their youth. Some are just reached by the wave—the spray only seems to reach them; others are immersed in its depths—the waves and billows pass over them. And the history of these last bears greater resemblance to the varied experience of Israel; and yet even concerning these, with whom God has already dealt so mysteriously, it may come true in the future, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." There may be some who are already entering a way that is new and mysterious to them. There was perhaps a time when they felt no anxiety or alarm about the great subject of their acceptance with God, and when the pleasures and enjoyments of the world filled up their thoughts; but a new impression has been made upon their minds, and they are beginning to be sensible that there is a great purpose for which they have been created, and, alas! they have not yet fulfilled it. And thus, like St. Paul, they find the commandment to be "unto death." "The law worketh wrath." How can this Jordan, which separates them with its overflowing waters from the land of peace, be crossed? There is but one path across it, and that path is Christ. Jesus, the ark of our covenant, is gone before us. But there is another period in our lives of which the passage of Israel through Jordan is a more exact type. We must acknowledge that there is something extremely awful in such a conclusion to our earthly pilgrimage as death; and the real wonder is, not that there are some who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage, but that there are such multitudes to whose thoughts this solemn and mysterious event is scarcely ever present, and on whose minds it makes no lasting impression. It lies quite beyond the bounds of our present experience. We may perfectly realise all the circumstances of death up to the moment of the separation of the soul from the body—the weakness, weariness, and pain of sickness, the tenderness and love of relations and friends in watching over us, and in smoothing our dying pillow—because in all this we have past experience to go upon, and we have only to imagine an increase of that which we have already felt. But when we endeavour to advance a step beyond this, and to realise the mysterious separation of the soul from the body, the loosening and snapping asunder of that invisible bond which unites them, we feel that we have stepped into a new region. Our past experiences fail us; and after trying much to realise it, we cannot but feel, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." And yet both the unknown mystery of death and its loneliness have been fully provided for in Him who "through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil." For Jesus, the ark of our covenant, has gone down before us into Jordan. The dark stream of Jordan manifests His power and reflects His light. And thus the loneliness of death is overcome. But let us not forget that it is presumptuous to expect this blessed hope and confidence to arise in our hearts in the immediate prospect of death if we are neglecting and slighting the ark of our covenant at this moment. The symbol of God's presence did not meet the Israelites for the first time at the brink of Jordan, but accompanied them throughout all their journey in the wilderness. Let us take heed, then, to the impressive words, "Sanctify yourselves." As we have been "set apart" for God in our unconscious infancy, let us set ourselves apart for Him through faith in Christ in our conscious

manhood. Let us dedicate ourselves to Him wholly, unreservedly, body, soul, and spirit. (*G. Wagner.*) *The untrodden and unknown way*:—1. We need a guide to lead us in this new and untrodden way. Travellers in strange countries are careful not only to furnish themselves with a chart or map of the country through which they may be travelling, but to employ a guide who knows the country. At every station at which travellers are wont to halt in Switzerland, guides are waiting to conduct strangers along the way by which they wish to go. From motives of economy or self-confidence, some travellers have been known to dispense with the help of a guide, and have lost their way, missed their step, and perished. In the journey of life, and at a stage such as this at which we have arrived to-day, we are reminded that we need one to go before us and lead us in the way. We have in the Word of the Lord, in the Holy Scriptures, what may be called a map or chart, exhibiting the general outlines and prominent features of the country through which we are to pass, and indicating the direction of the path and way along which we are to walk. But we need more than this—we need a living guide. And that living guide is not a fallible man, or company of men, but is the Lord Himself. His knowledge of the way is perfect; and no one that committed himself to His guidance ever perished by the way. For all His resources of knowledge, wisdom, grace, righteousness, and power, all are pledged to conduct in safety to the bliss of heaven those who by faith follow Him. 2. We must be obedient to the instructions of the heavenly Guide. In order to this we must be distrustful of our own knowledge and wisdom. Many a traveller amidst Alpine passes and heights has fallen and perished, the victim of self-confidence. And many who for a season seemed to be obedient unto Christ have departed from Him and perished, because they preferred their own wisdom to His. But it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps. In order to a faithful adherence to the guidance of the Lord, we must beware of false and deceitful guides. If we are among the obedient followers of Christ, we shall watch for the intimations of His will. That Word shineth in this dark world that it may be to us what the star was to the eastern sages, a light to guide our steps to the heavenly palace, the house where Jesus now reigns. Yes, if we would follow Christ in the way, His Word must be “a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.” As obedient followers of Christ we must be not only earnest and humble students of His Word, but thoughtful observers of His works in providence and in grace. 3. We should prepare ourselves for following our heavenly Guide and Leader in the way heretofore untrodden by us. “Sanctify yourselves,” said Joshua to the people, “for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.” This involves separation from all that is unholy, or that is inconsistent with the undivided and entire consecration of ourselves in heart, purpose, and life to the Lord. And it requires that we dedicate ourselves, soul, body, and spirit, unto the Lord. (*G. Macaulay.*) **Sanctify yourselves.**—*Solemn preparation for duty*:—Sequester yourselves from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come hot, reeking out of the world into God’s presence, but you will find the influence of it in your duties. It is with the heart a few minutes since plunged in the world, now at the feet of God, just as with the sea after a storm, which still continues working muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and storm over: thy heart must have some time to settle. There are few musicians that can take down a lute or viol and play presently upon it without some time to tune it. When thou goest to God in any duty, take thy heart aside, and say, “O my soul, I am now addressing myself to the greatest work that ever a creature was employed about. I am going into the awful presence of God, about business of everlasting moment.” (*H. G. Salter.*) *Prepare for seasons of grace*:—The grace of God at all times awaits, forecomes, accompanies, follows, encompasses us. It is everywhere, for it is the Holy Spirit, who is everywhere, since He is God. But although grace is ever around and in those who have not finally rejected it, there are special seasons at which it comes to individuals and to the Church—seasons in which grace does not only trickle down as the dew, but runs down like a river, sweeping away all the barriers of earthliness, and bearing us onward like a tide; seasons which if we miss we know not what we lose: the wave has passed by, and we who might have been borne upon its crest, and carried safe, are tossing to and fro on a perilous sea. Such seasons, to individuals, are the first drawings of the child’s tender soul to God; its first stirrings at the thought that it is not a citizen of this earth, that it belongs to heaven, to eternity, to God; its first yearning to go forth out of itself to be for ever God’s. Such again are its first strong upliftings in prayer, and following

the drawings of God, and pantings after communion with Him, as it seeks to rise on, and on, and on, tremblingly, yet aspiringly, if by any means it might reach to God! or its quiet waiting within itself, if so be He would come down to it. But although He comes to all alike who look for Him, He doth not come alike to all. He filleth all; but all do not alike contain Him. Our capacity to receive Him, is our longing for Him. The greater the hunger of the soul after righteousness, the more He will feed and satisfy it who is our righteousness. And so, whenever God would draw near to man, He would have man prepare for that awful nearness. We cannot on the instant change our whole tone of mind. We cannot at one moment jest, the next be devout; at one moment care for earth, the next for heaven; at one, love the creature for itself, the next the Creator for Himself. Nature itself tells us that we cannot pass suddenly from one to another. If we have heavy news to convey, we try to prepare the mind, that they burst not at once upon it. If a solemn thought crosses the soul in laughter, it recovers itself, as it can, hastily and confusedly together, and the very disorder of the mind shows that the sudden change is against nature. The soul feels ashamed that it was so relaxed before, so little in the state wherein it would receive the Heavenly Visitant. And this teaching of God in our hearts He enforced in the outward nearness of His visible presence. When He willed to appear in awe on Mount Sinai, for three days was the congregation to prepare itself. Whether in chastisement or in mercy there is a season of preparation. Whether God would give them flesh to eat in the wilderness, or lead them over Jordan, or take out from among them him who had taken the accursed thing, it is still one word—"Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow." If such was the preparation for the type and shadow, what for the reality? If such for the miraculous sustenance of the body, what for the food of the soul? If such the entrance into the type of heaven, what when heaven and earth are united in one? And so an apostle's voice warns us, "Let a man examine himself," sift himself, "and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." And God has taught the Church to place longer seasons of preparation before the greater mysteries of the faith. "Sanctify yourselves," saith God—that is, "separate yourselves from things unholy, that ye may be separated unto Me, and I may hallow you, and make you holy." We cannot hallow ourselves; but we can, by His grace, put off things unholy. We cannot give to ourselves Him, the True Bread from heaven, nor create in ourselves hunger after Him, our righteousness; but we can abstain, through His gracious aid, from filling our bellies with the swine-husk this world's goods, and vanities, and accursed pleasures, which make men loathe, as "light bread," "the manna which cometh down from heaven." Oh, then, if we "have been sometime darkness," seek we now to be "light in the Lord." Let us now "cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light." (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) *Sanctify yourselves*:—Is it possible for a Christian to sanctify himself? Yes; for man has a part to play in his own sanctification. Man must co-operate with God in working out his own salvation. Man works, God works, and the result is man's sanctification. Many Christians have failed to recognise this union of the human and the Divine in the work of their sanctification, with the result that they have erred greatly, and made little or no progress in the Divine life. For example, we find Christians who overlook the fact that man is to work out his own salvation; they say it is all of God, and they throw themselves passively on God for their sanctification. This course of action, or rather want of action, ends in their becoming impractical and useless Christians, making no progress themselves in the Divine life, and of no use to the Church in its fight against sin and Satan. On the other hand, we find Christians who overlook the fact that it is God who worketh in man both to will and to work. Such try to work out their salvation in their own strength; they seek, by power of will, to overcome their weaknesses and their sinful tendencies, and in this they are largely successful. They attain to the point of being free from all gross and outward sins of the flesh. But, alas! they make no progress in eradicating the sin of their heart. There is no internal change of heart corresponding with the outward reformation in life. This course of action leads to spiritual decay and death. Man cannot sanctify himself. The work of sanctification is carried on in the heart of the believer by the co-operation of the human and the Divine: man works, God works. God, in all His dealings with man, in grace, recognises man as a free agent, capable of receiving or rejecting His grace. Man is not passive, he is active. He is of his own free will to yield to the influence of the Spirit of God. He is to resist sin. He is to prove how he may most successfully overcome temptation. He is to keep

himself unspotted from the world. He is ever to be watchful. In fact, he is to act as if everything in his sanctification depended upon himself. This is the point which I wish to emphasise to-day, namely, man's work in his own sanctification. How, then, are we to sanctify ourselves? I. BY SEPARATING OURSELVES FROM EVERY KNOWN SIN. It is pre-supposed that we are true Christians, that we have been regenerated; for no sanctification is possible before conversion; the order is, first justification, then sanctification. The seed of the tree of righteousness, planted at conversion, must pass through many stages before the seed has grown into a tree of righteousness. The tender plant, the sapling, the young tree, the mature tree. Before it comes to maturity, it has to be watched and tended and watered and digged about and pruned. Its growth is a very gradual process. Even so is the growth of the soul in holiness. If we would sanctify ourselves the first thing we must do is to separate ourselves from known sin. It may be that our sin lies in eating and drinking too much. Our easy circumstances enable us to live a life of leisure and luxury. If we wish the blessing of God, we must separate ourselves from these sins. It may be that our sin lies in being vain and proud: our vanity is seen in our dress and in our behaviour; our pride is seen in our bearing to equals and inferiors. If we wish the blessing of God, we must separate ourselves from these sins. It may be that our sin lies in unbelief. This is the sin of sins. We limit the Holy One of Israel. Practically, we say God can do this for me, but He cannot do this other thing—I must do it for myself. If we wish the blessing of God, we must separate ourselves from this sin of unbelief. In fact, whatever be our known sin, we must separate ourselves from it. To do this thoroughly we must go about it with firmness of purpose, with a fixed determination. Which of us have resisted unto blood, striving against sin? We need nerve so to resist sin. The motto of the Irish family of O'Neill is "The Bloody Hand." It had its origin in the following incident:—In days of old the leader of a band of pirates gave out that whoever first touched the land they were making for should be possessor of it. One of the band, named O'Neill, determined to gain it; he pulled ashore with all his might, but a rival passed him when near the shore. What was to be done? Instantly this strong-nerved, resolute, determined man rose, lifted his battle-axe, struck off his hand, threw it ashore, and so touched the land first. This nerve and resolution was shown to gain a possession of land. What will we do to gain possession of ourselves? Will we deal thus resolutely with sin? Yes. We will cut it off, and cast it from us. I make a distinction between known sin and unknown sin. If we live up to the light we have, and deal faithfully with the sin which God has revealed to us in our lives, He will give us more light. This is what is meant by gradual sanctification. The more we know of the holiness of God, the more will we know of our own want and holiness. As we grow in grace, our spiritual eye becomes keener, and we see new sins in our life which were not manifest before. When we discern these sins, we are to deal with them at once, and separate ourselves from them. II. Besides separating ourselves from every known sin, it is necessary, if we would be ready to meet with God, to PREPARE OUR HEARTS AND MINDS. Our hearts and minds must be set on God, so that we may be ready to hear, and to remember, and to obey. Every appetite and passion must be stilled; the cares and anxieties and the work of the world are to be set aside. We must give as much time as we can to reading and meditating upon the Word of God, so filling our hearts and minds with the truth. We must spend long periods in prayer, following the example of our blessed Master, who spent whole nights in prayer. If we would be thoroughly prepared to meet God, we must dwell on the thought of what God is—the Holy One of Israel, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the God of our salvation. We must come to God in a spirit of expectant faith, believing that He is able and willing to enrich us with all spiritual blessing, and that He will give to each of us the very blessing which we need. The more we are prepared in heart and mind to meet with God, the greater blessing shall we receive. To great faith our gracious Saviour still says: "Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt." (*Wm. Galbraith.*) *The wise conduct of human life* :—The wise conduct of human life is foreshadowed in this story. The crises men encounter are to be met; the Jordans that block their way are to be crossed, as Israel met its trial hour, as Israel passed the river that barred it from its possession. I. MEN SHOULD SANCTIFY THEMSELVES. A religious frame of mind, and the habit of looking at life from a religious point of view, are acquirements of great importance. A true Christian soon learns by experience that all his times are in God's hands. Each new difficulty encountered brings to mind how, in the past, all things have

been made to work together for good ; and so, though "perplexed," the believer is not "in despair." II. MEN MUST FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE OF THE DIVINE LAW AND THE DIVINE LOVE. Sinai and Calvary are both guide-posts pointing out the right and the safe way. God's commandment, as well as God's grace, helps men out of their difficulties. It is imperative, in times of trial, that they should trust in the Divine mercy, but quite as important that they should do what seems to be the Divine will. III. MEN MUST PATIENTLY WAIT GOD'S TIME. Deliverance out of difficulty is not always immediately granted. The Divine promise is sure, but the time of its fulfilment is not announced. Because the prayer for escape from threatening dangers is not answered in a moment, let us not therefore "cast away our confidence, which has great recompense of reward." And this is eminently true in regard to the last Jordan which we are required to cross. Dying grace is held in reserve for dying hours. The Lord of both life and death will be ready when the time arrives. The dark river will be, not a barrier, but a highway lighted by the glory beyond. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *Sanctify yourselves* :—I. IN DWELLING UPON THE PLACE IN GOD'S PLAN OF PREPARED MEN AND WOMEN. There are men and women with whom God will work, and there are men and women with whom He will not work. Who are those with whom God will work ? As a general rule, those who sanctify themselves for His work ; that is, separate themselves by a thoughtful detachment from other engagements to make this work of His the prior thing. II. IN DWELLING ON THE FACT OF OUR ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE UPON GOD. This is true in all things. It is signally true in the work of setting up His kingdom in the earth. There were things which Israel could do. There were things which they could not do without a signal, Divine interposition. Ever and again the Christian Church comes to the bank of some swift river. The obstacles in the way of her progress are like Jordan with full banks. Then ever let her sanctify herself with the humbling but precious thoughts of her absolute dependence upon a Divine intervention. III. IN DWELLING UPON THE NEED OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE. This was a thought which ever lived with Moses : "If Thy presence go not with me, take us not up hence." The presence of God is sometimes withdrawn. Sometimes it is especially manifested. A leader needs credentials. A leader of God's people needs Divine credentials. The work we attempt requires God's presence. We are wholly dependent upon God to bring us across the river, and we shall need His presence on the other shore. It is sanctifying to couple with the thought of our dependence on God this other of the efficacy of His presence. IV. IN DWELLING UPON THE REASONS FOR CROSSING THE JORDAN. The land was to be subjugated for God. It was to be taken for Him and settled for Him, and thus make a part of the kingdom of God. The great, main reason for desiring to see God's work revived is that His kingdom may come in power ; that the city and the nation and the world may be His. V. IN DWELLING UPON WHAT GOD HAS DONE. This is the day of common sense in religious matters. Our fathers were superstitious. In these days science has come to the forefront, and the religion of the supernatural has been superseded. When these doubts arise and press us, when they beset us and whisper and roar about us in the air, it is good to remember what God has done. The God of the Red Sea is the God of the Jordan. VI. THEY WOULD BE AIDED IN SANCTIFYING THEMSELVES BY REFLECTING UPON WHAT IT WOULD BE TO TURN BACK—after forty years in the wilderness, to turn back once more and give up the hopes of entering the land of promise ; again to go from camp to camp in a maze of wanderings and die in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb with the rest, after all ! Would not this thought most powerfully move them to embrace God's service ? to set themselves apart to utmost co-operation in His plan, with unquestioning faith to follow the ark ? Which things are a parable. Many Churches, many Christians, have the experience of coming up in the full view of great blessings, promised blessings, and turning back. Is it so irksome a thing, then, to make the kingdom of heaven first, that we are willing, after all, even after getting a close view of the blessing, after God has promised that this blessing shall be put in our very hands, that we shall turn back rather than sanctify ourselves ? (*G. R. Leavitt.*) *Success in Divine work* :—I. THE CONDITION OF SUCCESS IN WORK FOR GOD IS HOLINESS. 1. Purity. Spiritual purity means power and beauty. It has a passive side (*Ezek. xxxvi. 25*). But it has an active side (*Jas. iv. 8*). 2. Consecration. That person, possession, or thing is consecrated which is given to God according to His will and pleasure. 3. Obedience. No practical holiness is possible without obedience. For what is sin but disobedience ? 4. But these three—purity, consecration, and obedience—do not set before us a complete idea of what the Bible means by holiness. It must have an inner life of

which these are but the outer manifestations. The very heart of it is the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit. II. **THE CAUSE OF THE CHURCH'S SUCCESS.** The Divine power. Christ has not said, "Follow Me" to any one to whom He has not also said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, My strength is made perfect in thy weakness." When God says, "Sanctify yourselves," it is the height of presumption and unbelief for us to sit down and say we cannot do it. The Lord is able to fulfil His promises. It is for us to obey. (*Homilist.*)

Consecration :—The context of this command, which gives such prominence to the wonders which God will do, is a happy correction of a very common notion respecting consecration, as though it were some great giving to God by us, some surrender or sacrifice of what we previously held; in fact, a sort of favour conferred upon Him, whereas it is only the readiness to receive from Him. Consecration is not a meritorious work of our own, but a willingness to let the Lord work His wonders upon us. It simply means a ready reciprocity. Yet even this reciprocity may involve surrender in a subordinate way, as it evidently did in the case of the Israelites. They could not possibly receive Canaan without giving up the wilderness. That command, therefore, "sanctify yourselves," was a call to heart-searching. It pressed home to all their thoughts this recognition, "We are the Lord's." It could not long remain a matter of doubt with any whether they stood ready for God to lead them over Jordan or not. The command given them was completely overshadowed by the promise that followed, and yet it was the promise itself that tested and tried the very intents of their hearts. It continues to be a part of the manifold wisdom of God to furnish such tests, even in providing our richest blessings. He who becomes a man must put away his childish things. The lingering child-nature struggles and shrinks from the sacrifice, but the spirit of the strong man uprising spares not the old treasures as he reaches on to the new. God cannot fill our hands with His great and good gifts till we drop the baubles they have held. And so in every onward step, calling us to some surrender, to some sacrifice, He clears away the superficial wrappings of our nature to learn what soundness exists beneath. (*S. F. Smiley.*)

To-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.—**Critical times and places in life** :—It was an hour and place of wonderful contrasts. As they remembered there swept vividly before their thought the recollection of the harsh experiences through which they had passed—the savagery of the roadless country they had traversed; the trials they had suffered in their restless journey, whose hurry allowed no opportunity for building a home. The backward look recalled nothing but weariness and sorrow—the only satisfying thing about it the fact that it was past. But, as they anticipated, they saw a fairer vision—of quiet homes; of orchards fragrant with blossoms and vineyards purple with grapes; of lands securely held; of children gathered round the family hearthstone; of all the blessings of organised, coherent society. The desert and the garden were both in full view; and their joyful expectation was that henceforth the garden, and not the desert, was to be their home. But—and there is often a "but" between men's hopes and their realisation—but between the desert and the garden there was a barrier. The stream must be crossed before vision could change to possession; and how cross it? There were no bridges spanning the river over which they might march in solid procession; there were no boats in which they might be ferried over in little companies; there were no fords through which they might pass one by one; the boldest swimmer would be like a straw in that hurrying flood. There are critical hours in all lives. Almost every experience has its crises and turning-points of greater or less magnitude. There are single moments and actions that like rudders steer us into wide seas of triumph or misfortune. Sufficiency of preparation to meet such hours, and acuteness enough to discover when they come, are indispensable to human success. There is one truth that men need to thoroughly learn: there is no such thing as "good luck" in the universe. As the old Chinese proverb puts it, "What will you have? says God; pay for it and take it." Success is not an inheritance or an accident. The men who are ready for emergencies are the men who win the victories. History is full of brilliant illustrations of this truth. The whole course of empire appears to pivot on single men and isolated hours. There was a critical hour in the history of the rebellion when statesmanship confessed itself at fault, and military strategy was ineffectual, and the nation was almost in despair; but when Abraham Lincoln affixed his signature to the Emancipation Proclamation, and announced, as the policy of the Government, "Henceforth all for justice," a new power entered the contest, and the future was secure. From that hour the multiplied forces of Omnipotence were auxiliaries. The muster-

roll held the names of the smallest part of the army. The morning *réveille* awakened a host unseen by mortal eyes. The long roll of the drums set in battle array a great company out of sight. Side by side with the nation's flag that waved over the charging lines floated the ensign of the Lord of hosts. Every seeming defeat became a real victory, and triumph followed triumph until the last enemy was subdued. The single act of the single man was the principal factor in the solution of the vast and complicated problem. In less dramatic form the same thing may sometimes be noted in individual experience. The selection of a business or occupation is an everyday matter, and yet what vast results may follow the wisdom or folly of the choice! The world took little note of the young tutor in Yale College, some half-century ago, walking up and down his room considering whether he had better take part in the revival movement then in progress; but the decision of that hour reversed all the previous purposes of the young man's life, and gave to the Church of God Horace Bushnell with his wonderful eloquence and measureless sweep of influence. Young men do well to be serious when they stand at the cross-roads of life, considering along which highway they will travel. In every man's life there comes one sovereign hour—the hour when he makes his final choice of God or the world, and settles the question whether he will pass time and eternity in the wilderness, or make himself an everlasting home in the Canaan of promise. All preceding experience leads up to that hour; all after-experience takes colour and substance from it. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *The wonders in store for God's people*:—I. WONDERS ARE IN STORE FOR US IN THE GREAT FUTURE TO WHICH WE LOOK FORWARD. II. WE MAY BE NOW ON THE VERY EVE OF THE WONDERS WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR US, AND WHICH SHALL BE WROUGHT AT GOD'S TIME AND IN GOD'S WAY. We cannot lift up the veil which hangs over the future. What manner of person ought I to be? To-morrow I may stand before God. III. IT BECOMES US TO SANCTIFY OURSELVES IN ORDER THAT WE MAY BE MADE MEET FOR THE WONDERS WHICH WE MUST SEE AND PASS THROUGH WHENEVER THEY MAY COME UPON US. (*Pulpit Studies.*) *To-morrow: spiritual foresight*:—This "morrow" is always coming upon prepared hearts. The unsanctified man sees nothing of all the mysteries of God. He is "blind and cannot see afar off." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Will the Lord come to those who have made no preparation for Him, and will He hasten to houses whose door is shut against His Anointed? "Blessed is that servant who when his Lord cometh shall be found waiting." A beautiful law is this, by which Joshua knows the secret of the Lord a full day before it is known by others. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." If the light comes first to the mountains, need the valleys peevishly complain? As a matter of fact some men are privileged beyond others in insight, and that strange sympathetic anticipation which often assumes prophetic dignity and certitude. Such men are teachers sent from God. The spirit that is in them is a spirit of rulership and command, and their supremacy is allowed without being claimed. Wonderful is the gift of utterance; when the poet speaks we feel that he has said something which we wished to say ourselves, and which, being said, we know to be wholly true. So, too, there are time-keepers appointed by God. Sometimes we do the right thing at the wrong hour, and thus our blow is wasted in the air. Our impatience would rush upon the Jordan, and we should be drowned. Lord, teach us how to wait; and when Thy commanding word comes, may we all be ready. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *God reveals His purposes by degrees*:—God often opens His hand by one finger at a time, and leaves us face to face with some plain but difficult duty, without letting us see the helps to its performance till we need to use them. If we go right on the road which He has traced out it will never lead us into a blind alley. The mountains will open before us as we come near what looked their impassable wall; and some narrow gorge or other, wide enough to run a track through, but not wide enough to be noticed before we are close on it, will be sure to open. The attitude of expectation of God's help, while its nature is unrevealed, is kept up in Joshua's last instruction. The people are bidden to sanctify themselves because to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among them. That sanctifying was not external, but included the hallowing of spirit by docile waiting for His intervention and obedience while the manner of it was hidden. The secret of to-morrow is partly made known, and the faith of the people is nourished by the mystery remaining, as well as by the light given. The best security for to-morrow's wonders is to-day's sanctifying. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel.*—*God's regard for His servants*:—How full and manifold the assurance! First, I will magnify thee.

I will endue thee with supernatural might, and that will give you authority and weight corresponding to the position in which you stand. Further, this shall be but the beginning of a process which will be renewed as often as there is occasion for it. "This day I will begin." You are not to go a warfare on your own charges, but "as your days, so shall your strength be." Moreover, this exaltation of your person and office will take place "in the sight of all Israel," so that no man of them shall ever be justified in refusing you allegiance and obedience. And to sum up—you shall be just as Moses was; the resources of My might will be as available for you as they were for him. After this, what misgivings could Joshua have? Could he doubt the generosity, the kindness, the considerateness of his Master? It is an experience which has been often repeated in the case of those who have had to undertake difficult work for their Master. Of all our misapprehensions the most baseless and the most pernicious is that God does not care much about us, and that we have not much to look for from Him. It is a misapprehension which dishonours God greatly, and which He is ever showing Himself most desirous to remove. It stands fearfully in the way of that spirit of trust by which God is so much honoured, and which He is ever desirous that we should show. And those who have trusted God, and have gone forward to their work in His strength, have always found delightful evidence that their trust has not been in vain. What is the testimony of our great Christian philanthropists, our most successful missionaries, and other devoted Christian workers? Led to undertake enterprises far beyond their strength, and undergo responsibilities far beyond their means, we know not a single case in which they have not had ample proof of the mindfulness of their Master, and found occasion to wonder at the considerateness and the bountifulness which He has brought to bear upon their position. And is it not strange that we should be so slow to learn how infinite God is in goodness? (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

Being made great:—It was a great undertaking to follow Moses. How came Joshua to succeed when it seemed so likely he would fail? 1. Because—looking at the human side of the question—(1) he did not foolishly try to reproduce his master and leader, to be a second Moses, but wisely strove to be his true self, and to do the particular work which God gave him to do; and (2) he entered upon and carried out his work in a spirit of complete devotedness to it; he lived to accomplish the one thing with which he was charged. 2. Because—looking at the Divine side of it—God was with him, encouraging and sustaining him. God made him great. He magnified him in the sense of the text, *i.e.*, He raised him in the estimation of the people so that he received as much honour from them as even Moses enjoyed. God also magnified Joshua by making him strong, worthy, even great in himself. God held such close intercourse with him, so guided and disciplined him, so influenced and inspired him, that Joshua became a thoroughly true, loyal-hearted servant, a godly man living a faithful, consecrated life. Without the latter there would have been something unreal about the former. For there is—I. A GREATNESS WE MUST DECLINE. 1. We may not seek to be made great by appearing better or wiser than we are. 2. We may not wish to occupy a position greater than that which we can honourably fill. II. A GREATNESS TO BE COVETED AND ATTAINED. How should we care to be magnified? We should aspire to the two elements of greatness which God gave to Joshua, though in us they take a different form. 1. Honour or esteem. We may well dispense with the obsequious or the ceremonious, but we cannot be indifferent to the respectful. Homage we can do without, but the esteem of the wise and good we crave and should secure. 2. Influence. In the home in which we live, in the school in which we teach or learn, in the sphere of daily activity, in the social circle, and in the Church of Christ, we can all be exerting influence: we can be such and can live such lives that we shall be continually restraining from the evil, and impelling toward the right and the true course. And how will God magnify us? (1) By building up in us a strong Christian character. In that strange experience through which God caused Joshua and Israel to pass (chap. iii.), both he and the priests were disciplined in faith, in obedience, and in steadfastness. By the privileges of the gospel and by the outworkings of His providence God is building us up in these and in other attributes of character, and is thus "making us great" and strong in His sight. (2) By closely associating Himself with us. Joshua was magnified in the sight of Israel in that henceforth he was known to be a man who had God upon his side, to be one who could lean on God's strength and be sustained. God magnifies His servant now by causing him to be regarded by all who know him as one who walks with God, with whom God dwells, on whose side the Holy One, the Almighty One is ranged. III. A GREATNESS WE CAN EXTEND OR

CONFER. 1. We magnify God when we adore Him and celebrate His greatness and His faithfulness. 2. We magnify Christ when we commend Him and His gospel by lip and by life : when we constrain others to know and feel the pricelessness of His love, the excellency of His service, the greatness of His promises (see Phil. i. 20). 3. We make our brethren great, in the best sense, when we lead them into the path of heavenly wisdom. (W. Clarkson, B.A.) *Divine honours* :—Joshua has not been a stranger to Divine honours. He has been chosen to succeed Moses, and so installed into the highest office in Israel. But greater honours are in store for him ; and to-day he is to receive some of these. He is to receive them not for self-glorification, but to glorify God, since they are to be evidences to the people that God is with him as He was with Moses. Much is said about worldly honours, and thousands are struggling every day to obtain them. They are characterised by three things, which we would do well to remember. They are few in number. Hence the great majority of the human family must live and die without them. Their duration is brief. Suppose they are bestowed on one when he comes of age, and that he is allowed to retain them till his death, which is not always the case, they can only be his for about fifty years. They are expensive and sometimes exceedingly embarrassing. To maintain them numbers have been brought to the margin, if they have not been driven over it, of monetary ruin. The old saying is still true in many instances : “Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.” In view of these characteristics of all worldly honours, we may well ponder the question, is the game worthy of chase? How different are Divine honours! All can receive them if they please, for the Lord has said : “Them that honour Me I will honour.” Like the soul they are immortal ; time does not dim them ; death will not touch them, and in eternity they will shine forth with a radiance above the brightness of the sun. May we all aspire to the honours which come from God only, and abundantly obtain them. They are indeed worthy possessions. (A. McAuslane.)

Vers. 9–13. **Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord.**—*The environment of worship* :—That is a bold challenge. That is a voice we need. Every age wants some Joshua, some mighty soldier of the Cross, to say, “Come, hear the upper music, the Divine melody, the holy revelation.” Have we the hearing ear? If we could hear better we could hear more. “Come hither.” Does that indicate a point in space, a place, a boundary, a sanctuary? If so, it would be quite in keeping with Oriental thought in general, and with Jewish habit in particular. Always religious exercise was associated with locality—with the mountain, with the city, with the temple, with the tabernacle, with the terebinth, with some place made sacred by historic communes and wrestlings with God. Christ said, “The time cometh and now is when neither in this mountain nor at Jerusalem (particularly and exclusively) shall men worship the Father,” but wherever there is a human spirit desiring the upward way, the higher light, the noonday of thought, and hope, and peace, wherever there is such a soul God is there, and God is the Author of it. Yet Jesus Christ Himself went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day—one of the evangelists says, “as was His custom.” Beware lest in supposing ourselves able to grasp the all we grasp nothing. The universe is too big really for any one of us to grasp ; we had better, therefore, have a little place cornered off and call it the Church, the sanctuary, the little temporary hostelry and lodging-place. All the earth is the Lord’s. Men are now in danger of worshipping totals, the Unspeakable All, the incognisable infinite, as the metaphysicians call it. We may believe in all that grandeur of immeasurableness, and yet at the same time we go home every evening. Home—but the earth is the Lord’s : why do you not live out in the open air? What do you want with home? you are a worshipper of Humanity, all space : why do you go home? You cannot keep away from the old place : the loved ones are there, all the lives that make your life a possible joy are there ; all the holy, shadowy, tender memories are there—the old seat, the old books, the old fire that talks as it crackles and blazes are there. “Come.” Why, the mere coming does us good, the very walk to church reddens the blood. The hunter says the delight is in the chase ; not in the death of the hunted animal, but in the flight, the leap, the bound, the dash. The coming, the act of locomotion and the act signified by locomotion, will do us good. For what purpose shall we come? “Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God.” That is the purpose. Not to hear the words of men. We are now here before God to hear what He will say unto us—“Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.” What shall

we hear? Shall we hear the words of some strange deity? Nay, "hear the words of the Lord your God." It is a family meeting. These pronouns seem to bring us into sacred and general possession of things in common with God. Your God, our Father, my God, your fathers' God: these are the terms in which the greatness and the nearness of God are typified to our dull imagination. When you hear the words of the Lord your God they will not be strange, inarticulate, untranslatable thunder; they will be gospels, voices of music, voices of welcome, tender assurances, great offers of love, sublime propositions of pardon; you will know every word of the speech, being neither affrighted by its majesty nor rendered indifferent by its condescension. To be able to receive such words—is that an insignificant sign? To know God's voice—is not that an evidence of man's greatness? (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you.**—*The best helper*:—Observe the form which the purpose of the miracle assumes there. It is the confirmation of the Divine presence, not with the leader, but with the people and their consequent victory. Joshua grasped the inmost meaning of God's word to himself, and showed noble self-suppression, when he thus turned the direction of the miracle. The true servant of God knows that God is with him, not for his personal glorification, but for the welfare of God's people, and cares little for the estimation in which men hold him, if they will only believe that the conquering God is with them. We too often make great leaders and teachers in the Church opaque barriers to hide God from us, instead of transparent windows through which He shines upon His people. We are a great deal more ready to say "God is with him," than to add, "and therefore God is with us, in our Joshuas, and without them." Observe the grand emphasis of that name, "the living God," tacitly contrasted with the dead idols of the enemies, and sealing the assurance of His swift and all-conquering might. Observe, too, the triumphant contempt in the enumeration of the many tribes of the foe with their barbarous names. Five of them had been enough, when named by the spies' trembling lips, to terrify the congregation, but here the list of the whole seven but strengthens confidence. Faith delights to look steadily at its enemies, knowing that the one Helper is more than they all. This catalogue breathes the same spirit as Paul's rapturous list of the foes impotent to separate from the love of God. Mark, too, the long-drawn-out designation of the ark, with its accumulation of nouns, which grammatical purists have found difficult—"the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth"; where it leads they need not fear to follow. It was the pledge of His presence, it contained the ten words on which His covenant was concluded. That covenant enlisted on their side Him who was Lord of the swollen river as of all the fierce clans beyond; and with His ark in front their victory was sure. Then follows the command to elect twelve representatives of the tribes, for a purpose not yet explained; and then, at the last moment, the manner of crossing is disclosed, to the silencing of wise doubters and the confirmation of ignorant faith. The brief anticipatory announcement of the miracle puts stress on the arrest of the waters at the instant when the priests' feet touched them, and tells what is to befall the arrested torrent above the point where the ark stood, saying nothing about the lower stretch of the river, and just hinting by one word, "heap," the parallel between this miracle and that of the passing of the Red Sea (Exod. xv. 8). (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) **The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth.**—The emphasis with which here and ver. 13 Jehovah is called "the Lord of all the earth" is very significant. This miracle demonstrated His power over all nature. He who can by His word suspend the operation of material laws, and whose bidding the forces of the world obey, is the supreme ruler of the world. As such all that it contains is at His sovereign disposal. As "the living God" has the power, so "the Lord of all the earth" has the right to bestow the land of Canaan upon whomsoever He pleases. Joshua and Israel were under no delusion in claiming that the Most High had given them this land. They were acting under no fanatical impulse. And their conduct gives no sanction to crusades elsewhere waged by those who have imagined themselves the special favourites of heaven, and pleaded a Divine right for their acts of rapine and bloodshed. Israel's credentials were of the most palpable character. The miracle which attended their march was God's own attestation to the fact that they were working His will. And as Jehovah is the Lord of all the earth, He shall one day be universally worshipped and obeyed. The covenant of God with Israel has sometimes been decried as the offspring of a narrow mind, which would limit the Divine favour to a particular nation. But it is here joined with the widest universality; and one

purpose of this particular miracle wrought on Israel's behalf is declared (chap. iv. 24) to be that all the people of the earth might learn a lesson of Jehovah's greatness. (*W. H. Green, D.D.*) *The ark of God; visible aids in religion*:—In the ark Israel saw God Himself, and yet lost none of their faith in the spiritual character of God. When the ark rested, Israel knew that God was among them; when the ark moved, then Israel believed that God was calling them to journey on again, and sang, "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered," &c.; when, again, the ark rested, they ceased to move forward, and sang, "Return, O Lord, to the many thousands of Israel." There was ever before the people of Israel the words of that commandment which forbade their ever thinking of God under any human, any material form, so that they had to content themselves with the ark of the covenant. But God, all this time, was preparing for a new manifestation of Himself in the Person of the Son, who was to take upon Him the form of His own highest creation, so that no longer should it be a sin to think of God under the likeness of a man. The man who depreciates the idea of a visible Church, and rejects externals in religion, has one side of the truth very clearly revealed to him; but I venture to think that not only is this one side insisted on to the exclusion of another equally true, but his position is maintained against certain unalterable facts, of which the first and foremost is, that our souls, through which alone, he argues, communion may be held with God, are imprisoned within material bodies, and cannot in this life, in the ordinary course, receive impressions of spiritual things except through the medium of those bodies. Israel in the wilderness was, no doubt, often very unworthy of the high calling which belonged to the chosen people; but they did succeed in living a life from which everything was removed except the prospect of the heavenly rewards. They knew they should not inherit temporal promises, and yet they patiently lived their lives in expectation of spiritual things. And during these lives they were guided by "the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth," and by the system of worship provided for them by God. We are looking, or ought to be looking, for like heavenly promises, and while we are in the flesh we shall find help, comfort, encouragement, and strength from these outward ordinances, which God has given us in His holy Church. (*E. Smith, B.A.*) **As soon as the soles of the feet . . . shall rest in the waters of Jordan.**—*Committal*:—The first step was to be taken in the waters. They were called upon not only to face the difficulties, but to enter them. They were not to ask God to prove His power first. They were to trust Him first, and then should they see as they followed on to know the Lord, "His giving forth" to be "prepared as the morning." How fatal had been a halt, although but one step short of the brim of the waters! Even the foot uplifted, ready to fall as soon as the path was ready, would have waited in vain. The promise was addressed only to the faith that, without seeing signs and wonders, could yet believe. That one step taken which proved their faith, and placed it in a position of entire receptivity—then God could prove His faithfulness and manifest His power. His wonders follow at once. The lesson which is here taught us is of the utmost importance, showing us the very essence of all true faith. Mature faith must be able to dare and to endure, with no other stay than seeing Him who is invisible. Our Father does, indeed, stretch out the hand of yearning tenderness to steady the tottering steps of a babe. In His pity and compassion He will not forbid the poor cripple his staff; but the faith of full years and of steady strength can never be developed by continued indulgence. It must be exercised by reason of use. Again, that God, instead of giving His people some visible aid for their crossing, set before them a most visible hindrance, doubling the danger and difficulty to the natural eye, is in perfect accord with our advanced experience. Only how often does the simplicity of our faith fail to equal theirs. It is the first instinctive impulse of unbelief to seek a sign—to have something to interpose between itself and the bare word of God. And so, how often is the question asked: "If God be really disposed to bring me into this glorious liberty, will there not be at least some token of it? Shall I find no evidence of it in my own altered feelings; and especially will not the Lord prepare the way by lowering the opposing tide of temptation?" The word of our God needs neither sign nor surety. Be it a promise, or be it a command, it matters not; for every command has a promise for its kernel. We are to go forward to obey His commands—forward to receive His promises—forward in faith—forward though difficulties double. Again, the foot dipped in the brimming waters declares emphatically that faith is to precede feeling. Nothing that we discover in heart or life need hinder

us in coming to Christ to seek deliverance from it. We may even use our worst discoveries as our plea in coming; "For the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Nor will my sickness make the Physician displeased with me in my first application to Him. But if after He has healed me, and taught me the conditions of sustaining health, I find myself again unloving, cold, perturbed, fretted, moody, I have not the least right to say that all is well, and that, disregarding all this, I am to believe myself fully accepted through Christ. Unless I bring this disturbance to Him for confession, forgiveness, and healing, I am utterly at fault. Our feelings are of importance. The same Creator who set the faithful nerves as sentinels along all the lines of the senses, to give due warning of danger and disease, gave a corresponding sensitiveness to our souls. Faith is not to discharge this as unnecessary, but to retain it in her service. If it be well with our faith, it will also be well with our feelings. (*S. F. Smiley.*) *When does Divine help come?*—When we, actually going forth in duty as He has told us, according to the directions He has given, laying hold by faith upon His promise, come to the limit of our strength—when thus our feet are dipped in the brim of the waters of our Jordan, His great help does come. 1. Such Divine help comes in difficult duty. Though duty be difficult, when we go forth toward it, as God has ordered, and in faith in His promise, we may be certain somehow His help will meet us. 2. Such Divine help comes scattering foreboded inability, *e.g.*, the women going to the sepulchre, asking, anxiously, "Who shall roll away the stone?" but going on and finding it rolled away (Mark xvi. 1-4). 3. Such Divine help will come in death. See what Mr. Greatheart says of Mr. Fearing in the second part of "Pilgrim's Progress." The whole passage is most exquisite. 4. Such Divine help will also come in conversion. There is that Jordan of belief in Jesus—of the absolute commitment of the self to Him which we must pass before we can enter the Canaan of forgiveness, and God's favour, and the noble life. Now go on toward it. Cross it. But you have no feeling, you say; that is not to the matter. But you do not know such feeling as other people say they have; that is not to the matter. But you do not understand how it can be; you need not; that is not to the matter. But you are not fit to make the crossing; you never will be fitter; that is not to the matter. This is enough. God tells you to go forth, along His way in faith of His promise; and when your feet but touch the brim of a perfect self-surrender, you are His, you are Christian. His forgiveness falls, you have passed into the Canaan of the new life. (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) *The ark in Jordan*:—It is worth noticing the use which in the passage of the river they made of the ark of the covenant. The pillar of fire had ceased to go before them. They had grown into the ability to appreciate a better and more spiritual symbolism. Fire meant more to the eye than a little box of acacia-wood, but the acacia box, considered as the casket of the Divine autograph of the two tables, denoted more to the mind and heart; and so it marks a growth that not the pillar, but the ark, guided them across the river. They treated the ark on this occasion reverently, but not superstitiously. They used it not as a "charm," but as a symbol. The Israelites on a later occasion used it as a charm in one of their battles with the Philistines, when after one defeat they said (1 Sam. iv. 3). To the men standing on the brink of the swollen Jordan, however, the ark was not a charm, a power, but only the representative of a power. Their own faith earned them miraculous passage, and not the little acacia chest; and they felt it so. There is danger of our coming to use the holy things of our religion more as the Israelites used the ark at Ebenezer than as they used it at the river. We easily fall into a way of attributing Divine potency to rites and ceremonies, prayers, sanctuaries, and ordinances, forgetting that these things are only types, significant as types, but not as forces—that the power of Christianity is not in the rites, but in the faith only that uses them. A symbol is a dangerous thing: the Hebrews learned that lesson at Ebenezer. A symbol is a precious thing: the Hebrews learned that lesson at the Jordan-crossing. (*C. H. Parkhurst, D.D.*) *Obedying God's commands*:—The Jordan of Canaan stands for any difficulty which the Lord commands us to encounter. Between us and the goal at which we are aiming, there is often some wide Jordan which, at the time, seems to us to be very peculiarly broad. At another time, when the stream is not so wide, we think that we might dare to make the attempt, but just now the thing seems too hazardous. We think we had better wait for a little, until the waters abate. So we stand on the brink shivering, and dare not plunge into the waves. How many a sinner has felt thus, as he has heard the call of God to forsake his sins! If only this or that

were a little different, he thinks he might venture, but just now the opportunity seems hardly propitious. To the believer the same temptation comes, as he faces some duty, and recognises that it is a duty, while yet he shrinks from it to-day. To-morrow, he argues, will be a more favourable season; and so he too refuses to step boldly into the flood. We all are inclined to ask that the billows may cease flowing before we are called to descend into their very midst. Is it not so? Let the example of this people, whom we have so often condemned with a kind of superior feeling of virtue, spur us to better ways of heeding the command of God. All that we need to be sure of is that we have the command of God. Sure of that, there is only one thing to be done by the believer, and that is to go ahead. If God says, "Go into the water, and when you get there the way will be made clear," we may be sure that in due time the waters will cease. Ours is to go ahead, and God's business is to see that the waters abate. If we do our part, we need not fear but what He will do His. "It is the first step that costs," is a proverb as true in religious matters as things secular. Many an undertaking that seemed impossible when we started has become very easy before we were done with it. Like the ten lepers who were told to go and show themselves to the priests before a spot of their leprosy had departed from them, but who as they went were cleansed, so it happens to the people of God: as they go, they receive the fulness of blessing, whereas had they waited for that until they were willing to start, they would have received nothing at all. How many blessings do you suppose you have failed to receive simply because you have refused to move until the whole way was made clear to you? You can at least go as far as the brink of the water, and even put your feet into the water, without being drowned. Why not try that much, and see what will happen? Is it not worth while? (*A. F. Schauffler, D.D.*)

VER. 14-17. The priests . . . before the people.—*Ministers as leaders of the people*:—It is not always that either priests or Christian ministers have set the example of going before in any hazardous undertaking. They have not always moved so steadily in the van of great movements, nor stood so firmly in the midst of the river. What shall we say of those whose idea, whether of Hebrew priesthood or of Christian ministry, has been that of a mere office, that of men ordained to perform certain mechanical functions, in whom personal character and personal example signified little or nothing? Is it not infinitely nearer to the Bible view that the ministers of religion are the leaders of the people, and that they ought as such to be ever foremost in zeal, in holiness, in self-denial, in victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil? And of all men ought they not to stand firm? Where are Mr. Byends, and Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, and Mr. Worldly-Wiseman more out of place than in the ministry? Where does even the world look more for consistency and devotion and fearless regard to the will of God? What should we think of an army where the officers counted it enough to see to the drill and discipline of the men, and in the hour of battle confined themselves to mere mechanical duties, and were outstripped in self-denial, in courage, in dash and daring by the commonest of their soldiers? Happy the Church where the officers are officers indeed! Feeling ever that their place is in the front rank of the battle and in the vanguard of every perilous enterprise, and that it is their part to set the men an example of unwavering firmness even when the missiles of death are whistling or bursting on every side. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

As they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan.—*The passage of the river Jordan*:—I. THAT WHATEVER DIFFICULTIES MAY ARISE IN THE CHRISTIAN'S PILGRIMAGE, THE MOST FORMIDABLE AWAITS HIM AT ITS CLOSE. Reserve, then, your resources. Do not waste your moral strength in a useless sighing over ills that are incident to human life, and which are blessings rather than curses if patiently borne. Remember that some really formidable obstacle may ere long be placed in your path, and that floods of suffering may be before you. The lesser troubles wisely borne will prepare you for greater ones—will teach you calmly to meet and eventually to triumph over them, as did the Israelites when, after encountering the perils of their desert-life, they came at length to "the swellings of Jordan." II. THAT GOD HAS PROVIDED APPROPRIATE MEANS BY WHICH THE DIFFICULTIES INCIDENT TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE MAY BE OVERCOME. 1. He endows us with moral courage. Faith in God will give us firmness in times of danger; we shall be calm when others are agitated, and steadfast when others are moved. 2. He vouchsafes His gracious presence. And where God is there is peace and safety. Victory over temptation, comfort in trouble, support in death, all are insured by the presence of God. 3. He provides a guide. It was not

under Moses, but under Joshua, that the Israelites crossed the Jordan, yet all and more than Joshua was to the Israelites the Saviour is to us; going before to show us the way, encouraging us by His example and sustaining us by His grace. (*H. J. Gamble.*) *The crossing of the Jordan*:—Our subject brings before us a scene which in many of its features reminds us of that memorable night in which the Lord led Israel forth by that unexpected way, through the waters of the sea, from the house of bondage into liberty, from cruel slavery into the joy of a new national life. Now there is much to be learned from considering both the points of similarity and of contrast in those two memorable events. First we notice that in both cases there was a going down into the element of water, and a rising up out of it into an entirely new position—the mystical symbol of death, and burial, and of resurrection. In both cases by this passage through water a complete separation was effected between the old and the new state of things, and in both cases the passage indicated the commencement of a new and happy career. In each case the water, which naturally should have been an obstacle, became, we may say, an assistance, and that which naturally should have been a cause of danger became a means of safety. And in both cases this was caused by a distinct Divine intervention, and in each case that manifestation of supernatural power was associated with a symbol of the Divine presence, though the symbols in the two cases were different—in the first it was the fiery pillar, in the second it was the ark of the covenant. Nor are the points of contrast less striking than the points of agreement. The frenzied terror, the fearful excitement which pervaded that terrified multitude at the Red Sea is conspicuous by its absence on this occasion; they are no longer fleeing from destruction and death, but passing on to a higher and happier kind of life. There they were passing from a fertile land into a howling desert, where they would have to depend on a miracle for every meal. Here they were passing from a waste of desert into a fertile land—a land that flowed with milk and honey. There we hear an outburst of triumphant enthusiasm when the sea was crossed, and loud songs of triumph rang forth from the vast multitude as the returning wave submerged the Egyptians. Here all seems to have been calm and solemn; the only expression of strong feeling was the setting up of those memorial stones as if a deep and lasting recollection of this great fact were aimed at rather than an evanescent excitement. In both cases, observe, we are contemplating a scene of salvation, yet is there a great difference between the salvation effected in the one case and in the other. In both cases the salvation comes through a divinely-appointed Saviour; but even between these there is a contrast. Moses was the Saviour from, Joshua was the Saviour into. And all this may throw much light upon a question that seems greatly to exercise the minds of some, especially just at present. It is unquestionably a fact that long after their conversion some Christians pass through an experience so marked and definite in its character, and leading to such happy and unmistakable consequences in their subsequent lives, that some teachers give to this great inward change the name of a second conversion. Others speak of it as entire sanctification, and urge upon all indiscriminately the necessity of passing through some such definite experience. Now two things are equally plain from this narrative. The first is, that the crossing of the Jordan did mark a very definite epoch in the history of the Israelites, and served to emphasise a crisis in their history, out of which they passed into a new and far more satisfactory condition. The second is, that this crossing of the Jordan, nevertheless, would not have been necessary at all but for the backsliding and perversity and unbelief of the Israelites. The lesson of Divine power exercised over the very elements, and over that element which, but for the intervention of an omnipotent hand, must have destroyed those whom it now protected, and the pledge that such a miracle contained for the future—all this would have been fresh in the minds of the Israelites when they first reached Kadesh-Barnea, and would have required no repetition. I was much struck with the remark of a dear friend of mine. Shortly after I had devoted myself entirely to mission work he said to me with great emphasis, "Now, my dear brother, you are going to give yourself up to the work of preaching the gospel, and I hope the Lord will give you many converts. But whatever you do, try and bring them in at Kadesh-Barnea; don't tell them that they've got to go wandering in the wilderness for forty years." I have never forgotten his words; and how I long for you young Christians who are just starting forwards from the Red Sea that you may be spared these forty years of weary wandering; that it should not be necessary for you to go on year after year murmuring over your doubts and fears, your disappointments

and your barrenness, your dulness and deadness, your infirmities and failures. Oh, it is weary work this! I pray you avoid it. We have seen that both the passage of the Red Sea and the passage of the Jordan were miracles of salvation wrought for Israel by God. We have also to notice that they are both instances of salvation by water. It is by God's judgment upon sin that we are to be saved from sin; by His judgment upon the world we are to be saved from the world. And now here lies our practical lesson. Whether we have been baptized at the moment of our conversion, and actually expressed our faith in Christ for justification in submitting to the ordinance, as probably was the case with St. Paul, or whether we are baptized in unconscious infancy before our faith became operative, as is usually the case with us Church-people, or whether we are baptized long after justification, as in the case with modern Baptists, we cannot become truly justified without passing through that which the ordinance symbolises—death and resurrection. Rise from the regrets of the past into the acquisitions of the future. Dry your tears, and claim your heritage. And here is the first step, "Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." Sanctify yourselves. This is God's call to those of us who would faint cross over the Jordan. Put away every unclean thing—all that interferes with the Divine operation. And the next lesson is, expect! To-morrow the Lord will do wonders amongst you. Only by a miracle of grace can you be raised to your true level of Christian experience, and brought into the land that flows with milk and honey. Your heavenly Leader seems to ask, "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" Oh, let Him be answered from the bottom of your heart with a fervent "Yea, Lord; there is nothing too hard for Thee." Then comes the great fact, the pledge and presage of all coming victories: "Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you," &c. Go down again into the place of death and burial, but see your Lord there before you, a pledge that when you pass through the waters, because He is with thee, the floods shall not overflow thee. Go down into the place of judgment, and see thine old wilderness life, with all its waywardness and wilfulness, judged, condemned, and left behind thee for ever. (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*)

*The ark and the crossing of Jordan:—*I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES AS CONNECTED WITH THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL. It does not appear that any intimation was given to the Israelites before the morning of the day on which they crossed the river as to the manner in which their passage was to be effected. This would be a great trial of their faith; and the readiness which they showed to go on when the ark did move was a clear proof that their faith, through the grace of God, stood the trial; and that they were actuated by simple trust in God, believing that whatever He said should be done would surely come to pass, however impossible it might seem to the judgment of men. The fact is that Israel had become accustomed to the constant exhibition of the most amazing miracles. They had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt by a succession of wonders. As our minds dwell on this strange sight, one object stands forth pre-eminently conspicuous, and that is the ark borne by the priests. The ark was the point round which all the glory of the miracle was made to revolve. As the people passed and gazed at the wall of waters, they would feel, we owe our safety and our easy passage to the presence of the ark, the token of the presence of Jehovah Himself. It will not be without instruction if we notice the name by which the ark was called in connection with the transaction before us: "the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God." Here, then, was a pledge of God's truth and faithfulness. He who was showing their way was one on whom they could thoroughly depend. How would this serve to stimulate them, to stir up their hearts, to awaken faith, to strengthen hope! Thus conspicuous was the ark on this most notable day. And if you ask why, the answer is twofold. First, because the ark was to remind them of the presence of God. By it He made to His people that most welcome of announcements, ever fresh: "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God." The ark was also a type of Christ; and though Israel might not see the lessons which all the typical economy taught, yet God would magnify His Son by exalting that which pre-eminently represented Him.

II. From the consideration of Israel LET US TURN TO OURSELVES, AND SEE WHAT IS TO BE GATHERED FROM THE HISTORY before us for instruction, comfort, and encouragement, as far as our own Christian life and practice are concerned. Is it not true that if we are among the spiritual Israel of God, experience of difficulty and trial is constantly falling to our lot? Now when we reflect on our necessities, cast our eyes around to survey our individual position, look onwards to the Canaan which we love, and think what we must encounter before its shore is reached, must we not have a guide and a defence?

Obstacles as great as Jordan with its overflowed banks and swollen stream meet us in our course; uncertainties in respect of which no calculation can, humanly speaking, be made, veil the future; intricacies which we cannot thread are constantly arising; enemies seem to stand upon the farther shore, and to threaten opposition and repulse even if we cross the stream. To-day all may be fair and smooth, to-morrow such a flood may arise of trouble, adversity, or temptation, as will be well-nigh sufficient to sweep us quite away. Well, let it be so. Believer, there is help for you which is all-sufficient. The ark is going before. Hear how the Lord speaks (Isa. xlii. 15, 16; xliii. 1, 2). Remember how you have been guided hitherto: how when you broke from the bondage of Satan and of sin, the Lord made a way through all that would have kept back your soul. If He of whom the ark was but a type, if Jesus be our guide, where may we not readily go? How precious is the word, "He goeth before them" (John x. 4). As we follow our heavenly Guide we may well believe that He leads us forth by the right way, that we may go unto a city of habitations. This is the glad portion of every one who lives the life of faith. He may thus individualise the covenant truth of God, and make it his own. But not only so, he can rest in the assurance that this covenant truth is the common heritage of all the saints, and so learn more and more to rejoice that all his brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus have the same guide, the same defence, the same refuge as himself. What a source of comfort is this; inexhaustible, overflowing, ever fresh and life-affording! (*C. D. Murston, M.A.*) *Jordan driven back*:—This was only one of several ways of entrance that might have been chosen; therefore this, the most unlikely of all, must have been chosen for special purposes. Nor are these difficult to find. I. By this wonderful entrance into the land JOSHUA WAS GREATLY HONOURED (ver. 7). It was a wonder wrought by Jehovah to establish the authority of Joshua. It was a fulfilling of the promise He had made, to be with him as He had been with Moses. It was an emphatic endorsement of the people's enthusiastic response. It was His own seal and signature placed upon Joshua's commission. Surely this was essential to united and effective action on the part of those he led. If men have no deep confidence in their commander, they cannot follow cheerfully, they cannot work heartily. Therefore, when God calls to office, He endows with all needful honour; and not only does He bestow it at the beginning, He also maintains it so long as He has work for His servants to do. Surely such a record as this should teach every servant of God to leave his honour in God's keeping. His one aim should ever be to honour God, knowing assuredly that that word of promise is never broken, "Them that honour Me I will honour." Yea, more than that, He will also cause others to do the same. II. Still further, we are told that by this miracle THE DIVINE PRESENCE WAS REVEALED (ver. 10). This wonder gave new proof of His guiding presence, and such an assurance was, in their present circumstances, peculiarly appropriate. The manna was about to cease. In like manner the beckoning banner of cloud and fire is furled for ever. No longer can it lead them forward, for their rest is gained. But if it has gone, Jehovah has not. His presence, though without that visible manifestation, is as real as ever. And it is as powerful; He is the living God, not dead like the idols of the Canaanites, or the ideas and abstractions of the philosopher, or the forces and atoms of the scientist. Neither is He inoperative; a worn-out energy, a decrepit force. He is acting everywhere, by all means, at all times. What a demonstration of these things was the working of this wonder. If it has been said of a great general that his presence with the army was worth a regiment, how much more would the assurance of the Divine presence strengthen every hero in Israel to chase a thousand foes. III. Again, by this miracle SUCCESS WAS GUARANTEED. After such a brilliant opening of the campaign, could there be an ignominious end? Impossible! He that did the greater wonder, would not fail in accomplishing the less. God never abandons His work half-way; He never leaves it marred or unfinished. IV. Among the results flowing from this wonder, not the least important was its influence on Israel's enemies. THE CANAANITES WERE TERROR-STRUCK (chap. v. 1). This great event, which filled the hearts of the Israelites with confidence, had just the opposite effect upon their enemies. Nothing could have dispirited them more. Who could stand against a people thus favoured? When God makes bare His arm the stoutest heart becomes like wax. All refuges of lies, every false security, is felt more frail than a gossamer web. (*A. B. Mackay.*) *The Jordanic passage*:—1. Standing on the scene of that affrighted and fugitive river Jordan, I learn that obstacles, when they are touched, vanish. It is the trouble, the difficulty, the obstacle there in the distance that seems so huge

and tremendous. 2. Again: this Jordanic passage teaches me the completeness of everything that God does. Does He make a universe, it is a perfect clock, running ever since it was wound up; fixed stars the pivots, constellations the intermoving wheels, and ponderous laws the weights and mighty swinging pendulum; the stars in the great dome striking midnight, and the sun with brazen tongue tolling the hour of noon. A perfect universal! No astronomer has ever proposed an amendment. Does God make a Bible, it is a complete Bible. Standing amid its dreadful and delightful truths, you seem to be in the midst of an orchestra, where the wailings over sin, and the rejoicings over pardon, and the martial strains of victory make a chorus like the anthem of eternity. Does God provide a Saviour; He is a complete Saviour. God—man. Divinity—humanity united in the same person. 3. Again, I learn from this Jordanic passage that between us and every Canaan of success and prosperity there is a river that must be passed. "Oh! how I should like to have some of those grapes on the other side," said some of the Israelites to Joshua. "Well," said Joshua, "if you want some of those grapes why don't you cross over and get them?" A river of difficulty between us and everything that is worth having. That which costs nothing is worth nothing. God makes everything valuable difficult to get at for the same reason that He puts the gold down in the mine, and the pearl clear down in the sea; it is to make us dig and dive for them. We acknowledge this principle in worldly things. Would that we were wise enough to acknowledge it in religious things. Eminent Christian character is only attained by Jordanic passage. No man just happens to get good. Why does that man know so much about the Scriptures? He was studying the Bible while you were reading a novel. He was on fire with the sublimities of the Bible while you were sound asleep. It was by tugging, and toiling, and pushing, and running in the Christian life that he became so strong. In a hundred Solferinos he learned how to fight. In a hundred shipwrecks he learned how to swim. Tears over sin, tears over Zion's desolation, tears over the impenitent, tears over graves, made a Jordan which that man had to pass. The other morning, seated at my table, all my family present, I thought to myself how pleasant it would be if I could put them all in a boat, and then get in with them, and we could pull across the river to the next world, and be there, and be there all together. But we cannot all go together; we must go one by one. What a heaven it will be if we have all our families there! Lord God of Joshua, give them safe Jordanic passage! Every Christian will go over dry-shod. One word of comfort from this subject for all the bereft. You see our departed friends have not been submerged, they have not been swamped in the waters; they have only crossed over. They are not sick, not dead, not exhausted, not extinguished, not blotted out; but with healthier respiration, and stouter pulsation, and keener sight, and better prospect, crossed over—their sins, their physical and mental disquietude all left on this side. Impassable obstacle between them, and all human and Satanic pursuit, crossed over. Would you have them back again? Would you have them take the risks and the temptations which threaten every human pathway? Would you have them cross Jordan three times—in addition to the crossing already—crossing again to greet you now, and then crossing to go back to heaven? (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The passage of Jordan:*—Behold, in this passage of Jordan, first of all a picture of the beginning of the Christian's earthly course. As we stand where Israel stood, on the eastern bank, we behold a fair inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey, rich with every earthly blessing, with all that heart could wish. But as between Israel and Canaan Jordan rolled, a great and immovable barrier, so between us and the goodly heritage of spiritual blessings we behold the swollen river of God's judgment against sin. How can we who are sinners enter into life and rest? How can we reach or enjoy such blessings? That barrier is to us unsurmountable. There are no fords in this river; and we cannot swim across it as the spies the Jordan. Neither is there any bridge above the waterflood. But look again. Behold a mighty wonder. That river is dried up and driven back. That barrier has been abolished, and the empty bed lies bare. It is as if there were no river. What has abolished the barrier? The ark of God alone. By means of it Jordan was driven back. And as the ark abolished the barrier between Israel and Canaan, so Christ has abolished death. He Himself, in His own body, has borne all the weight of the flood of God's judgment against sin. He has finished the work of salvation, and opened up a new and living way through His own body into the land of spiritual rest. He has done this, and done it alone. Of the people there was

none with Him. No hand of man had a share in this work, even as no man in Israel drove Jordan back. And Jesus abolished death as speedily and effectually as that flood was driven back. As it was with the priests in Jordan so was it with the great High Priest in the waters of judgment. Whenever the soles of His feet touched the brim of the deadly flood it fled away. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. To those who trust in Him, so far as safety goes, it is as if it did not exist. Not the faintest trickle of condemnation can damp their feet. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Mark also how the passage was made by Israel. As it is written, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land"; so might it also be written of this twin event, "By faith they crossed the Jordan and entered into the inheritance of the Lord." By nought that we can do can we gain an entrance; but trusting in Him who has made an end of sin, we pass from death to life, from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son. As Israel passed over Jordan by faith in God, even so must all pass from condemnation to acceptance, according to that word of the gospel, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And right gloriously is all such confidence justified, whether in the case of Israel or of any sinner that believes. Oh! how safe are they who put their trust in the living God, who enter into life by faith in Christ Jesus. The way of faith is absolutely safe for all who walk therein. And it is as simple as it is safe. The entrance into Canaan was the simplest, the easiest, the plainest, that could be devised. A little child could cross the emptied river as well as the stoutest warrior. And the stoutest warrior had to go the same way as the little child. It was a path that suited the feeblest, and therefore a path that suited the strongest; and no one could make any mistake about it; the wayfaring man, though a fool, could not err therein. Again, note that this way of entrance was free to all. No one was prevented from crossing. No charge was made for crossing. Whosoever would was welcome to enter in. The fact that the road lay open was an invitation for all to cross to the goodly land of rest. Even so, though the blessings of Canaan are not to be compared for a moment with the glory of God's inheritance of grace, still entrance into this heavenly rest is free. Without money, and without price, whosoever will may enter in. But we cannot conclude our consideration of this great event without pointing out its resemblance to that abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom, ministered to all those who with all diligence add to their faith courage, knowledge, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love. The grace that led Israel through the wilderness for forty years; the grace that sustained their lives amid its barren sands; the grace that gave them bread from heaven and water from the flinty rock, did it fail them at the end of the journey? Nay! nay! The same power and love that had fed them with manna, and canopied them with cloud and flame, divided the waters of Jordan and gave them abundant entrance. This God remains our God for ever. His grace can never fail us. (*A. B. Mackay.*) **The priests . . . stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan.**—*The priests in the midst of Jordan; or, Moral firmness:*—Observe the sublime calmness of these priests—these leaders of the people; they stood firm in the midst of the waters till all passed over. The circumstances suggest two remarks about their firmness. I. THAT IT WAS RATIONAL IN ITS FOUNDATION. 1. It was not stolid indifference. 2. It was not confidence in their own power to keep back the mountain of water. 3. It was not, of course, faith in the laws of nature. These men were firm in defiance of nature's laws. 4. What, then, was the foundation of their firmness? The word of God. Now, our position is, that it is more rational to trust the word of God than the laws of nature. (1) Because His words bind Him to action; the laws of nature do not. (2) Because deviation from His word would be a far more serious thing to the universe, than deviation from the laws of nature. Were He to deviate from His word, virtue would be at an end, moral government would be disobeyed, the grand barrier between right and wrong, truth and error, heaven and hell, would be broken down; and anarchy and misery would deluge the moral creation. (3) Because He has departed from the laws of nature, but has never swerved an iota from His word. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," &c. 4. Two inferences necessarily flow from the foregoing considerations—(1) That it is more reasonable to walk by faith than by sight. (2) That apparent impossibilities can never be pleaded against Divine predictions. II. THAT IT WAS SALUTARY IN ITS INFLUENCE. 1. The force of human influence. The millions of every age follow the few. 2. The philosophy of useful influence. Fidelity to God is the spring of useful influence. (*Homilist.*)

No river there!—The dying words of Bishop Haven to the Rev. Samuel Upham, who went to see him, were, "Preach a complete gospel: a whole Christ, a whole heaven, a whole hell, the whole Bible from end to end." His physician on leaving said, "Good-night, bishop," and he answered, "Good-night: next time it will be 'Good-morning.'" Then he closed his eyes, and some thought the spirit had fled, but he opened them again, and, looking at the Rev. Mr. Mullalieu, said, "I have been looking for the cold river, but there is no river there; only a broad plain leading up to the throne." Soon afterwards his spirit crossed the "broad plain."

CHAPTER IV.

VERS. 1-24. **What mean ye by these stones?**—*The first act in Canaan.*—These stones proclaimed certain realities. Taken from the dry bed of the river, they declared God's power in cutting off the waters before the ark of His covenant; twelve in number, one stone for each tribe, they declared how that all Israel had entered into Canaan; set up together in Canaan, they witnessed to Israel's unity in that land. Moreover, they became a memorial to the nation of Jehovah's work for them. First, these stones declared Jehovah's great work for His people; even Jordan emptied of its waters before the ark of His covenant, and His people brought thereby into the fulness of their blessing. Now as we truly recognise that we are brought, in Christ, into the heavenly places, our first action in spirit will resemble that of Israel: we shall extol God for His power and might in accomplishing His purpose in bringing us into such blessing. Christ, our ark, went down into death for us, exhausted its power, stripped of its might; and God has given us, who were dead in sins, life "together with" Christ risen from among the dead, and has set us in Him in the fulness of blessing, so that as truly as Israel through the passage of the Jordan were in Canaan, saints now are in Christ in the heavenly places. To enter into this grace, it is necessary to keep before our hearts, in faith, the measure of God's Divine power exercised towards us, the exceeding greatness of which is according to that energy and might of His "which He wrought," &c. (Eph. i. 20). And speaking in the language of the type under our consideration as "clean passed over" Jordan, the Christian's first act should be the heart recognition of what God has done. We are across the river; to God through Christ be the praise. Next, the stones, twelve in number, "according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel" (vers. 5, 8), spoke of the whole of Israel. Christians occupy themselves practically with spiritual, not national, unity; therefore with the truth that all saints of every nation are one in God's sight and according to His purpose. Saints are seated together in the heavenly places in Christ, the one common place of blessing for all who believe. One association and one privilege mark all saints, and all equally have the highest and the best place. Even as each individual believer has life for himself "together" with Christ risen (Eph. ii. 5), so have all believers the highest privileges in common; they are by God made "to sit together" (Eph. ii. 6). The pillar of twelve stones, set up in Gilgal, became a memorial to the nation of Jehovah's work for them. The question, "What mean ye by these stones?" which the children would ask their fathers was to be answered by a relation of the Lord's doings. And well indeed may Christians recount to their children what God has wrought. Our little ones should be grounded in the great truths of God's Word. Redemption, resurrection, and ascension facts should be implanted in their minds and memories. (*H. F. Witherby.*) *The pile of stones speaking.*—It is an outrage to build a house like this, occupying so much room in a crowded thoroughfare, and with such vast toil and outlay, unless there be some tremendous reasons for doing it; and so I demand of all who have assisted in the building of this structure: "What mean ye by these stones?" 1. We mean that they shall be an earthly residence for Christ. Jesus did not have much of a home when He was here. Oh, Jesus! is it not time that Thou hadst a house? We give Thee this. Thou didst give it to us first, but we give it back to Thee. It is too good for us, but not half good enough for Thee. 2. We mean the communion of saints. 3. We mean by these stones the salvation of the people. We did not build this church for mere worldly reforms, or for an educational institution, or as a platform on which to

read essays and philosophical disquisitions; but a place for the tremendous work of soul-saving. Do not make the blunder of the ship carpenters in Noah's time, who helped to build the ark, but did not get into it. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Stones buried and raised*:—I. These stones were most emphatically a MONUMENT OF GREAT MIGHT. The hand of man is capable of great achievements. How stupendous, how unparalleled, was the work of carrying Israel across Jordan in this fashion; yet how easily, how quickly, how quietly, was it all done! II. Yet these stones formed a MONUMENT THAT MIGHT BE DESPISED. Simple and rude it was; it had no beauty or architectural comeliness, to be desired; it was nothing more than a rough pyramid of twelve muddy stones. With what contempt would an Egyptian look down upon it. But, after all, ostentation is human, simplicity is Divine; for though, from a human point of view, the wonder commemorated here was very great, what was it from the Divine? Nothing. What, after all, was the opening up of this passage to Him who upholds all things by the word of His power, who gathers the waters in the hollow of His hand, who taketh up the isles as a very little thing? Nothing, and less than nothing. It was easy for the men of Israel to raise such a monument. Yes; yet it was harder for them to heap up these stones than for God to heap up these waters; and all the might that reared the pyramids could never have congealed these depths. III. Again, THIS MONUMENT HAD A WORLDWIDE REFERENCE AND A SPECIAL APPLICATION. Most monuments have a very restricted reference. They speak to a political or a religious community; to the inhabitants of a city or the natives of a country, or to the members of a common faith; but this simple monument on Jordan's bank has a voice for all mankind. It gives a declaration of God's mighty power, so clear and emphatic that if men do not hear its testimony it is because they have stopped their ears. And if it had, for the human race as a whole, a great lesson to teach, it was fraught with special instruction to the Israel of God. To all men it cried, "God is mighty"; to Israel it testified, "This God abides thy God for evermore." He is your refuge and strength. Therefore this monument was set up that they might remember and fear the Lord for ever and walk in His ways, and do His commandments. IV. OTHER LESSONS ARE TAUGHT BY THESE STONES. They were twelve in number, arranged in their places by twelve warriors, one from each tribe; therefore it is plain that the whole people are represented by these stones. Also there were two sets of twelve stones: one set in the bed of the river, buried by its waters; another raised from the bed of the river, and piled upon its bank. Therefore we have here the whole people represented in two different aspects. The twelve buried stones speak of Israel in one relation; the twelve raised in another. Think of the buried. What mean ye by these stones? They lie on the bottom of the river, covered by its muddy waters. They represent God's chosen people, for they are twelve. The strange place, therefore, in which they lie, must be a representation of some spiritual and important truth concerning Israel. What is it? "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." The death of those who came out of Egypt made this very plain. Now the children have arisen in place of the fathers, and they are about to enter in. What is their title to the inheritance? Is it better than that of their fathers? Is it true that they are worthy; that they have clean hands and a pure heart, and have not lifted up their souls unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully? Is it true that they are righteous? Can they claim entrance because of their obedience to the law? Nay, by the law shall no man be justified; and this burying of the twelve stones most solemnly emphasises this declaration. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven." The sinner must leave the old man behind; the body of sin must be destroyed; we must be born again ere ever we see or enter into the kingdom of God. Do we ask, where is the old man, the body of sin? The Cross and grave of Christ give answer: it is gone, clean gone for ever; lost sight of, as these stones in the bed of Jordan. They are buried, to know no resurrection; yea, God tells us He has cast them behind His back, into the depths of the sea, a far deeper grave than Jordan. Through Alaric I. the Goths first learned the way to Rome. He and his rugged hosts were everywhere invincible. All Italy, luxurious and effeminate, lay at his feet. He extended his conquest as far south as Sicily. But at Cosenza in Calabria he was seized with a deadly malady. When he died, his followers had to face a great difficulty. What were they to do with the dead body of their great leader? It was impossible to carry it back over Italian plain and snowy Alp to the dark forests of his fatherland. It dare not be left to the mockery and desecration of the cliffs he had conquered. Therefore they determined to

bury it in the bed of the river Busento. They set their captives to the task of diverting the stream from its channel, and there in its dry bed they dug the grave of Alaric. Then, when he was buried deep in his rocky tomb, and the waters rolled once more in their wonted channel, to hide for ever the secret of this strange sepulchre, all the captives were put to death. These Goths wished to give their king a grave which no hand could reach. Even such a grave has God given our sins, and here in these stones we behold a picture of what He has done. We are buried with Christ. Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God by Christ Jesus our Lord. But there were twelve stones raised upon the bank as well as twelve buried in the bed of Jordan, and we may well ask, "What mean ye by these stones?" This is the positive side of the same truth we have been considering. As the buried stones speak of death, so the raised speak of resurrection. We are not only buried with Christ, but are also quickened with Him, raised with Him, and seated with Him in heavenly places. The twelve buried stones picture our place on account of sin; the twelve raised declare our place on account of righteousness. The first speak of weakness; the second of might. The one declares all "old things are passed away"; the other, "all things are become new." These twelve stones set on Jordan's bank were raised from Jordan's bed. That river, as it were, begot them. They were of it, from it, out of it. Even so the Church of Christ is begotten and brought forth from His death. The agonies of Christ crucified were the travail pangs of the new creation. As His people are buried with Him, so are they quickened, "begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead." Yes, it is a "lively hope." The great pyramid of Egypt was after all a monument of despair, "the eternal abode" of the dead. This little pyramid of Canaan is a pyramid of hope, placed in the goodly land conspicuously and permanently; reminding those that believe that we are not only raised with Christ, but seated with Him in heavenly places—that we are henceforth a constituent part of His inheritance. (*A. B. Mackay.*)

Voiceful stones.—This primitive form of a memorial is common to almost all nations. Of this character are the Egyptian obelisks and the cairns and the Druidical circles in England and Scotland. The text is the question of the children. The sight of the cairn would awaken curiosity. It has been well asked, "What child in Altorf but must have inquired respecting the statue of William Tell, or in Lucerne about the lion sculptured by Thorwaldsen to commemorate the deaths of the Swiss Guard?" These memorial stones would remind the tribes of God's greatness and goodness. But the stones must have tongues in order that their testimony may be more complete. They were not simply to be memorial; they were also to be declaratory. . . . Occupying to-day for the first time this place of worship, it is fitting that we should ask and answer the old question, "What mean ye by these stones?" The form which the stones have taken partly answers the question. Turret, tower, and spire point heavenward. In its symmetry and sincerity the whole structure preaches the need of truth in the heart and life. 1. These stones express our conviction of the world's need of Christ's gospel. Sin is the terrible fact in human existence. It is the absence of wholeness and of happiness; of Godlikeness here, and of heaven hereafter. It has separated man from God, and man from man. It is the prolific parent of all our woes. In the fulness of time the Christ was born. One element, the negative element, in that fulness was the world's fruitless effort to help itself. Mighty Rome, in her abject helplessness, was calling for a deliverer. Beautiful Greece was stretching out her hands for a healer. Christ was both to both so far as they received Him. The experience of the world must be that of each individual. God says, and experience echoes the saying, "Thou hast destroyed thyself." Thank God He speaks this other word: "But in Me is thy help." 2. These stones express our faith in Christ's gospel to meet the world's need. To each man, guilty and condemned, it offers, through the death and mediation of Christ, a full and free pardon. It makes the redeemed here have foretastes of heaven. It harmonises all the conflicting interests of human society. 3. These stones declare our faith in and our duty toward the aggressive, the missionary side of Christ's gospel. It means to conquer the world. It will do it. This is its lofty ambition and its Divine destiny. In this respect it stands unique among the religions of the world. We are not to satisfy ourselves by singing, "Hold the fort!" we must shout, "Storm the fort!" Our anti-mission Church is an anti-Christian Church. 4. These stones declare our faith in our distinctive organic order as a body of Christians, as being in harmony with Christ's gospel. (*R. S. MacArthur.*)

Stones of memorial.—I. THE MEMORY OF

GOD'S GOODNESS IS HONOURING TO GOD HIMSELF. To receive favours from an earthly friend, and then to forget them, and to act as if they had never been bestowed; this is ingratitude, base and contemptible. How much worse is the conduct of those who are insensible to and negligent of the favours shown by God to man! Especially should redemption wrought by the Son of God be kept in everlasting remembrance. The least we can do is to praise and glorify the God of grace.

II. THE MEMORY OF GOD'S GOODNESS IS A STIMULUS TO PIETY. Remembrance feeds the flame of devotion, of love, of trust. To think of God's favours and to be thankful is "a good thing," is profitable to the spiritual life, and conducive to fellowship with God, and to true happiness and contentment.

III. THE MEMORY OF GOD'S GOODNESS IS AN ENCOURAGEMENT IN TIME OF TRIAL, DANGER, AND FEAR. The distressed and harassed may well call to mind the Divine interpositions of the past, which will lead them to exclaim: "The Lord hath been mindful of us: He will help us." (*Family Churchman.*)

The memorial stones:—I. WHAT WAS GOD'S PURPOSE? 1. The memorial was to be an aid to faith. 2. It had the purpose of cherishing gratitude. 3. It was a reminder of the need of unity.

II. WHAT ARE THE PROPHETIC ASPECTS OF THIS MEMORIAL? 1. The two piles of stones, according to St. Augustine, represent the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles; the new Israel on the bank of the old river, the old in the midst of the stream, as the "buried" past. Thus the "memorial" is the Church of Christ, built upon the apostles, the one Divine Society, which is founded on a Rock, and against which the gates of hell may beat, but cannot prevail; for it is a memorial "for ever."

2. As the passage of the Red Sea represents baptism—God "safely led the children of Israel Thy people through the Red Sea, figuring thereby Thy holy baptism" (*Prayer Book*)—so some writers have seen in the crossing of Jordan a figure of the pardon for sins committed after baptism; in other words, an image of repentance. Further, as after passing Jordan, the Passover was kept, so after repentance the Holy Communion is received. In fact, the memorial as to its purposes may be compared to the Holy Eucharist; that is, a "memorial" of the death and passion of Christ: "Do this, for My memorial"; it is the great service of thanksgiving for redemption, as its name announces; and it is a pledge of unity, for "we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one Bread" (1 Cor. x. 17).

3. Further, as through Jordan the Hebrews entered the land of promise, the "Holy Land," so penitence must be introductory to a holy life, which leads to heaven. 4. It may be noticed that by some modern writers Jordan is regarded as the river of death, and the words, "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" (Jer. xii. 5) to be applicable to the fears which surround death, through which all must pass before they can "see the kingdom of God."

III. LESSONS. 1. To sustain our faith by the use of those "outward and visible" signs—the Sacraments, which our Lord has appointed as the memorials of what He has wrought for us. 2. To make our lives more lives of thanksgiving, and especially by receiving the Holy Eucharist, which is the "thanksgiving" which Christ ordained to be offered up to the end of time, "till He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26).

3. Further, let the twelve stones remind us of the union which should exist between the members of Christ; for whilst we are bidden to "honour all men," the apostle says further, "love the brotherhood." 4. The cairn of stones at Gilgal should teach us that we "as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood," &c. (1 Pet. ii. 5). The truest witness to Christ is to be found in the lives of His members, those who make Him visible. To such, the power which made a way for Israel through Jordan will not fail them, and the promise will be fulfilled by the Saviour (Isa. xliii. 2).

(*Canon Hutchings.*) *Memorials*:—I. THAT THE SPIRITUAL LIFE SHOULD BE ONE OF CONTINUED MEMORIALS. Is it not one continued course of mercies? And as these mercies, these proofs of love and care telling sweetly of the provision of a Father, the grace of a Saviour, the presence of a Comforter, are manifested day by day and hour by hour, what cry so fitting as that of the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits"? How delightful to look back and trace the dealings of God with your soul; or, not confining the mind to spiritual things, to see how, at times, especial providences have fallen out, telling of unceasing watchfulness on the part of the Lord, and calling for devout acknowledgment on yours. How delightful to find that you have not overlooked these signs of goodness, but that they still live fresh in loving recollection, and that here on earth those things are not forgotten which assuredly will furnish themes of praise hereafter in heaven. It has been so all along. Observe Abraham on mount Moriah; Jacob on the plain by Luz; Moses after Israel's defeat

of Amalek at Rephidim; Samuel when the Philistines had fled before him; look at the children of Israel here at Gilgal; the same Spirit moves them all. II. IT IS USEFUL TO CONSIDER WHAT WE SHOULD COMMEMORATE, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH SUCH COMMEMORATION SHOULD BE OBSERVED. We might speak of national mercies, and mercies to our Church; of signal benefits, such as our pure creed, our heritage of the Word of God, the opening of wide fields for Christian enterprise, the revival of the spirit of religion, which, a century ago, made England see a wondrous resurrection from spiritual death, and which is still manifesting itself in a thousand forms for the good of man. Such things as these call for deep thankfulness. The Christian community which can recount them may appropriate the language (Psa. lxxviii. 1-7). But just in proportion as thankfulness fills the individual heart will the general mind of the community feel its expanding power. The revival of God's work in this, as in other respects, must begin in the individual, and the community will take its tone from the majority. And if we learn to value for ourselves, by personal participation, the blessings of the gospel of Christ Jesus, we are prepared to appreciate the benefit which those blessings confer on the community: if we really set up our memorials for saving mercy conferred on ourselves, the Divine goodness shown to our nation and our Church will not readily be overlooked.

III. WHY IT IS DESIRABLE TO ACT IN THE WAY THAT HAS BEEN POINTED OUT. We are prone to look rather at our sorrows than at our joys; to brood over trouble rather than to be grateful for prosperity. Poor complaining souls, take heed lest you rebuke God. Look on the other side. Try to count your mercies. "My mercies." Yes! The help God has given you over and over again; the difference which you may find between your trials, which are so great, and those of your neighbour, which are even greater; the patience and long-suffering with which God has borne all your repining, your murmuring, your forgetfulness of Him, your doubts and fears and unbelief; the grace which has spared you instead of cutting you off in sin and casting you down to hell; the rich privileges and means of spiritual good brought to your very door and placed within your reach, set by your side from time to time, with merciful perseverance and consideration for your soul. Let us be well assured that if we kept these things more in remembrance the spiritual life of the people of God would flourish and abound to an extent as yet not generally seen.

1. There would be more gratitude. Fresh exercises of praise would spring from hearts whose thankfulness would be from time to time more specially revived.
2. There would be more hope. As desires after mercies might arise, they would not be vague, but accompanied by well-grounded expectations based on the past experience of so many mercies remembered.
3. There would be more faith. When dark clouds gather we should see the light streak where they would ere long break, the golden fringe to show that the sun is still there. We should feel that these shadows shall be dissipated as others have been.
4. There would be more happiness. Where gratitude and hope and faith abide, repining and doubt can find no room. (C. D. Marston, M.A.)

Memorials:—Memorials! What are they? For what do they stand, and what do they teach? They are special signs of Divine interposition in human lives, and commemorate some event or circumstance claiming special remembrance and study.

- I. THIS MEMORIAL WAS COMMEMORATIVE AND SUGGESTIVE. 1. It commemorated a new departure. They had not been this way before, they had never stood so near the fulfilment of hope as they did now. This is typical of every life. We all have our new departures, times of marked and decisive change, when some sudden bend in the road completely changes the track, leads us into new scenes of activity or rest, giving us new revelations and new experiences, and are truly periods of deep interest, epochs, red-letter days in our lives; we cannot forget them, and have raised memorials marking them as points to be remembered and studied.
2. It commemorated a signal mercy. Every Christian life has its seasons of peculiar need, which are often made special means of grace. And should he not raise memorials to mark both the trial and the mercy?
3. It commemorated a remarkable deliverance. What a sublime spectacle! When all human aid is unavailing, and nothing can save but direct Divine intervention, then Jehovah commands the waters to stand up upon a heap, again showing His salvation to His people. Some such memorial you have in your life. Some time of pressing need, when human help failed, and God came to your deliverance by opening up a path through the deep waters for you. And have you made no mark, no sign, put up no lasting reminder?

II. THE VALUE OF SUCH MEMORIALS.

1. They witness for God. They stand at different points on the ways of life, bearing silent but telling testimony to the power and grace of the Infinite Father in some time of

sore and pressing need, confirming our faith in the doctrine of the conscious, abiding, personal presence of God in the lives of His people. 2. They remind us of mercies received in the past. We are consciously faulty in memory, are apt to forget the blessings already received, and to grow impatient and fretful when things are a little contrary; then it is of service to us to go back a little in our history to some of these times of God's special nearness to us, when He gave us such unmistakable proof of His presence and grace by some marked deliverance, some special blessing, or some signal answer to prayer; when we can refresh our faulty memories by putting our hand upon some place, or time, or event in our life that we had marked by a stone of memorial, as a record of faith in God and gratitude to Him. 3. They inspire confidence and hope for the future. Much was before them to perplex. 4. They check despondency and gloom. 5. They supply precious lessons of Divine faithfulness. God would have us raise these memorials by the way to remind us of His covenant engagements. The past shall repeat itself in our future. 6. These memorials are of service to others. The pillar at Gilgal was not only to be a memento of the sovereign mercy of God to those who had actually witnessed the cutting off of the waters of Jordan, but it was to supply to posterity some precious lessons of Divine majesty and love. Much so it is with the memorials of Christian lives—they exert a helping influence on other lives. 7. These memorials supply incentives to increased devotion, and stimulate to loftier praise. In this day of scepticism, coldness, indifference, and practical infidelity, when the actual presence of God in individual lives is more or less ignored, it is both refreshing and reassuring to take up Christian biography and hear how the holy men and women who have passed into the Father's house accounted for similar events in their lives. I have sometimes seen family Bibles marked with peculiar hieroglyphics which a stranger could not read or understand; but ask the husband or wife to tell you what these marks mean, and you will find that each has a history precious and sweet to the marker. They are pillars that have been raised to remind them of some special answer to prayer, when they pleaded that promise; or when some extraordinary light broke upon the mind, on a certain day, as they pondered and prayed over that verse; or perhaps it was a literal fulfilment of another promise on which they had rested in a time of distressing calamity, and they have placed these memorials there to call to mind the signal mercy of God in their time of urgent need, and they would as soon doubt the need as they would the source of supply. "God did it for us," they say, "as surely as He divided Jordan for Israel to pass over to Canaan." I have also heard matured Christian men converse together on God's dealings with them, and have felt a strange thrill pass through me as one of them has put his hand upon some pillar in his life and said, "Here God met me, and I communed with Him. It was a time of bitter pain and need, and I was bowed down to earth with the burden, and was fainting by the wayside, but the Lord drew very near, and I seemed to hear His voice speaking to me, and asking me to tell Him about the pain, and I was drawn out to tell Him all, and He blessed me there, by giving in a way marvellous to me just what I needed; I rose up a strong man, and the grace was so like a miracle that I put up this memorial, and this spot is very dear to me, for here I saw God face to face and my life is preserved." (*J. Higgins.*)

The stones buried in the Jordan:—As a memorial of this wonderful passage, twelve stones were selected from the rocky bed of the river, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel; and these were borne across before them on the shoulders of twelve men, and planted on the upper terrace of the valley beyond the reach of the annual inundation. In this manner was formed the first sanctuary of the Holy Land, which was a circle of upright stones—like one of the so-called Druidical circles in which our pagan ancestors worshipped in our own country. But besides this memorial which was set up on the western bank of the Jordan, there was another set up in the bed of the river itself. In the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood, in the centre of the channel, twelve stones like those which had been carried across to the opposite bank were arranged probably in the same manner; and when the river, which had been temporarily driven backwards to allow the Israelites to cross, returned to its forsaken bed, its dark, muddy waters flowed over the buried stones and hid them for ever from view. Thus there were two monuments of the miraculous passage of the Jordan taken from the materials of its own bed; one that gave rise to the sacred shrine of Gilgal, which was for a long time the appointed place of worship in the land; and another that was buried out of sight for ever in the muddy ooze of the deep rushing river. The

sacred narrative tells us what were the purpose and meaning of the monument that stood on the dry land and was visible to every eye; but we have to find out what were the purpose and meaning of the monument that was invisible beneath the waters of the river. The place where they entered the Holy Land is unique. There is no other place like it in the world. It is the deepest chasm on the surface of the earth—at a great depth below the level of the sea. Do we not see in this circumstance a symbol of the deep repentance and self-abasement which a people so sensual, so ignorant, required before they could be fitted to occupy the heights of worship in God's holy heritage? Then look further at the fact that the time when the Israelites crossed the Jordan was the spring-time, which in Palestine is the commencement of the barley-harvest. We are told elsewhere in Scripture that the harvest is emblematical of the judgment. It was therefore a time of judgment when the Israelites crossed the river; their past sins, their numerous rebellions, and outbursts of unbelief, deserved condemnation and punishment; their iniquities rose up against them, and demanded their exclusion from the land of promise as unworthy. But God in His great mercy held back the waters of the Jordan, the waters of judgment and death, which would otherwise have overwhelmed them, whilst His holy ark stood in the midst of the stream, and Israel crossed in safety; a token surely that though He was angry with them, His anger had passed away, and He was about to give them double for all their sins. Look further still at the significant fact that when the Israelites had erected their first sanctuary on the other side of Jordan, on the soil of the Holy Land, which by this solemn act became their own inheritance, they were immediately circumcised, and thus consecrated anew to the Lord, made new creatures, as it were, from their birth to Him. So that we see in this incident, as well as in the circumstance that the older generation which had left Egypt all perished in the wilderness, and only their children entered the Holy Land, what we may regard as the origin and illustration of our Lord's saying, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Seeing, then, that all the incidents and circumstances of the passage of the Israelites across the Jordan form a very focus of symbolism, we are surely warranted in looking for a spiritual significance in the burying of the memorial stones in the bed of the river. The Jordan was a boundary river, separating between the wilderness and the promised land. It flowed down to the dreary, lifeless solitude of the Dead Sea. Its waters, laden with mud, were dark and drummy, and concealed their bed and whatever they flowed over completely. Its course also was very rapid and impetuous. In all these respects it was a most expressive symbol to the Israelites. The transition from the wilderness to Canaan was not made over continuous dry land; a water-boundary was interposed, through which they had to pass. And did not this teach them that in the passage from the wandering life of the desert to a settled home in the land of promise they were not to continue the same persons in the new circumstances that they had been in the old; but, on the contrary, were to undergo a moral change, a spiritual reformation. They were to be made a holy nation, in order to be fit occupants of the Holy Land. Their passage of the Jordan was therefore a baptism of repentance; the river at the entrance of the Holy Land, like the laver at the entrance of the tabernacle, afforded a bath of purification; and the memorial stones laid in the bed of the river, over which the waters, when they had safely crossed on dry land, returned, burying them for ever from sight, represented the fate which should have been theirs had God dealt with them according to their sins. And just as the scape-goat carried away the sins of the people, confessed on its head, into the wilderness, into a land of forgetfulness, so the dark, muddy waters of the Jordan carried away the stones which represented the sins of the Israelites into the Dead Sea, there to be engulfed for ever. All baptism is in a spiritual sense the crossing of a boundary. When a child is baptized it crosses a boundary between nature and grace—between ignorance and knowledge. And when in later life we are baptized with a spiritual baptism, born again of water and the Spirit, we cross the boundary between spiritual death and life—from the kingdom of Satan to that kingdom which is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Now the river of baptism is a river of death. In crossing it we die to sin and live to righteousness. In entering into the new life the old life perishes. Through the death of the old man there is the resurrection of the new man. All that is connected with the old life of sin and unbelief is taken from us and carried down to the Dead Sea. The body of sin is drowned in the waters of forgiveness, and shall no more rise up against us. Like the stones in the bed of the Jordan, there is no resurrection for that which

was connected with our former dead sinful selves. And how precious is the significance of the buried stones when looked at in this light! It is not a truth that pleases the intelligence by its ingenuity only; it is a truth that satisfies the heart by its suitableness to its wants. How comforting and reassuring is the thought that when, through faith in Christ, we have crossed from a state of nature to a state of grace, all our sins are cast into the sea of God's mercy. They are as completely buried out of sight as the stones in the ooze of the Jordan. The peace that is like a river and the righteousness that is like the waves of the sea flow over them. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*) *The witness of the stones*.—1. They were stones of witness, for in after-years they powerfully proclaimed that the miracle of dividing the water of the Jordan was true, since they were raised at the very time; they were erected publicly in the sight of the people, and no one would have dared to make such a monument, and to declare that it commemorated such an event, had the miracle never taken place. Scripture miracles are attested by witnesses, which attestation distinguishes them from the so-called miracles of the heathen world. 2. And the stones of Gilgal were stones of encouragement, for when Israel looked on them, and recollected that they recalled God's power, no doubt could be felt that God was able to make their enterprise a success. When the great cities, vast wealth, and mighty armies of the Canaanites were considered, many a Hebrew might feel his heart sink within him as he looked on the rude and undisciplined host which Joshua had led across the Jordan. But a glance at the stones of the circle of Gilgal would dispel all such fears, and he would think—"The mighty Jehovah who divided the waters of Jordan is on our side; and against the power that cleft asunder the waves of that river what can the might of the Amorites avail? Jehovah is with us, and against Him whose word divided Jordan vain is the power of the Canaanite, and our victory is absolutely sure." 3. But while these stones gave encouragement to Israel, they bore witness in a different manner to their enemies, for to the Canaanites they were stones of warning. How could Amorite or Hittite withstand invaders whose God possessed the power of dividing the waters of Jordan? They had run riot in sin; they had stifled conscience: they had despised warning; and now the day of mercy was past, and the avengers were upon them, and who could hope to resist their power and to escape their swords, when their God made the waters of Jordan to stand as a heap in the day when His people passed over? Sin will not go for ever unpunished; God's Spirit shall not always strive with man, and corruption shall not with impunity defile the fairest portions of a groaning creation: but when the day of grace has passed, the day of vengeance shall certainly follow. The stones in Gilgal are gone, the circle is destroyed, and the stony witness of encouragement and warning is no longer borne; but there are stones around us now which give their witness, and our ears must be heavy if we do not hear, and our minds dull if we do not understand, the testimony that they deliver. "What mean these stones?" 1. They show God's power; for who could make such mighty foundation rocks, and after their formation could heave them up into their present lofty heights, but a Being possessed of almighty power? 2. What wisdom, too, is exhibited in their formation! What a wonderful skill is shown in the selection of their constituent elements, and in their combination according to a fixed design! 3. And what goodness also do these stones of the hills manifest? for how useful they are to man, and how it stimulates his inventive faculty to quarry, shape, and erect them as monuments to beautify the creations of his genius! Man puts up milestones to measure the length of his journey, and God also erects milestones to mark how man himself is advancing on that journey which we are all travelling. What is our life but a journey? ever advancing and ceaselessly progressing day by day, month by month, and year by year. Life's journey is to many painful and wearisome. The morning of life, with its freshness, is gone; the noontide sun beats fiercely on our heads; the novelty of changing experiences has passed away; and as we slowly advance along the highway of daily life, our hearts begin to get weary, and we too become discouraged "because of the way." God puts up His milestones to mark our progress on life's journey, and as we pass them successively, it is solemn to notice their witness and their character. The eyesight begins to grow dim: slowly, indeed, but surely; and we treat the fact almost with indifference. It is a mere common event, but it is another milestone on the road of life, to show that the end will before long draw near. The hearing is dulled. Pleasant sounds can no more be enjoyed, and the harmonies of nature's and of human music gratify us no longer. We quietly accept the inevitable, perhaps with a sigh, but at all events with resignation, knowing that it must be so; and in the

heavy ear we recognise another of God's milestones. Memory now begins to fail. We cannot trust it as formerly, and do not attempt to tax its power for fear that it should prove treacherous. Failing, capricious memory! what is it but another milestone placed by God by the side of the road of life to tell us that we have passed over the greater part of our journey and are drawing near to home? The milestones of the way, how differently they affect different people! Here is a man going away from his country, seeking his place of abode in a distant land, and leaving behind him all he holds dear in this world: his lands, his treasures, and his friends. Milestones are sad things to him, for they tell him that his time in the land in which all his pleasure is found is rapidly passing away. But here is another man, returning to his home. He has been in a foreign land; has made his fortune: has landed on his return at the well-known port, and is journeying rapidly along the highroad to his loved and long-expected home. He knows a welcome is there: dear ones are all looking out for his arrival, and his greeting will be joyous, while he will not merely meet them, but will never leave them again. How quickly he walks! How slowly the milestones seem to pass! The heat of the sun, the length of the way, the ups and downs of the road, are all nothing to him, for the thought of the home ever drawing nearer and nearer makes him take no notice of them whatever. So it should be with us. We have had, perhaps, our morning of life, and it may be that the journey is beginning to grow wearisome; but let us think less of the road and more of the home. (*D. G. Whitley.*)

The priests . . . stood . . . until everything was finished.—*The way of difficulty*:—I. REMEMBRANCE OF GOD IS THE ONLY ENCOURAGEMENT THROUGH WHICH SOME PARTS OF LIFE'S WAY BECOME BEARABLE AND PASSABLE. II. GOD'S REGARD TO THE GREATER TRIALS OF OUR LIFE DOES NOT CALL OFF HIS ATTENTION FROM DETAILS. He not only parted the waters, but He waited in the river, both in power and presence, "until everything was finished." III. THE GENERAL COMMANDMENTS OF THE BIBLE ARE MEANT TO REGULATE AND CONTROL THE SPECIFIC ACTS OF OUR LIFE. "According to all that Moses," &c. But Moses had never given any commands touching the actual passage of the Jordan. Yet Moses had commanded an implicit reliance on Divine guidance and a careful obedience to Divine requirements. Such general words covered all the particulars of the case. There are many things in the family, in business, in the Church, and in the world, which no specific precept may touch; there is absolutely no place which we can occupy in our daily life which in principle and in spirit is not covered by the Scriptures. IV. WHILE DIVINE PATIENCE NEVER WEARIES IN GIVING US NECESSARY HELP, WHEN GOD GOES BEFORE WE SHOULD PROMPTLY FOLLOW. "The people hastened and passed over." Whatever motive actuated their haste, haste was the right thing for the time. God does not work that we may idly look on. His manifest energy is a call for our marked diligence (2 Sam. v. 24). V. GOD, WHO MAKES WAY IN THE VAN OF OUR DIFFICULTIES, IS NO LESS NECESSARY TO SECURE OUR REAR (ver. 11; Deut. xxi. 17, 18). Not only that He may see His people, but that He may save them, He besets them "behind and before." (*F. G. Marchant.*) **The people hastened.**—Probably the majority of the people were moved by fear, but some feelings may have led some of the host to hasten, and other considerations others. I. THE HASTE OF FEAR. This also leads to Canaan. II. THE HASTE OF DILIGENCE. With so much to be done, each had need to remember, "the night cometh." III. THE HASTE OF REVERENT OBEDIENCE. God does not work mightily and command urgently that men may move slothfully. IV. THE HASTE OF COMPASSION. While the people tarried, the priests must wait. No man ever idles without expense and inconvenience to some one else. V. THE HASTE OF UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE. The quick movement of a few would communicate itself to all. Our pace times that of our companion, and his that of others. (*Ibid.*) **Quick use of opportunity**:—They made the best use of the golden opportunity afforded them, and with the utmost alacrity and diligence hastened across the river while thus laid bare for them. The torrent was restrained by the mighty power of God to afford the people an opportunity to pass over dry-shod. But there was no time for presumptuous delays, as though they could count upon an indefinite prolongation of this favoured season, and might postpone crossing until it suited their pleasure, in the confidence that God's grace would wait upon their dilatory movements. There was no disposition on the part of any to remain as long as they could on the wilderness side, with any chance of getting into Canaan before the waters should rush back again into their accustomed channel. (*W. H. Green, D.D.*) **The people's haste**:—The priests and the ark stood still; but "the people hastened and

passed over." Many commentators assume that they hastened from fear. Such haste would have been both utterly unseemly, and an evil omen for the conquest. There were other reasons for making all possible haste. Were they not keeping the priests of God with their arms outstretched, to bear up their holy burden? And moreover, there, distinct before them, beautiful in the soft, rich light of the early morning, lay the homes, and vineyards, and fields, which they were to possess. A few steps, and their feet would be in Canaan; a few moments, and the weary waiting of years would end. As the tired labourer hastens at the first glimpse of his home, so must they have hastened. There may have been, also, some innocent rivalry to be among the first to touch the further shore. All these motives, indeed, might easily combine as they hastened and passed over. And shall not the thought that Jesus waits till all be gathered in—waits, without coming yet "in His power and great glory"—shall not this thought stir up His Church, not only to be looking for, but hastening His coming? The love of Christ constraining us, will urge us onward. And who that has had "the eyes of the understanding opened" to behold what are "the riches of glory" of this inheritance in Christ Jesus would not fain "to his speed add wings," that he might enter it and at once possess it? (*S. F. Smiley.*) **Come ye up out of Jordan.**—

Firm in duty:—We can fancy how the people who had reached the western shore lined the bank, gazing on the group in the channel, who stood still waiting God's command to relieve them at their post. The word comes at last, and is immediately obeyed. May we not learn the lesson to stand fixed and patient wherever God sets us, as long as He does not call us thence? God's priests should be like the legionary on guard in Pompeii, who stuck to his post while the ashes were falling thick, and was smothered by them, rather than leave his charge without his commander's orders. One graphic word pictures the priests lifting, or, as it might be translated, "plucking," the soles of their feet from the slimy bottom into which they had settled down in their long standing still. They reach the bank, marching as steadily with their sacred burden as might be over so rough and slippery a road. The first to enter were the last to leave the river's bed. God's ark "goes before us," and "is our rearward." He besets us behind and before, and all dangerous service is safe if begun and ended in Him. The one point made prominent is the instantaneous rush back of the impatient torrent as soon as the curb was taken off. Like some horse rejoicing to be free, the tawny flood pours down, and soon everything looks "as aforetime," except for the new rock, piled by human hands, round which the waters chafed. The dullest would understand what had wrought the miracle when they saw the immediate consequence of the ark's leaving its place. Cause and effect seldom come thus close together in God's dealings; but sometimes He lets us see them as near each other as the lightning and the thunder, that we may learn to trace them in faith, when centuries part them. How the people would gaze as the hurrying stream covered up their path, and would look across to the further shore, almost doubting if they had really stood there that morning! They were indeed "Hebrews"—men from the other side—now, and would set themselves to the dangerous task before them with courage. Well begun is half done; and God would not divide the river for them to thrust them into a tiger's den, where they would be torn to pieces. Retreat was impossible now. A new page in their history was turned. The desert was as unreachable as Egypt. The passage of the Jordan rounded off the epoch which the passage of the Red Sea introduced, and began a new era. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Life a journey:—I. THAT HUMAN LIFE IN THIS WORLD IS A JOURNEY. 1. Change of scenery. 2. Approach to an end. 3. Unsettledness of feeling. Life's journey is—(1) Unremitting; (2) irretaceable. II. THAT HUMAN LIFE IN THIS WORLD IS A JOURNEY WHICH WILL HAVE AN END. 1. Our end is certain. 2. It is solemn. III. HUMAN LIFE IN THIS WORLD WILL HAVE AN END WHICH MAY BE GLORIOUS. 1. It may be glorious in the courage of the traveller. 2. It may be glorious in the destination reached. (*Homilist.*) **Those twelve stones . . . did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.**—*The double monument of the passage of the Lord's host across the Jordan*:—Many fine allegories have been reared upon the foundation of the twenty-four stones that were placed, twelve in the river-bed, and twelve at the encampment in Gilgal. Some have spiritualised them as types of death and the resurrection; others have seen in them a representation of the prophets and apostles of the Old and New Testament dispensations. They mean that the passage of the Israelites over Jordan is—I. A REAL EVENT. The history that records it is not an oriental poem or a patriotic legend. It is not a fine conception

of an impassioned imagination. It is not an exaggeration. We have before us a plain matter of actual history. II. A SIGNIFICANT EVENT. 1. God was glorified. He was herein exhibited as "the living God" (chap. iii. 10), and "the Lord of all the earth" (chap. iii. 11). 2. Joshua, moreover, was magnified, and shown to be Moses' divinely-sanctioned successor (chap. iii. 7). 3. The Israelites, moreover, were assured. With the remembrance of the naked channel of Jordan, what cause of trepidation can remain? 4. By this miracle their enemies were appalled—namely, the inland Amorites, the immediate spectators; and the Canaanites, or coast tribes (Num. xiii. 30) in the distance, who heard the report (chap. v. 1). The passage took place "right against Jericho" (chap. iii. 16). Oh, portentous sight for the inhabitants of that fortress! III. A PATTERN EVENT. It was with apparent reference to this event that God promised His people by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, "When thou passest through the waters," &c. Let us, then, claim the promise, and embrace the consolation that this history declares to us for ourselves. And what can we do in these "swellings of Jordan"? Here is an answer to our misgivings, "The Lord will do wonders among you!" IV. A SYMBOLICAL EVENT. 1. On the one hand, we may regard the passage of the Jordan as a glorious and "abundant entrance" into the promised inheritance. 2. On the other hand, we may regard it as illustrating, not only the triumphant close, but also the hopeful beginning of the believer's course, and conversion, not death, will be the aspect of Christian experience that we shall recognise. Application: 1. Are you yet in your sins? and do you long to experience the saving change of the new birth? But does a very torrent of difficulties seem to roll at their fullest height between you and the peace and pardon you long to enjoy? Go forward, and fear not. Jesus Himself calls you. He Himself accompanies you. Every hindrance will vanish if you obey His word. 2. Are you already amongst God's people? Have you anxieties, difficulties, obstructions, in your course of life? He who opened a highway through the Jordan is also your helper. 3. Is Jesus your hope, and do you nevertheless quail when you think of the hour of your departure hence, when you must leave all you love here below? (Isa. xliii. 1-8). (*G. W. Butler, M.A.*)

The stones of memorial.—I. GREAT EVENTS DESERVE COMMEMORATION. In them God is the teacher. Men have always been ready to perpetuate the memory of their own great deeds. By memorial structures, memorial days, memorial observances, they have sought to keep alive the knowledge of their achievements and to foster a regard for the sentiments which lived in them. It has been common for all men in every age to act upon the principle which Daniel Webster stated when the corner-stone of the Bunker Hill Monument was laid: "Human beings are composed not of reason only, but of imagination also, and sentiment, and that is neither wasted nor misapplied which is appropriated to the purpose of giving right direction to sentiments, and opening proper springs of feeling in the heart." But no memorial structure elaborately reared to perpetuate right feeling and sentiment could subserve this end as fitly and fully as did the rude circle of stones set up at Gilgal. It nursed no pride of ancestry. It declared God's "mighty acts." Reminded by this rude memorial, one generation praised His works to another. They were led to speak of the glory of His kingdom, and to talk of His power. II. GOD EXPECTS THE CHILDREN TO BECOME INTERESTED IN GREAT EVENTS OF THE PAST. It was for the children's sake that the circle of stones was set up at Gilgal. It was to awaken their curiosity. God wishes the children to ask a great many questions. In this way He would have them learn what He has been doing for His people in past ages. III. GOD EXPECTS THE FATHERS TO BE READY TO ANSWER THE CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS. The stones of Gilgal could be of little use to those children whose parents did not keep freshly in mind the events commemorated. They would become a monument whose inscription had faded away. No doubt the word "fathers" means parents, but it is worthy of remark that it does not mean mothers only or especially. The father who gives over to the mother the religious training of the child fails in the special duty which fatherhood imposes. He shirks the greatest responsibility of life. The father who answers his child's questions by evasion acts unworthily. "My wife takes care of the religion of the family," a busy man said. But this is not God's plan. This father's life, in many respects admirable, failed miserably in a central, essential duty. For this failure no other well-doing could compensate. IV. THE STONES ERECTED AT GILGAL SUGGEST MORE LASTING MEMORIALS WHICH GOD HAS SET UP. 1. A memorial book. Concerning this book He would have the children question and the fathers give answer. How has this book been made, and by what providence

has it been preserved? 2. A Church with memorial rites. What do baptism and the Lord's Supper have to tell us about God's ways with men? 3. A memorial day. Sunday is God's commemoration day. It stands a lasting memorial of the greatest event in human history. (*W. G. Sperry.*) *The memorial stones*:—Gilgal, the first encampment, lay defenceless in the open plain, and the first thing to be done would be to throw up some earthwork round the camp. It seems to have been the resting-place of the ark, and probably of the non-combatants, during the conquest, and to have derived thence a sacredness which long clung to it, and finally led, singularly enough, to its becoming a centre of idolatrous worship. The rude circle of unhewn stones without inscription was, no doubt, exactly like the many prehistoric monuments found all over the world which forgotten races have raised to keep in everlasting remembrance forgotten fights and heroes. It was a comparatively small thing; for each stone was but a load for one man, and it would seem mean enough by the side of Stonehenge or Carnac, just as Israel's history is on a small scale as compared with the world-embracing empires of old. Size is not greatness; and Joshua's little circle told a more wonderful story than its taller kindred, or Egyptian obelisks or colossi. 1. These grey stones preached at once the duty of remembering and the danger of forgetting the past mercies of God. When they were reared they would seem needless; but the deepest impressions get filled up by degrees, as the river of time deposits its sands on them. We do not forget pain so quickly as joy, and most men have a longer and keener remembrance of their injurers than of their benefactors, human or Divine. The stones were set up because Israel remembered, but also lest Israel should forget. We often think of the Jews as monsters of ingratitude; but we should more truly learn the lesson of their history if we regarded them as fair, average men, and asked ourselves whether our recollection of God's goodness to us is much more vivid than theirs. Unless we make distinct and frequent efforts to recall, we shall certainly forget God's goodness. The cultivation of thankful remembrance is a very large part of practical religion; and it is not by accident that the psalmist puts it in the middle, between hope and obedience (*Psa. lxxviii. 7*). 2. The memorial stones further proclaimed the duty of parental instruction in God's mercies. They speak of a time when tradition was the vehicle of history; when books were rare, and monuments were relied upon to awaken curiosity which a father's words would satisfy. Notwithstanding all differences in means of obtaining knowledge, the old law remains in full force, that the parent is the natural and most powerful instructor in the ways of God. The decay of parental religious teaching is working enormous mischief in Christian households; and the happiest results would follow if Joshua's homely advice were attended to, "Ye shall let your children know." 3. The same principle which led to the erection of this simple monument reaches its highest and sacredest instance in the institution of the Lord's Supper, in which Jesus, with wonderful lowliness, condescends to avail Himself of material symbols in order to secure a firmer place in treacherous memories. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The Lord your God dried up the . . . Jordan*.—*Hindrances removed*:—That is true. We saw it. We were there. It is happening every day. Take out the mere detail and put in the great picture, and what is it? It is Divine interposition in the affairs of life. It is God taking away all hindrances to the progress which He Himself has purposed and defined; not the hindrances to your progress, but the hindrances to His own progress as shown through your life. He will not take any stones out of our way if they lie between us and ruin. He will rather embed those stones a little more firmly. God be praised for His hindrances! We wanted to make that contract, and could not. We had the pen in hand to sign it, but the ink would not flow, or the light suddenly gave out, and we dropped the pen. What did it? We see now we were going to sign away our birthright, our liberty, our honour, our conscience, and we were doing this more or less unconsciously, and God said "No." Blessed be God for His denials! Sometimes we are able to say, "Blessed be God for His bereavements!" Let God alone. Let us put our lives just into His hands and say, "Lord, they are Thy lives more than ours. Thou hast only lent them to us. We would not spoil one moment of these trembling frailties which we call our lives. Undertake everything for us and use us. We will run Thine errands, we will obey Thy will, we will do what Thou dost bid us do. Lord, undertake for us. Then if there is a river in the way Thou wilt dry it up, if there is a Red Sea in the way Thou wilt command it to stand back, and we shall walk through the beds of rivers as if they were beds of roses." You would be greatly comforted, as I have been in

a thousand instances, by reasoning from the river to the sea. This is the right method of inference, by induction and by deduction. What has God done for us in the past? Hear David. He said: "The God that delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from this uncircumcised Philistine. I will strike him in the name of the Eternal." Was it a rash act? It was reasoned piety. Why did the young man's blood boil for one moment and then subside? It was all the piety of the past gathered up into one supreme stroke. Sometimes one act of faith condenses a lifetime of study, experience, and prayer. Wondrously doth life bring its own power, and marvellously doth yesterday contribute its quota to the forces of to-day. When a great man advises you upon a certain course, he does not speak for the moment. For a quarter of a century and more he has been buried in the study of law, and when he gives you advice that could be written down in a line he puts a lifetime into that line. When the hoary physician touches your pulse half a century touches it. So we should thus see God moving, as in contemplation and in faith, from the Jordan to the Red Sea. He says to us, as we near the sea: "What about the Jordan? Was there one drop of water on the sole of your feet?" No, Lord, there was not. "Then," saith He in reply, "as with the Jordan, so with the Red Sea. It shall be dried up as if it had never been." When the disciples said, "How can we feed this multitude?" He said, "Did I not feed a multitude once. What lack was there then?" None. "Had the people barely enough to eat?" Nay. "How many baskets took you up?" Twelve. And He helped them to carry out that reasoning, that He who was able to do it once was able to do it twice; and if He could do it twice, He could do it for ever. Here is the historical lesson He teaches us, that what He did yesterday He is going to do to-morrow. If you have no faith in to-morrow, surely you have faith in your own recollection of yesterday. There are timid souls who never dare look at to-morrow. The Lord says to these, "Then think about yesterday; that is over. Now what was done to you yesterday? You thought your heart was going to burst. Did your heart break yesterday?" No. "You thought all things were against you yesternight. Did one star fall out of its place?" No, Lord, they are all there. "Then," saith God, "as yesterday, so to-morrow; as the Jordan, so the Red Sea." What is your experience? How have you been treated in straits and perplexities and difficulties? Who cooled your fever? Who brought light when all was darkness? Bacon saith, "A little learning inclineth to atheism"; but much learning, great wisdom, makes a man pray. Whenever you doubt God, think that you are but feebly or superficially instructed. When you can lean upon Him four-square, know that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. How true it is that all things in life are done by an unseen power in so far as they are either good or bad. The devil is as invisible as God. How wonderful a thing it is that life becomes shaped into palaces and temples without any handling of our own. The Jordan was dried up not with hands; the Red Sea was dried up—not with hands. Hands, poor hands, what can hands make? "The hand can make and break" is a little proverb, I would suggest. Whatever can be made by the hand can be unmade by the hand. God Himself takes all primary ministry unto His own power and employs us, even when we are going about our own errands, simply as His messengers. All life as it grows wisely and well turns and tends to service. Blessed be God, there is a bondage of love, there is a slavery of joy! Are you dreading the Jordan? He will dry it up for you if you put your trust in Him. Are you dreading the Red Sea? He will blow it away with the wind of His mouth. You may go within a step of it, nay, you may touch it, but the moment the foot of faith touches that sea, the sea is gone. (J. Parker, D.D.)

CHAPTER V.

VER. 1. Their heart melted . . . because of the children of Israel.—Divine control over all:—Kings and princes, captains and nobles, are most perfectly under the control of God; not only their counsels and operations, but their very spirits are subject to the influence of His secret and all-pervading dominion; they are restrained by cowardice, or incited by courage; intimidated by fear, or emboldened

by valour, as best may promote the purposes of Providence and the interests of the Church. More has often been effected by this, wherein has appeared no human agency, than could have been by all the advantages of physical strength. It has been seen in the procedure of the Divine government, and opening of the secret counsels of heaven, that turns the most peculiar and results the most momentous have proceeded from this invisible working of God. But for this, the condition of Israel, as frequently appeared in review, would have inspired their adversaries, and, in the mere opposing of force to force, insured to them triumph. A spirit of blindness and infatuation has been permitted to seize the enemies of the Church, and to fall upon the powers of the world, or the Lord's people had again and again been swallowed up. The expedients of infinite wisdom, and resources of almighty power, never fail: they are innumerable, and always at command; not confined to the common laws of nature, but comprehend the secret dominion of spirits, and that unlimited range of omnipotence, by which, in special operations, all things are possible with God, and present to instant adoption, as the purposes of His love may require, or the counsel of His will determine. (*W. Seaton.*)

Vers. 2-9. Make thee sharp knives and circumcise.—*The circumcising at Gilgal*:—Even those comparatively unenlightened people must have realised that there was deep spiritual significance in the administration of that rite at that juncture. On more than one occasion they had heard Moses speak of circumcising the heart, and they must have felt that God meant to teach them the vanity of trusting to their numbers, or prowess, or martial array. Their strength was nothing to Him. The land was not to be won by their might, but to be taken from His hand as a gift. Self and the energy of the flesh must be set aside, that the glory of coming victory might be of God and not of man. We must be content to be reckoned among the things that are not, if we are to be used to bring to nought the things that are, "that no flesh should glory in His presence." We, too, must have our Gilgal. It is not enough to acknowledge as a general principle that we are dead and risen with Christ, we must apply it to our inner and outer life. We have no warrant to say that sin is dead, or that the principle of sin is eradicated, but that we are dead to it in our standing, and are dead to it also in the reckoning of faith. But for this we need the gift of the Blessed Spirit, in His Pentecostal fulness. It was by the Eternal Spirit that our Lord offered Himself in death upon the Cross, and it is by Him alone that we can mortify the deeds of the body. For, first, the spirit of self is so subtle. It is like a taint in the blood, which, stayed in one place, breaks out in another. Protean in its shapes and ubiquitous in its hiding-places, it requires omniscience to discover, and omnipresence to expel. And, secondly, only the Spirit of God has cords strong enough to bind us to the altar of death; to remind us in the hour of temptation; to enable us to look to Jesus for His grace; to inspire us with the passion of self-immolation; to keep us true and steady to the resolves of our holiest moments; to apply the withering fire of the Cross of Jesus to the growth of our self-conceit and self-energy—for all these the grace of the Spirit is indispensable. He is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, therefore He must be the Spirit of death to all that pertains to the old Adam. There is a sense in which all believers have been circumcised in Christ; but there is another sense in which it is needful for them to pass one after another through the circumcision of Christ which is not made with hands, and which consists in the putting off of the body of the flesh. To that all who would lead a life of victory and inherit the land of promise must submit. The process may be sharp, for the knife does not spare pain. But it is in the hands of Jesus, the lover of souls. Oh, shrink not from it! (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

Christian character:—The more a man learns of God, the more he knows of grace. If we would apply to ourselves spiritually the lessons of the circumcision in the land, we must give the grace of God, which led to the circumcision, full place, and remember that God asks for the devotion of His people, because He has, in Christ, brought them into perfect favour. Was it by observing God's ordinances, or was it through God's almighty grace that Israel entered the land of promise? They entered it as a nation in uncircumcision, and therefore exclusively by God's sovereign grace. And why did God not seek for circumcision from the people of Israel, so long as they walk in the wilderness? The wilderness was the scene of their distrust of God. A distrusting spirit is ignorant of God's real character, and consequently is not morally fitted for separation to Himself; but God, having brought us by His grace to know ourselves to be in the heavenly places in Christ,

seeks separation to Himself, corresponding with the liberty into which He has brought us. Grace known and realised is the only true power for heart separation to God. Circumcision with Israel was merely a carnal ordinance, and, in common with all ordinances, gave neither power for communion with God, nor for conflict with His enemies. It was a sign that the children of Israel were God's earthly family, and a people separated from all the rest of mankind. The circumcision made without hands, with which the Christian is circumcised, in Christ, is a separation to God from the whole world. As the people of Israel, because brought through the Jordan, were enjoined by God to be circumcised, and their careless wilderness ways were allowed no longer, so the Christian, because he has died with Christ to the world, and to his old self, is exhorted to mortify his members, and his worldly ways are no longer permitted. This mortification is simply self-denial, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Man naturally loves sin; he loves his own way which is the essence of sin; but he who lives in Christ is called to die to himself in daily walk and conduct. There is no way of living to Christ but by dying to self. It was by no means sufficient to Israel to know that they went across the Jordan, in order to enjoy the riches of the inheritance; for until circumcision was effected none of Canaan's food was spread before them, nor were they called to conflict. And we may be sure that so long as we walk in the flesh and please ourselves, there can be no communion—no feeding upon Christ. Neither can there be any victories for the Lord, unless self is subdued. Satan would beguile the youthful believer into the misty atmosphere of a Canaan of the imagination, where the flesh is allowed to work. In this aerial Christianity, circumcision—self-mortification—is not permitted; the practical result of being dead with Christ is not allowed to wound the will. But there is no stability of soul, no solid devotedness. Such a believer is like the insect, which, well-nigh composed of wings, and possessing scarcely any weight, is driven from the flower garden by the first storm. Sorrowful as is the result of letting the imagination carry away the soul, perhaps the effect of accepting Divine truth in intellectualism is more so. A Christian holding the doctrine of death with Christ, and resurrection with Christ, in the understanding only, goes out from the sunlight of God's presence into a land of deathlike coldness. If circumcision in its spiritual signification were rightly valued, such abuses of the truth of God would certainly find no place in the believer's heart. To mortify our members is not a painless exercise. Saying, "We are dead," is not mortifying; but it is to deny the wishes of our old nature because "we are dead" (Rom. viii. 13). The mere fact of the people of Israel's entrance into Canaan did not constitute them at liberty before God. They were brought into the land of promise by the passage of the Jordan, but were not pronounced free by Jehovah until circumcised. God's liberty for His people is that of His own making, and therefore perfect. It is what He thoroughly approves and delights in. And the means by which, step by step, He brings His people into the enjoyment of this liberty, is grace. If we are God's free men, it is evidently in the land of promise that we have liberty, for only in the fulness of God's favour can we experience His rolling away the reproach of our bondage. (*The Gospel in the Book of Joshua.*) *Why was circumcision suspended in the wilderness?*—Some have said that, owing to the circumstances in which the people were, it would not have been convenient, perhaps hardly possible, to administer the rite on the eighth day. Moving as they were from place to place, the administration of circumcision would often have caused so much pain and peril to the child, that it is no wonder it was delayed. And once delayed, it was delayed indefinitely. But this explanation is not sufficient. There were long, very long periods of rest, during which there could have been no difficulty. A better explanation, brought forward by Calvin, leads us to connect the suspension of circumcision with the punishment of the Israelites, and with the sentence that doomed them to wander forty years in the wilderness. When the worship of the golden calf took place, the nation was rejected, and the breaking by Moses of the two tables of stone seemed an appropriate sequel to the rupture of the covenant which their idolatry had caused. And though they were soon restored, they were not restored without certain drawbacks—tokens of the Divine displeasure. Probably the suspension of circumcision was included in the punishment of their sins. They were not to be allowed to place on their children the sign and seal of a covenant which in spirit and in reality they had broken. But it was not an abolition, only a suspension. The time might come when it would be restored. The natural time for this would be the end of the forty years of chastisement. These forty years have now come to an end, Doubtless it would have been a great

joy to Moses if it had been given him to see the restoration of circumcision, but that was not to take place until the people had set foot on Abraham's land. We may well think of it as an occasion of great rejoicing. The visible token of his being one of God's children was now borne by every man and boy in the camp. In a sense they now proved themselves heirs to the covenant made with their fathers, and might thus rest with firmer trust on the promise—"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." Two other points demand a word of explanation. The first is the statement that "all the people that were born in the wilderness . . . they had not circumcised" (ver. 5). If the view be correct that the suspension of circumcision was part of the punishment for their sins, the prohibition would not come into operation for some months, at all events, after the exodus from Egypt. We think, with Calvin, that for the sake of brevity the sacred historian makes a general statement without waiting to explain the exceptions to which it was subject. The other point needing explanation is the Lord's statement after the circumcision (ver. 9). The words imply that, owing to the want of this sacrament, they had lain exposed to a reproach from the Egyptians, which was now rolled away. What seems the most likely explanation is, that when the Egyptians heard how God had all but repudiated them in the wilderness, and had withdrawn from them the sign of His covenant, they malignantly crowed over them, and denounced them as a worthless race, who had first rejected their lawful rulers in Egypt under pretext of religion, and, having shown their hypocrisy, were now scorned and cast off by the very God whom they had professed themselves so eager to serve. But now the tables are turned on the Egyptians. The restoration of circumcision stamps this people once more as the people of God. (*G. W. Blaikie, D.D.*) *The reproach of Egypt*.—By this reproach we are to understand all that stigma which clung to Israel through its relation to Egypt. This stigma had two aspects, an inner and an outer; an active and a passive. It consisted in that feeling of humiliation and self-reproach, which must have rested on the heart of every intelligent and pious Israelite during the wilderness wanderings. And it also consisted in the feeling of scorn and contempt with which their great oppressors the Egyptians must have looked upon them during all that period. In its inward aspect, the reproach of Egypt was caused by spiritual assimilation to Egypt. Moses had said, "The Lord will put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." This difference was manifested in many striking ways, during the progress of Israel's gradual emancipation. But when this rite was in abeyance, this difference was lost in a measure. Physically, there was no difference between the children born in Egypt after the Exodus and those born in the wilderness. Circumcision was, as it were, God's brand on His people marking them for His own. Its lack proclaimed that they were "Lo Ammi," not God's people. But there could be no greater outward stigma than this. It was Israel's glory to be Jehovah's peculiar people and to bear in their bodies the seal of His covenant. From this height of privilege they looked down on all men. For an Israelite, therefore, to consider his position during the forty years, would be to acknowledge that there was no difference, so far, between him and an Egyptian. Jehovah was no longer, in this mode of outward recognition, his God. But there was a deeper and more potent assimilation, of which the outward and physical was only the sign. There was on the part of Israel assimilation to Egypt in spirit. They reproached God for their redemption, saying that He had brought them from Egypt to destroy them; they actually went the length of appointing a leader to guide them back to the house of bondage. What could be more grievous than such sin? what could more plainly show their assimilation in heart to Egypt? Therefore to a pious and penitent Israelite there was here cause for the deepest abasement. His cry in self-reproach would be, "My sin is ever before me." This also would be implied in the inner aspect of the reproach of Egypt. But in addition to this inner aspect of the reproach, there is also the outer to be considered. The reproach of Egypt not only consisted in those feelings which must have taken possession of a pious Israelite, but also in those taunts which must have been hurled at them by Egypt. Their haughty taskmasters would no doubt make their former bondmen a subject of reproach and mocking scorn. They would look down upon them, and speak of them with unutterable contempt. They would describe them as a despicable race of worthless runaways. And they would also find good cause for merriment in the prolonged wanderings in the wilderness. "Where are all their high hopes?" they might have said. "They have ended in smoke. A great deal better off they are now than they were with us, hungering and thirsting in that desert, instead of living on the fat of the land! A

nice wild-geese chase that famous Moses has led them." Such was the reproach of Egypt; but here and now it is rolled away. By this act at Gilgal Israel is no longer assimilated to Egypt in body. The knives of flint have again put a difference between Israel and Egypt. Each man bears in his body the mark of Jehovah's covenant. And seeing the land of Canaan was God's gift to them as Abraham's seed, and to Abraham's seed as faithful to Jehovah, i.e., as circumcised, this act was a Divine and formal conveyance of the land to these men of Israel. Thus at Gilgal the title-deeds of Canaan were signed, sealed, and delivered; and thus again, the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. Israel is no longer a homeless wanderer but an heir of God. Also the assimilation to Egypt in spirit has come to an end. No longer are they uncircumcised in heart. Never again do they cast a longing, lingering look behind. Surely this transaction is also recorded for our instruction and reproof. Gilgal says, "Put off the old man with his affections and lusts; put off all moral and spiritual assimilation to the world. Crucify the flesh and its deceitful lusts. Mortify the deeds of the body." The great need of the present age is to be brought in spirit to Gilgal, i.e., to learn to the very centre of our souls the spirit of self-sacrifice. The process may be painful, like cutting off a right arm or plucking out a right eye; yet it is the necessary sequel of entrance into God's inheritance. And as it is the necessary sequel of entrance, so is it the necessary prelude to worship and to victory. There can be no true worship of God except our hearts are cleansed from the filthiness of the flesh. There can be no true victory for God, either within or without, except our souls are purged from the power of sin. (*A. B. Mackay.*)

The consecration of the Lord's host at Gilgal; or, a revival.—The need, the tokens, and the blessedness of this revival are set before us. (1) Its need appears in the reproach of Egypt. (2) Its tokens are the restoration of ordinances. (3) Its blessedness consists in the return of favour. I. Let us first dwell upon the need of Israel's revival, as seen in THE REPROACH OF EGYPT. There are many among us who have indeed left Egypt. To the questions, "Is the Lord among us, or not?—Are we His people?" they can humbly answer "Yes"; for He has given them sure pledges of their interest in the everlasting covenant. And yet, if asked to give a reason of the hope that is in them, they would not be ready. The answer of faith can scarce find utterance amid the sins and shortcomings that compass them round, and testify against them. Their words, their tempers, their works, their experiences, all seem to give the lie to their Christian profession and to their hope. The world of unbelievers, too, joins issue against them, and, discerning their failures and inconsistencies, derides their religion, calls them hypocrites, and prophesies their doom. This "reproach of Egypt," lies heavy upon God's saints who thus walk in darkness. II. The narrative goes on to tell of the tokens of Israel's revival, as seen in THE RESTORATION OF ORDINANCES. As the sacrament of baptism perpetuates and expands the teaching of the rite of circumcision, so that of the Lord's Supper repeats the lessons of the Passover. The Christian ordinance looks back, as the Jewish sacrifice looked forward, to the death of Jesus as our substitute. Since the fall of Adam, there has been but this one way of salvation. May we, amid our fuller privileges, and clearer light, approach the same God whom Israel worshipped, confiding in the same atonement, and renew our covenant with Him in the breaking of bread, and the drinking of the cup of blessing. Our feast similarly commemorates the past, the present, and the future: for we herein shew forth an accomplished redemption, our own reconciliation thereby, and our participation in our Saviour's love at the marriage feast above. III. It remains for us now to speak of the blessedness of Israel's revival, as seen in THE RETURN OF FAVOUR. 1. First, the Lord expressly declares to Joshua, as the head and representative of the nation, "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you." Blessed assurance! 2. Beside the answer of God to Joshua, a second gracious token was granted. The enemy was still as a stone. With blanched cheeks and palpitating hearts, the Canaanites looked on and saw the people all encamped at Gilgal. Now, shall not Israel, with soldierly decision, seize on the opportunity, and ere they have recovered from their panic, strike a decisive blow, and so possess the land? Such is not the Lord's order: but until the fourteenth day of the month the men of war are shut up in their tents; and then, as though in a land of peace, during a full week the Passover is kept throughout their families. 3. Was it not providentially ordered by a loving Father that Israel should be brought into the land at the time of harvest? Thus temporal supplies shall not fail those whom God accepts and approves: thus, also, spiritual provision shall

never fail God's people. 4. The close of the chapter presents us with a fourth token of the return of favour to Israel, in the manifestation to Joshua of the great Angel of the Covenant, with His drawn sword lifted, not in vengeance against Israel, but against their foes. This was the promised angel who should go before them, and lead them to victory. (*G. W. Butler, M.A.*) *Gilgal*.—I. ATTENTION TO THE SPECIAL SERVICES WHICH WE OWE TO GOD OUGHT TO STAND BEFORE ALL OTHER CONSIDERATIONS. What is religion? The question seems a simple one; but, indeed, it is one the true answer to which involves a great deal. The term is a most comprehensive one, including all that men should believe and all that men should do. A religious person is one whose heart has been imbued with Christian truth, and whose affection has laid hold on God as revealed in the Scriptures with a firm grasp; a person whose life, regulated increasingly by such principles, manifests more and more of the beauty of holiness. In religion, then, we come to deal with the doctrine and the practice of the Bible. It tells of what may alarm, and what may soothe. It shows a reality of wretchedness, want, guilt and death in which men are by nature; and a reality of joy, perfection, righteousness and life in which they may be by grace. It appeals to men as immortal beings, urges on them the consideration of their immortal interests, and in the words of Him, around whom all true religion circles and to whom it is intended to lead, charges all thus: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." I would ask you, seriously, should not this matter have our first and most solemn consideration? Is there any matter which ought to engage us before this? II. WE MAY REPOSE IMPLICIT CONFIDENCE IN GOD WHILE WALKING IN HIS WAYS AND AIMING AT HIS GLORY. Men are never losers by religion. The man who can style himself servant of Christ has a Master whose service is the guarantee for every possible good. Affairs and matters come to be so differently weighed and estimated, when heavenly wisdom is granted for the test, that it is no wonder to find men reckoning gains and losses, probabilities and duties, by a standard the reverse of that which they formerly used. What if we had accosted the leader of the hosts of Israel when he promulgated the order for observing circumcision and the Passover at Gilgal? Suppose that we had said, Strike your decisive blow; push on at once; select your picked men, and leave the rest to fortify your position, and to take care of the women and children; go straight up to Jericho. Your rite of circumcision will render you defenceless, your paschal feast is hardly fitted to such a critical position and such unusual circumstances as yours. Suppose that we had argued with Joshua thus. Would not his reply have been, "We can trust God: we know Him. He has said, 'I will not fail you, nor forsake you'?" (*C. D. Marston, M.A.*) *Time taken for religious duties is not lost*.—Dr. James Hamilton once related an anecdote which illustrates a vital question in the Christian life. A writer recounts it as follows: "A gallant officer was pursued by an overwhelming force, and his followers were urging him to greater speed, when he discovered that his saddle-girth was becoming loose. He coolly dismounted, repaired the girth by tightening the buckle, and then dashed away. The broken buckle would have left him on the field a prisoner; the wise delay to repair damages sent him on in safety amid the huzzas of his comrades." The Christian who is in such haste to get about his business in the morning that he neglects his Bible and his season of prayer rides all day with a broken buckle.

Vers. 10-12. Encamped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover.—*Three successive days*.—In one of his sonnets, Matthew Arnold tells of an interview he had on a day of fierce August sunshine, in Bethnal Green, with a preacher whom he knew, and who looked ill and overworked. In answer to the inquiry as to how he fared, "Bravely!" said he; "for I of late have been much cheered with thoughts of Christ, the Living Bread." There is a great difference between the strength which may be supplied from without, and that which is assimilated within. To illustrate the first. We tread the cathedral close and examine the mighty buttresses that steady the ancient walls. What though the "high embowed roof" presses on them with all its weight to make them bulge, they may not stir an inch from the perpendicular so long as those masses of stone, built up without, forbid. To illustrate the second. We must visit the forest glade, where giant oaks withstand the blasts of centuries, because they have incorporated into their hearts the properties of earth and air, becoming robust, and sturdy, and storm-defying. There are many ways in which the holy soul derives strength from without. It is buttressed by remonstrances and appeals, by providences and promises, by the fear of causing grief, and by the incitement of passionate devotion. But if these were all they would be in-

sufficient. We need to be strengthened from within, to have within ourselves the strong Son of God; to know that the Mightiest is within us, and working through us, so that we, even as He, can do all things. In this old record we may discover without effort the Living Bread under three aspects—the Passover; the corn of the land; the manna. Each of these consumed one of three successive days. I. THE PASSOVER. How little we understand the way by which each part of our body takes the particular nourishment it requires from the food we eat. But we know that such is the case, and that bones, muscles, and tissues appropriate their sustenance from the common store. So though we may not be able to explain the philosophy of the process, we believe and are sure, that as we hold fellowship with Jesus in quiet hallowed moments, our weakness absorbs His strength, our impatience His long-suffering, our restlessness His calm, our ignorance His wisdom. “He is made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” His flesh is “true meat” because it makes us strong to endure and do. His blood is “true drink,” because it satisfies our thirst, and makes glad our heart. But let it ever be borne in mind that as no uncircumcised person was permitted to partake of the Passover, so none who are living in wilful sin can feed on the flesh and blood which were given for the life of the world. There must be a Gilgal before there can be a Passover in the deepest and fullest sense. This is why you have no zest in prayer, no appetite for your Bible, no enjoyment in the ordinances of the House of God. You have not yet put away all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, you have not yet submitted yourself to the sharp two-edged sword, you have not yet been delivered from the reproach of Egypt, you have not yet purged out the leaven of insincerity and falsehood. II. THE CORN OF THE LAND. The Paschal Lamb is good, but the corn of the land includes the fruits, and honey, and bread-stuffs that grow on the soil of the Resurrection-life. The ascension of Christ may be considered in many aspects, but in each we seem to stand beneath His outstretched hands of benediction, as they did who saw Him parted from them, and taken up before their adoring gaze. Happy indeed are they who also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell. To do this is to eat of the corn and fruit of the land. III. THE MANNA. The corn began before the manna ceased. The one overlapped the other as the thatch of a hay-rick or the feathers of a bird. God does not wish that there should be those intervals of apparent desertion, and the failure of supplies of which so many complain. It is quite likely that He may have to withdraw the extraordinary and exceptional, as represented by the manna; but He will wait until we have become accustomed to the ordinary and regular supplies of His grace, as represented by the corn. In the blessings of our outward life, He does sometimes humble us, and suffer us to hunger. The brook Cherith dries before He sends us to Zarephath. But as to the inward life, He gives without stint. The table is always prepared before us in the presence of our enemies—one form of soul-sustenance is within reach before another form fails; we must have learned to feed ourselves with strong meat before He drops the spoon with which He had been wont to nourish us with milk. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) The manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land.—*Manna and corn*:—Various conjectures have been formed regarding the nature of the manna, which every morning whitened like hoar-frost the ground around the encampment of the Israelites in the wilderness. It was indeed a miraculous substance in the sense of its having been provided at the very time when, and in the very circumstances where, it was required. But we have no reason to believe that it was in itself a miraculous substance, a material previously unknown, created specially for the purpose and coming down straight from heaven. God economises the supernatural element in His working, and makes use of ordinary means as far as they will go. He who used the ordinary thorny growth of the desert as the medium of His transcendent revelation when He appeared in the burning bush, and converted the simple shepherd’s rod in the hand of Moses into a serpent, and made it the instrument of compassing the deliverance of Israel by signs and wonders, would in all likelihood employ on this occasion a substance indigenous to the desert, as the basis of the great miracle which He wrought for the supply of the daily bread of His people. Such a substance might well have been the white hard exudation that drops from the thorns of the tamarisk shrub, and frequently covers the ground to a considerable extent, which is used for food at the present day by the Arabs, and to which they give the name of manna. We cannot expect to trace an exact correspondence, for some of the qualities and conditions of the manna of Scripture were unmistakably supernatural. It is sufficient if the natural object could serve as a mere fulcrum for the miracle.

But whatever might have been the nature and origin of the mysterious substance which God made use of, it is evident that the manna was intended to serve a wise and gracious purpose in the religious economy of the Israelites. He who said that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness all other things that we truly need will be given to us, furnished a remarkable illustration of the truth of the promise in the experience of the Israelites. There was no want to those who feared God and did His will; bread was given to them and their water was sure, even if the bread had to come down from heaven and the water had to be produced from the flinty rock by the smiting of the miraculous rod. But this supernatural life was not to last for ever. It was appropriate to the wilderness, God's special dwelling-place, as it were, where there was nothing but God and nature; but it was not suitable to the promised land, where all the conditions of a natural human life existed, and which was the haunt of man as well as the scene of nature's most beneficent operations. Accordingly we read that when the Israelites first tasted of the corn of Canaan at Gilgal, the manna which had been their food for so many years previously ceased at once. The natural, which is always, superseded the supernatural, which is only occasional. The miracle must give place to the common processes of life. The manna ceasing when the Israelites ate of the corn of Canaan teaches us the lesson that God's help is given, not to supersede our self-help, but to enable us to help ourselves. No one can truly know what it is to find his sufficiency in God but he who puts forth all the strength which he himself possesses. It is exactly in proportion as we strive to do all, and strive in vain, that we can have an experimental consciousness of God's almighty aid. And thus the believer feels that God's strength is made perfect in his own weakness. The difference between manna and corn is most suggestive. Manna was a supernatural product provided directly by Divine power. It came to the Israelites in the wilderness without any toil or trouble of their own. No tiller of the ground had wrought for it in the sweat of his face, and therefore it was but little esteemed by the Israelites. They soon lost their relish for it; it became tasteless and insipid, and their souls loathed it in the end. But corn, on the other hand, implies and involves great and continuous labour. A sacrifice is made, a loss sustained in parting with the seed-corn. There is much sweat of the face in preparing the ground for its reception; faith is exercised in entrusting it to the earth; patience and hope in watching its growth and waiting for its ripening; and toil again is required in reaping, storing, and preparing the harvest for bread. And is there not the same wide difference in spiritual things between manna and corn—between what is given to us without any toil or trouble of our own, and what is wrought out for us and in us, as the result of our own toil and, it may be, our own sad experience? No doubt we should prefer manna to corn; we should like to get heavenly blessings straight out of God's hands. But the rule of the Divine kingdom is "no cross, no crown." In no other way would God's spiritual or natural blessings do us good. Only in this Divine way does the procuring of them act as a heavenly discipline, counteracting the evil tendencies of our nature, enabling us to sympathise with the plans and hopes of God, and fitting us for the enjoyment of His everlasting rest. When the Israelites entered the Holy Land, God gave them at first the corn of their enemies, as He had given them the manna of the wilderness. That was necessary—just as it is necessary for the child to be supported at first by its mother's nourishment, and the young plant by the provision stored up in the seed. But this old corn would last only a little while; it would cease as the manna had ceased. When it was done the Israelites would have to sow and reap their fields in order to get a new supply; they would have to provide for themselves by the toil of their hands. And how significant of the new life which it nourished was the new corn in these circumstances! The Israelites looked forward from the wilderness to the promised land as the place of consummation and rest. But they found that their former discipline in the new circumstances was not ended, but only changed in its character; that amid golden cornfields and rich pastures and luxuriant vineyards they would have to practise in even higher degree the virtues which the wilderness-life called forth. And how symbolical was the new corn of the land—the bread for which they toiled in the sweat of their face—of this life of self-conquest and devotion which it sustained! It might seem that their life in the wilderness, directly supported by God and under His immediate care, was higher and more heavenly than their life in Canaan, sowing and reaping their fields, and providing for their wants by their own labour. But it was not so; for the wilderness-life fed by the manna of heaven was only an introduction to, and a preparation for, the higher life of Canaan fed by the corn of earth. And let us

remember this solemn fact when we are tempted to think that life spent in directly religious acts in the sanctuary, at the communion-table, in the closet, a holier and more acceptable life to God than the life spent in the place of business and in our homes, in everyday duties and labours. The incident of the manna of the wilderness giving place to the corn of Canaan is in entire harmony with all God's dealings with man. The dispensation that was inaugurated by supernatural manifestations is carried on by common helps, and through the homely experiences of human life. The supernatural life in the visible presence of Jesus must merge into the natural life of faith and hope amid ordinary circumstances. God gives at appropriate times meat to eat which the world knoweth not of—hidden manna, living bread direct from heaven. And when the manna is withdrawn and we are supplied with corn—with "human nature's daily food"—let us seek to profit by what the manna has done for us and taught us. We have received spiritual food that we may have grace and strength to carry on the common duties of life. We have tasted that the Lord is gracious on the Holy Mount that we may follow hard after Him along the beaten paths of life. (*H. Macmillan, D.D.*)

Not manna, but old corn:—The manna ceased when the people had the old corn of the land. Now the question is—I. WAS THE OLD CORN OF THE LAND ANY LESS WONDERFUL THAN THE BREAD OF THE WILDERNESS? If we think of the reproductive energy of nature we are amazed. There are always apples, pears, grapes, melons, cherries, gooseberries, currants; there is always wheat for man, and corn for animals. The year comes, and these things come. But more than recurrence, there is multiplication. One grain of wheat will produce from 20 to 100. This is as inexplicable a wonder as was the manna, and cannot be explained without the recognition of two facts—the Divine power, and the Divine wisdom. Life and growth are in the hands of the Lord. The common mercies of life are direct Divine gifts. But look at another fact—the whole material life of the nation, and of the world, depends upon the harvest. If bread be dear there is less to spend upon other things. The price paid for bread depends upon the abundance or deficiency of the harvest; and that fixes the amount of production which can safely be ventured upon; and that again, the wages that can be paid; and that again, the condition of every poor man's cottage, and of every rich man's mansion throughout the land, and throughout the world. Manna! An international aspect of the question is thus unfolded. The necessities of peoples, and the abrogation of distance, and their separations by steam, have led to a freer exchange of commodities. We have had three or four poor harvests, but bread has not risen as it must otherwise have done! Why? Distant supplies have been available: we are not now dependent only on our own harvest. II. CONSIDER THE CEASING OF THE MANNA IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S LIFE. The gathering of manna from the ground was a short and simple affair, requiring neither much skill nor wit. In the land miracles ceased, and means had to be employed. Gifts are not so helpful as labour. To earn a fortune is better than to inherit one. III. THE CEASING OF THE MANNA SUGGESTS THE REMOVAL OF THINGS ON WHICH HUMAN HAPPINESS SEEMS HERE WHOLLY TO DEPEND. IV. CANAAN WAS A TYPE OF HEAVEN, AND THE CEASING OF THE BREAD OF THE WILDERNESS SUGGESTS THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE CONDITION OF LIFE HERE AND THERE. We shall lose much we here deem essential, but it is far better. What will it be to be there? It is the harvest-life of earth and time and the redeemed Church. (*W. H. Davison.*)

Corn for manna:—After receiving the title-deeds of an estate, the next step is to enter into possession. And one of the best evidences that this has been done, is to take the use of all that the inheritance contains. Thus the Israel of God acted. First they celebrate the solemn feast of the Passover, and then partake of the fruits of the land. In this connection two things are coupled together, the eating of the corn and the cessation of the manna. I. THIS SUDDEN CHANGE WOULD BRING TO MIND God's power. It is a well-known fact that our ears may get so accustomed to a sound as to be unconscious of it. In like manner men may get so accustomed to the wonders of God's might as to be unmoved by them. But this sudden stoppage of the manna must have arrested them all. It would be as if the sun had risen in the west. How strikingly would it teach them that this was a gift of Almighty power! The manna came not a day sooner than it was needed, and it did not stay a day later. They beheld the manna no more: but they saw instead fields white unto the harvest, and the power of Jehovah matured the one as truly as it sent the other. God has been supplying our wants of mind, body, and estate during all the past years of our life; and it may be we have been forgetting that we owe all to His power; therefore, to rouse us to this consciousness, He cuts off

these supplies. The shock is great. Astonishment fills our hearts. Sorrow lays hold on us; indeed, we may be tempted to despair. Is this seemly? Nay. If we are His there is never room for despair. We can never drift beyond His love and care. He who has provided for the past will provide for the future. II. The cessation of the manna would also **MAGNIFY HIS GRACE**. Whatever their feelings and thoughts and deeds, whatever their spiritual state during these years, His supply never varied, was never suspended for a single day. And surely in our earthly course we too have had experience of this goodness of God. Notwithstanding our forgetfulness, thanklessness, rebellion, He has never cast us off, He has never left us to ourselves. He who has thus dealt with us in the past, will continue to do so to the end. III. This event would also **EXALT HIS LIBERALITY**. There is a great change in the material supplied to Israel for its physical wants. But it is a change, not from better to worse, rather from good to better. For forty years they had been accustomed to food of the same flavour; now there is great diversity, a supply to suit every taste. During these past years the supply was measured, there was a fixed quantity for each; now the store is unlimited. As it was with Israel in regard to this bodily provision, so it is with the children of God in regard to that which is spiritual. They receive grace and more grace. They go from strength to strength. With ever-increasing capacity comes more and more abundant supply. And this law not only regulates the Christian experience on earth and in time, it will also hold in heaven and in eternity. Faith, hope, and love are graces that abide for ever. IV. This cessation of the manna would also serve to **DISPLAY GOD'S CAREFULNESS**. God is very liberal, but with all His liberality there is no wastefulness. God always appraises His gifts at their true value, and would have us do the same. God will never be so lavish of His gifts as to allow them to be scorned as superfluous. When He gives them the abundance of Canaan He takes away the manna. When men become careless or indifferent concerning His heavenly gifts, we need never be surprised if He takes them away. V. This cessation of the manna also **EXHIBITED GOD'S WISDOM**. The manna was suited to the state of the people in the wilderness, it was not so convenient an article of food in Canaan. Whether or not it was more nourishing, it did not demand the same punctuality and regularity in gathering, and therefore was more suitable as the supply of soldiers. Corn would keep for an indefinite time, manna would not; therefore for those whose time would be so fully occupied, and yet whose hours of rest and work would be so uncertain, the corn was better. Also to have continued the supply regularly or intermittently, even for those who were not fighting, would have bred indolent and luxurious habits. It is good for man to be busy. As it is with material things so it is with spiritual. As the manna was taken away, so often spiritual experiences vanish to make room for others. Anything which does not serve the purpose for which it was first given may well be taken away. Thus we find as we pass through time that though many gifts, good, seasonable, necessary, are taken away, there are always compensations which leave us no losers. (*A. B. Mackay.*) *Corn in place of manna*:—This subject leads me, first, to speak of special relief for special emergency; and, secondly, of the old corn of the Gospel for ordinary circumstances. If these Israelites crossing the wilderness had not received bread from the heavenly bakeries, there would, first, have been a long line of dead children half buried in the sand; then, there would have been a long line of dead women waiting for the jackals; then, there would have been a long line of dead men unburied, because there would have been no one to bury them. It would have been told in the history of the world that a great company of good people started out from Egypt for Canaan, and were never heard of, as thoroughly lost in the wilderness of sand as the *City of Boston* and the *President* were lost in the wilderness of waters. What use was it to them that there was plenty of corn in Canaan, or plenty of corn in Egypt? What they wanted was something to eat right there, when there was not so much as a grass-blade. In other words, an especial supply for an especial emergency. That is what some of you want. The ordinary comfort, the ordinary direction, the ordinary counsel, do not seem to meet your case. There are those who feel that they must have an omnipotent and immediate supply, and you shall have it. Is it pain and physical distress through which you must go? Does not Jesus know all about pain? He has a mixture of comfort, one drop of which shall cure the worst paroxysm. Is it approaching sorrow? Have you been calculating your capacity or incapacity to endure widowhood or childlessness or disbanded home, and cried, "I cannot endure it"? Oh, worried soul, you will wake up amidst all your troubles, and find round about

you the sweet consolation of the Gospel as thickly strewn as was the manna round about the Israelitish encampment! Especial solace for especial distress. Or is it a trouble past, yet present? A silent nursery? A vacant chair opposite you at the table? Oh, try a little of this wilderness manna: "I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." "Like as a father pitieth his children," &c. But after fourteen thousand six hundred consecutive days of falling manna—Sundays excepted—the manna ceased. Some of them were glad of it. You know they had complained to their leader, and wondered that they had to eat manna instead of onions. Now the fare is changed. Those people in that wandering army under forty years of age had never seen a cornfield, and now, when they hear the leaves rustling and see the tassels waving, and the billows of green flowing over the plain as the wind touched them, it must have been a new and lively sensation. "Corn!" cried the old man, as he opened an ear. "Corn!" cried the children, as they counted the shining grains. "Corn!" shouted the vanguard of the host, as they burst open the granaries of the affrighted population, the granaries that had been left in the possession of the victorious Israelites. Then the fire was kindled, and the ears of corn were thrust into it, and, fresh and crisp and tender, were devoured of the hungry victors; and bread was prepared, and many things that can be made out of flour regaled appetites sharpened by the long march. "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land." Blessed be God, we stand in just such a field to-day, the luxuriant grain coming above the girdle, the air full of the odours of the ripe old corn of the Gospel Canaan. "Oh!" you say, "the fare is too plain." Then I remember you will soon get tired of a fanciful diet. We soon weary of the syrups and the custards and the whipped foam of fanciful religionists, and we cry, "Give us plain bread made out of the old corn of the Gospel Canaan." This is the only food that can quell the soul's hunger. Christ is the Bread of Life, and taking Him, you live and live for ever. But, you say, corn is of but little practical use unless it is threshed and ground and baked. I answer, this Gospel corn has gone through that process. When on Calvary all the hoofs of human scorn came down on the heart of Christ, and all the fangs of Satanic fury beat Him long and fast, was not the corn threshed? When the mills of God's indignation against sin caught Christ between the upper and nether rollers, was not the corn ground? Oh, yes! Christ is ready. His pardon all ready; His peace all ready; everything ready in Christ. Are you ready for Him? There is another characteristic about bread, and that is, you never get tired of it. There are people here seventy years of age who find it just as appropriate for their appetite as they did when, in boyhood, their mother cut a slice of it clear around the loaf. You have not got tired of bread, and that is a characteristic of the gospel. I notice, in regard to this article of food, you take it three times a day. It is on your table morning, noon, and night; and if it is forgotten, you say, "Where is the bread?" Just so certainly you need Jesus three times a day. Oh, do not start out without Him; do not dare to go out of the front door, without having first communed with Him! Before noon there may be perils that will destroy body, mind, and soul for ever. You cannot afford to do without Him. You will, during the day, be amidst sharp hoofs and swift wheels and dangerous scaffoldings threatening the body, and traps for the soul that have taken some who are more wily than you. When they launch a ship they break against the side of it a bottle of wine. That is a sort of superstition among sailors. But oh, on the launching of every day, that we might strike against it at least one earnest prayer for Divine protection! Then at the apex of the day, at the tiptop of the hours, equidistant from morning and night, look three ways. Look backward to the forenoon; look ahead to the afternoon; look up to that Saviour who presides over all. Bread at noon! When the evening hour comes, and your head is buzzing with the day's engagements, and your whole nature is sore from the abrasion of rough life, and you see a great many duties you have neglected, then commune with Christ, asking His pardon, thanking Him for His love. That would be a queer evening repast at which there was no bread. This is the nutriment and life of the plain Gospel that I recommended you. But alas for the famine-struck! Enough corn, yet it seems you have no sickle to cut it, no mill to grind it, no fire to bake it, no appetite to eat it. Starving to death, when the plain is golden with a magnificent harvest! (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *The cessation of the manna:—* The special supply ceased with the special demand. They were not to look for extraordinary relief when, with due diligence on their part, the ordinary would suffice. This fact suggests some important points with regard to the government of God,

1. There is no wastefulness in the Divine economy. God does not use extraordinary means where the ordinary will avail to accomplish His purposes. We can easily conceive how, out of a prodigality of power, the manna might have been continued long after the land of Canaan had been reached ; it might have been argued that such a continuance would be very helpful to the Israelites, supplying them with a perpetual and visible reminder of God's care for them. The answer is, that at any rate such a continuance was not granted ; and further, that it is not our Father's way to permit the repetition of an aid the absolute necessity for which has departed. He is glorious in giving, but there is with Him no expenditure which would only tend to produce in the long run a contempt for His daily, His common, His highest, gifts. This principle is of widest application. When the Lord Jesus came to establish His kingdom, He wrought miracles in abundance ; but when in the course of time the Church became firmly established, and the truth of the gospel was made evident by its renewing power over men, then the miracles gradually ceased, and that not because the Church had gone backward, but because she had advanced, and her claims could rest upon proofs of a more spiritual order. This principle receives a yet further illustration in the fact that, whilst the Lord displays His power, He yet takes up the work directly only when man is compelled to lay it down. The manna of the desert did not supplant the sowing and reaping of Canaan. Christ will raise the little child to life, but her parents must find her something to eat. Christ will speak the word of power, only possible to Him, "Lazarus, come forth," but human hands must roll away the stone, and unbind the grave-clothes from the man risen from the dead. An angel struck the fetters from the limbs of Peter, and brought him out of the prison, but after that the apostle must put forth his own efforts in order to escape the rage of his persecutors. In all these cases a Divine power might have accomplished the whole transaction ; but it did not, and it does not now. God is pleased in His mercy to give to us certain powers, all His and yet ours, ours and yet His, and it is for us diligently to use them. In no impious sense we may say that God helps those who help themselves. We have seen that there is with God no useless expenditure. He does what is sufficient, but not more than sufficient, for the occasion. Now, if that be true, how vast in His eyes must be the needs of sinners, how heavy the task of saving them, that in order to its accomplishment it was needful that the Lord Jesus should come to suffer and die. The greatness of the Redeemer argues the magnitude of the work of redemption.

2. But further, whilst there is no waste in the Divine economy, yet there are special provisions for special occasions. There is here, if we can lay hold of it, a truth for us, full of real comfort, instinct with hope. What was the case of the Israelites ? It was this. By no ingenuity, by no conceivable diligence upon their part, could the necessities of the vast host of men, women, and children have been supplied in the wilderness, and yet these very necessities arose because at the command of the Most High the journey from Egypt to Canaan had been undertaken. That is, it was the path of duty which was thus beset with difficulty. That being so, the Israelites could rightly look up to God to have their wants supplied. If the Lord Jesus bids a dozen men supply five thousand with bread, He Himself multiplies the tiny store until there is enough and to spare. If He commands a paralytic to take up his bed and walk, He gives the strength by which the command can be accomplished. The manna given to the Israelites in the sandy desert is a symbol of the most helpful truth, that God will not fail us in any difficulty that may come to us in doing His will. Our principal business is not to perplex ourselves with a thousand questions as to how we may accomplish this or that ; our anxiety should gather about an earlier point and a simpler—namely, what is the path of duty—have we a right to enter upon such and such manifest duties and burdens ? If the command is plain, let us obey. If God point the way, then, even if it visibly lead into perplexing responsibilities, expectant faith is the highest reason, and the soundest wisdom is hope in Him. Yes, without doubt, we have a right to look for special supplies for special needs.

3. There remains one more truth necessary for the completion of the subject before us, namely, that, on the whole, the ordinary conditions are the highest, the best, the most abiding. Which was really the best state, the wandering or the settlement, the desert or Canaan ? And yet the first condition was that of manifold miracles, the water from the rock, the pillar of cloud and of fire, the daily manna ; the latter, that in which the people were handed over to the ordinary conditions of life—they had to sow and till and reap, to buy and sell, even as we. The new convert has experiences which by and by yield to firmer principles ; his love may deepen and become

infinitely stronger in its influence upon him, and yet some of the peculiar brightness of the early days may have departed. There are times of great exaltation, of movement, of excitement, in the history of churches, but it has yet to be proved that these are indeed, all things considered, the best. I have much faith in quiet, plodding work in our churches, in the continuous use of such means of grace as God gives us, the common corn of the land. I have much faith too in the power of a quiet, steady Christian life, which is regularly fed with the Word of God and with prayer. The exaltation of the special above the ordinary has even served to keep men from accepting Jesus Christ, by obscuring the simplicity of that faith by which we are saved. (*E. Medley.*) *Divine giving and withholding*:—I. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO HIS FRIENDS. II. GOD WILL NOT WORK MIRACLES WHEN HE CAN MEET HIS CHILDREN'S NEEDS BY ORDINARY METHODS. III. A TEMPORAL BLESSING IS SOMETIMES REMOVED WHEN IT HAS BROUGHT THE DESIRED SPIRITUAL END. (*W. Harris.*) *The old gospel or the new?*—In the pulpit of our times we have two different gospels, each calling itself Christian and each asserting its superior excellence. The one is satisfied to rest on the testimony of God, to stand by the old landmarks, to receive the traditions of Scripture as delivered by prophets and apostles, and with these to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. The other, or new gospel, sets out from the principle that Christianity, like any other system of human knowledge, is an evolution and development. There is no absolute standard of truth back in the past; the only standard is in man himself—the highly educated man of the present, the advanced and incomparable man of the future. Some things are all the better for being new. But religion is not one of them. In a world of doubt and uncertainty, it is no small proof of the truth and excellence of the gospel that it is so old, that it has been so long tried and so fully tested—tried and tested in the crucibles of experiment, in the very fires of persecution. 1. This is the gospel which first converted the world. It was not liberalism, but the doctrine of Christ's atonement for sin and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which converted the three thousand sinners of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Will any one tell us how long it would have taken the rose-water gospel of our modern *dilettante* to have done this work? 2. It is this old gospel alone that has sustained the Christian martyrs of all ages and all lands under their trials and persecutions. Who cares for science, literature, or art, when racked with pain and passing through the valley and shadow of death? Talk to us of God, tell us of heaven, show us the way to God and heaven, is then the high and only demand. 3. It was the preaching of this old gospel that awakened the Church to new life and produced the great reformation of the sixteenth century. It was as life from the dead, and Pentecostal baptism from heaven, when God raised up the great reformers, and by His grace enabled them, with a restored Bible, to proclaim again from the pulpit and the press the grand distinguishing truths of the ancient faith. 4. This again is the only gospel that has ever founded and sustained missions to the heathen. The new gospel of moderatism, of sentiment and art, or philosophical superiority to all creeds as equally good or indifferent, has never aspired to the dignity of converting the world to Christ. 5. Other grounds might be added for adherence to the old gospel—as that it has produced all the greatest characters in history, has founded all the great institutions of Christendom, has caused all the great revivals of religion in the Church, has been adorned by all the greatest preachers and evangelists of all ages—in a word, has accomplished nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths, of all the good that has thus far been accomplished in the world. (*Prof. Leroy J. Halsey.*) *Miracle and the commonplace*:—It is a strange thing to read that when at last the long-promised land had been attained there should be a diminution of the splendour of that Divine assistance which had attended the chosen people throughout their wanderings in the wilderness. "The manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the old corn of the land." That is to say, the experience of the Israelites was one which swept down from the experience of splendid and wonderful works into that of ordinary, commonplace operation of the laws of nature. It looks a backward step. We, too, envy those who lived in the days when manna fell from heaven and the water came forth from the smitten rock, when the Jordan was cleft in twain, and men, without striking a blow, felt that the Divine arm was outstretched on their behalf. Or our thoughts may go back to the life of Him who lived in the world, not merely the life of beauty, but the life of power, and we may envy those who were privileged to walk at His side and see His hand stretched forth to touch the leper and he was healed, to raise the dead to life again. The dawn of early life has passed away, and with it the splendour of the morning, and all that we may

claim is to live in a light which has faded down to the mere light of common day. It is a step downwards, we say, from those days of wondrous power to the days in which we can trace but little of the Divine in our midst. My purpose is to ask you to notice that so far from this transition from the extraordinary to the ordinary being a step downwards in the education of human beings it is distinctly a step upwards: that the whole story, if we will read it aright, may show us that God is leading us to far clearer and more constant manifestations of Himself. Your life and mine is real and strong in proportion as it is filled with a clear conception of God, in proportion as it is full of spiritual vigour within, and in proportion as it is energetic towards those whom we meet abroad. In those three relationships life finds its perfection. It does not find its perfection in itself alone; it is related by origin with God. And therefore it cannot grow out in fruition and in perfection of beauty at all except in certain conscious relationship to Him. It cannot ripen in the mere consciousness of God, because we are moral beings and we must ripen within ourselves; neither can we ripen within ourselves without relationship to our fellow-men, for God has put us in the midst of those men where the very order of things is a social order; and we grow not merely by the law of our own inward development, but we grow also by the law of contact and association with our brother men. And if you will look at this story which tells us of the transition from the marvellous to the commonplace, I think you will see that whether you regard life from any one of these three points you are asked to take a step forward and to move higher. 1. First, then, the relation we bear to God. The thought which underlies our regret when we say that we wish we had lived in the days of more marked interposition of God is this—that somehow or another wherever there is a marvellous or miraculous manifestation of God there is an opportunity of knowing Him which is denied to us. If you will reflect you will see that on the contrary the demand that underlies our thought is a demand which is destructive of our conception and consciousness of God sooner or later. What are we saying? We are saying in effect this: we want to be back in the old days of miracle, and we want the Divine made known to us through His marvels. What is that but saying, “O Lord, Thou hast made the world, and Thou hast made the world according to order, and laws govern that world. Break Thy laws that we may know Thee!” But surely that is to demand almost an impossibility! It is an admission that we have but little conception of the Divine working at all. You and I can see immediately what would be the result. That which happens constantly ceases to be extraordinary from the nature of the case, and there would be no more reason for believing in God because of such frequent manifestations of a startling character, for they would no longer be of the very character which we plead is their essential power. But you say, “We do not want Him to do this; we do not want Him to show Himself thus by for ever breaking up His laws, and being for ever doing the thing which we now deem extraordinary, but we do ask Him to break the silence and let us see some startling manifestation of His presence.” And then that means to say that we should only realise Him in proportion as He came and stood beside us veiled in these splendours. What, then, would be our inheritance in God? We should have an occasional God, not a permanent one. If we have any vivid conception of Him, He must be a permanent and a perpetual God to our lives and our souls. What you and I want is not a God of occasional work, but the God of a perpetual working in our midst. Therefore, surely we are enlarging our thoughts of God when we say, “God is not only in the startling things, but He is in the commonplace things, of life; God is not only in the cleft rock, He is also in the quiet hill and in the soft meadow; He is not only in the cloven sea or the Jordan struck asunder, but He is in the little burn that bubbles at our feet.” Surely that gives us a much larger and nobler idea of the Divine; that brings us into closer relationship with Him. It enlarges our conceptions; we feel that we live not in a world which now and then is privileged to behold God as a ruler, marching in stately procession through His universe, but rather as the Father of His children who dwells with them at all times. He is about our path and our bed; His tender mercies never fail to the sons of men, but are over all His works. 2. But life is not merely made up thus of the conceptions which we have of God, but it is made up of our own personal growth. The object which God has, if I may speak with all reverence, in putting us into this little world for the three score years and ten is not to secure our happiness nor to startle us into a kind of hysterical perception of His presence, but to educate us as His children. And therefore, when we ask that God should make Himself manifest by these miracles and wonders, we are really making a false conception of our own powers and

capabilities in relation to God. For by what faculty do you perceive God? For everything that we look at is apprehended by one faculty or other that we possess. Do I expect to apprehend Him by the physical eye? Do I imagine that I shall apprehend Him by intellectual effort? Surely those are only conceptions which belong to past ideas, crude notions of God. I cannot perceive God by the physical eye. God is a spirit! I cannot perceive God by my intellectual powers, because the world, by wisdom, knew not God, and if He be God at all to me He is the Incomprehensible One. Then, of course, the miracle and the wonder are outside the case, for the marvellous can only speak on the plane of things physical or appeal to the power of the mind, the intellectual power within us. Our Lord was constantly teaching that. In His parable of Dives and Lazarus He uses the very principle. Here the man in his torment imagines that a wonder will convince his brethren. "Send Lazarus! Let the marvel appear!" And the only answer is, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead"—in other words, if they have not the moral capacity to follow the teachings of Moses and the prophets, if they have no moral affinity and sympathy with the prophets' teaching, no wonder will give them that capacity. You cannot create a capacity by a wonder outside a man. You cannot make a blind man see red because he cannot see pink; you cannot, by intensifying a force outside, give him a faculty which is lacking in himself. The way in which you can understand God is by the exercise of your moral faculties. Jesus Christ was the greatest moral teacher that ever lived, and what is Jesus Christ's emphatic statement concerning this? He says there are two faculties by which God can be apprehended, one is single-mindedness, the other, purity of heart. For so, He said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." That was His idea, and John, the beloved disciple who laid his head upon the bosom of the Christ, uttered the same principle when he said that the only way by which God could be apprehended was by the exercise of a loving disposition. A loving disposition is indispensable. You cannot perceive Him without it, and you can understand why. The reason is written down on the very surface. How can you understand him whose nature is loving if you be not loving also? How can you understand him whose nature is simple-minded if you too are not simple-minded? The faculty by which you apprehend God, then, is not the intellectual, not the physical, but the moral; and hence how will a miracle affect your moral faculties? How can it appeal to your moral powers? So that when you have asked that you should have a miracle to show you God, the answer of the thought and the answer of the principle is the same, you cannot so apprehend God unless you previously possess the moral faculty to enable you to grasp Him. And if you will reflect upon it, this is only another way of saying what is true of everything in the world, that the one condition by which you can understand anything or anybody is that you shall be in some degree a sharer of their nature. That is true! Let us picture to ourselves the tourist who hurries across the Atlantic, and hurries through the towns of Europe in order to see or "to do" the Continent. Place him down with his erratic mind untrained before the greatest masterpieces of art; plant him in the chapel at Florence; let him stand face to face with Michael Angelo's creations of Night and Morning. His first impression will be, "These are greatly over-praised; why, the very anatomy is faulty; I cannot see why people should praise these things." But now for a moment imagine that there drops upon that man's soul as he stands there some little portion of Michael Angelo's nature. What a transformation takes place within his soul in his power of perception at that moment! Then he says something new; then these "greatly over-praised" figures begin to have a message for him; they seem to speak into his life now because Michael Angelo is in his soul, and he can read what Michael Angelo meant. I put it to you in your homes; measure your acquaintances, tabulate them in your own mind, and see what the result is. Only where there is that sort of affinity you can really enter into the capacity of knowing one another in the true friendly sense; and what is the secret of it all? Your power of knowing and entering into the lives of these people depends upon your sharing in some degree their nature. It is the same surely with God. We talk of knowing God. How blind and foolish we are! Knowing God, the measureless, pure God, the bright and eternal God, the God whose mercy is over all His works. How can we know Him if we be not righteous? How can we understand Him if we be not holy? How can we enter into His love if no love dwells within our soul? It is the moral faculty, it is the possession of these moral qualities which are power.

Hence, when the message comes to you, "Go forward! rest no longer upon the miracle! Rest now upon the ordinary manifestations!" it is as if it said—and the message came to the Israelites as it comes to you and me—"You are no longer in a state of babyhood, dependent upon these things outside your moral nature." "You must give moral co-operation"—that is the meaning of the message. You must give moral co-operation now in your own education, for only by that moral co-operation can there be a pure apprehension of the Divine and the real entering into communion with Him. Thus, then, it is a step upwards, is it not? a step upwards in the moral education of men. But there is a third aspect of life.

3. Your life and mine is a life of association with others, and so long as men were in the state in which they were surrounded by the marvellous, the manna fell just where they could gather it without any exertion, but the corn needed to be sown, and the corn needed to be gathered in the spot where it grew, and therefore the children of Israel were now in the position of being made co-operators in the work of God. And so it is for you and me to understand that the advantage of its coming in that way is that it draws us into partnership with the work, and we are promoted to a stage higher when we are sent into the fields to gather, and when we are made so far co-agents with God that in the great work of the distribution of His food amongst men we take our share. (*Bp. Boyd Carpenter.*) *Old corn*:—The old corn eaten by the Israelites was to them a verification of the Divine promise. Abraham was a pilgrim in Canaan, but he could mentally claim the whole land for his descendants. When Lot left him for the rich plain of the Jordan, the Lord said to him (Gen. xiii. 14-16). This was a great promise for the patriarch; also for his son and grandson, to whom it was in substance repeated. But what about those Israelites in Egypt whose hands and faces were smeared with the clay of the brickyards? There were probably times when they thought the promise was forgotten. But the promise was not forgotten, and every grain of the old corn eaten by the Israelites was a proof of God's fidelity to His word. We are reminded by corn, whether old or new, that God is an active power in the world. We may talk about germination and the fructifying influences of dew, rain, and sunshine; but behind all secondary causes there is the great First Cause. In Tibet there is a sacred tree which is said to bear on its leaves hymns, litanies, and pictures of Buddha. On grains of corn, if we look aught, we shall see psalms in praise of God's truthfulness and pictures of God's goodness. He whose finger has yearly given a vitalising touch to the seed in the ground, and shown His beneficence in a long succession of harvests has not failed, and will not fail, in either His threatenings or His promises. The corn eaten by the Israelites was old, and therefore good corn. If it had been badly harvested it would have sprouted, and when parched or made into cakes would have lacked the right flavour. It was in prime condition, and so was a treat to the Israelites after their long diet of manna. In the Bible we have what may be spoken of as old corn. The truths which God has given for the nourishment of our souls are not of recent date, but bear the impress of primitive years. We are not to despise those truths because they are old; if they are old, they are a glory for modern times. Whenever the Church has risen to new life, it has been because of a return to biblical beliefs and biblical methods of activity. When, however, the Church has become little more than a gorgeously decorated petrification, it has been revived by the old corn of simple doctrine. Novelties in theology may be attractive, but they cannot do for us what is done by doctrines which are ancient without being antiquated, and venerable without being enfeebled by years. Much as men have grown in science and literature, they have not so grown religiously as to be independent of the atonement. We need the old truths, and we can no more do without them for our souls than we can do without bread made of sound corn for our bodies. (*J. Marrat.*) *The Divine law of economy*:—A law of economy, we might almost say parsimony, prevails, side by side with the exercise of unbounded liberality. Jesus multiplies the loaves and fishes to feed the multitude, but He will not let one fragment be lost that remains after the feast. A similar law guides the economy of prayer. We have no right to ask that mercies may come to us through extraordinary channels when it is in our power to get them by ordinary means. If it is in our power to procure bread by our labour, we dare not ask it to be sent direct. We are only too prone to make prayer at the eleventh hour an excuse for want of diligence or want of courage in what bears on the prosperity of the spiritual life. It may be that of His great generosity God sometimes blesses us, even though we have made a very inadequate use of the ordinary means. But on that we have no right to presume. We are

fond of short and easy methods where the natural method would be long and laborious. But here certainly we find the working of natural law in the spiritual world. We cannot look for God's blessing without diligent use of God's appointed means. (W. G. Blaikie, D.D.) *The loss of one kind of advantage is compensated by the advent of another*:—In childhood and early youth we depend for our growth in knowledge on the instructions of our teachers. What puzzles us we refer to them, and they guide us through the difficulty. If they are wise teachers they will not tell us everything, but they will put us on the right method to find out. Still they are there as a court of appeal, so to speak, and we have always the satisfaction of a last resort. But the time comes when we bid farewell to teachers. Happily it is the time when the judgment becomes self-reliant, independent, penetrating. We are thrown mainly upon our own resources. The manna ceases, and we eat the fruit of the land. So in family life. The affection that binds parents and children, brothers and sisters, to one another in the family is both beautiful and delightful; and it were no wonder if, on the part of some, there were the desire that their intercourse should suffer no rude break, but go on unchanged for an indefinite time. But it is seldom God's will that family life shall remain unbroken. Often the interruption comes in the rudest and most terrible form—by the death of the head of the house. It is often a painful and distressing change. But at least it wakens up all who can do anything; it rescues them from the temptation of a slumbering, aimless life, and often draws out useful gifts that turn their lives into a real blessing. And there are other compensations. As old attachments are snapped, new are gradually formed. And even in old age a law of compensation often comes in: children and children's children bring new interests and pleasures, and the green hues of youth modify the grey of age. Then there is the happy experience by which the advent of spiritual blessings compensates the loss of temporal. Such instances are not uncommon as that which the Rev. Charles Simeon gives, in speaking of some blind men from Edinburgh whom nearly a century ago he found at work in a country house in Scotland: "One of the blind men, on being interrogated with respect to his knowledge of spiritual things, answered, 'I never saw till I was blind; nor did I ever know contentment while I had my eyesight, as I do now that I have lost it; I can truly affirm, though few know how to credit me, that I would on no account change my present situation and circumstances with any that I ever enjoyed before I was blind.' He had enjoyed eyesight till twenty-five, and had been blind now about three years." Lastly, of all exchanges in room of old provisions the most striking is that which our Lord thus set forth (John xvi. 7). Very precious had been the manna that ceased when Jesus left. But more nourishing is the new corn with which the Spirit feeds us. Let us prize it greatly so long as we are in the flesh. We shall know the good of it when we enter on the next stage of our being. Then, in the fullest sense, the manna will cease, and we shall eat the corn of the land. (*Ibid.*) *God considerate*:—How gracious is the gentle, thoughtful kindness of God, who lets us see the new before He quite takes away the old, accustoming us to walk before He removes the chair on which we had leant so long, careful that we should be able to swim before He removes the cork. Do not fret if the rhapsodies, and outbursts, and exuberant manifestations of earlier days have ceased; it is better to live by the ordinary laws of human life than by the abnormal and miraculous. And after all there is as much Divine power in the production of a fig and pomegranate, of oil-olive and honey, of barley and wheat, as in the descending manna; as much in the transformation of the moisture of earth and air into the ruddy grape as in the miracle of Cana; as much in the maintenance of the soul in holiness and righteousness all its days as in the communication of unspeakable visions and words that may not be uttered. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.)

Vers. 13-15. **Nay; but as Captain of the host of the Lord.**—*The warrior Christian*.—I. THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS VISION TO JOSHUA. "The Lord's host" does not primarily allude to those Israelite armies encamped beside the overflowing waters of the Jordan, but to other and invisible hosts encamped all around on those heights, though no ear ever heard the call of the sentries at their posts of duty, or saw the sheen of their swords flashing in the sunlight, or beheld their marshalled ranks. Those troops of harnessed angels were the hosts of which this wondrous warrior was captain. The story of the conquest of Canaan is not simply the account of battles fought between Israel and the Canaanites, but of the results of a conflict yet more mysterious and far-reaching between the bright

squadrons that follow the lead of the captain of the Lord's host, and the dark battalions of evil entrenched in the hearts and strongholds of the enemies of God. Is it, therefore, any cause for wonder that the walls of Jericho fell down; or that vast armies were scattered without a blow being struck; or that the land was subdued in a seven years' campaign? These achievements were the earthly and visible results of victories won in the heavenly and spiritual sphere by armies which follow the Word of God upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. Those walls fell down because smitten by the impact of celestial hosts. Those armies fled because the dark powers with which they were in league had been put to the rout before the Lord God of Sabaoth.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS VISION TO THE CHURCH. Throughout the world of nature there are signs of conflict and collision. There is no pool, however tranquil; no forest-glade, however peaceful; no isle bathed by southern seas, and set gem-like on the breast of ocean, however enchanting; no scene, however fascinating, which is not swept by opposing squadrons contending for victory. The swift pursue their prey, the strong devour the weak, the fittest alone survive in the terrific strife. So it has been in the history of our race. The books that contain the records of the past are largely records of wars and decisive battles. Their pages are wet with tears and blood. The foundations of vast empires have been laid, like those of African palaces, on the writhing bodies of dying men. For the student of God's ways all this leads up to a more tremendous struggle between darkness and light, evil and good, Satan and our King. And here is the real importance of the ascension, which was the worthy climax of the wonders of the first advent, as it will introduce the glories of the second.

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS VISION TO OURSELVES. We sometimes feel lonely and discouraged. The hosts with which we are accustomed to co-operate are resting quietly in their tents. No one seems able to enter into our anxieties and plans. Our Jerichos are so formidable—the neglected parish, the empty church, the hardened congregation, the godless household. How can we ever capture these, and hand them over to the Lord, like dismantled castles, for Him to occupy? That problem at first baffles us, and appears insoluble. Then we vow it shall be untied, and summon all our wit and energy to solve it. We study the methods of others and copy them; deliver our best addresses and sermons, put forth herculean exertions. We adopt exciting advertisements and questionable methods, borrowed from the world. Suppose Israel had taken lessons in scaling walls and taking fenced cities from the Canaanites! Or that the people had made an attack on Jericho with might and main, determined to find or make a breach! Finally, in our hours of disappointment, when we have tried our best in vain, and have fallen, as the sea-birds who dash themselves against the lighthouse tower fall to the foot with broken wing, it is well to go forth alone, confessing our helplessness, and tarrying for the vision, for we shall then be likeliest to see the Captain of the Lord's host. He will undertake our cause, He will marshal His troops and win the day, He will fling the walls of Jericho to the ground. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*)

The armed angel of the covenant appearing to Joshua.—I. JOSHUA WENT FORTH TO BE ALONE WITH GOD. The hour, thought of for forty years, had now arrived; the campaign was about to begin, and everything devolved upon him. No Moses now to direct him. There was the impregnable fortress before him. A long siege or a speedy capture alike impossible. A dilemma. He knelt for guidance.

II. THE LORD CAME TO BE ALONE WITH JOSHUA. 1. To Abram, a wanderer, He appeared as a wayfurer; to Jacob, distressed at the prospect of a conflict with his brother, He appeared as a wrestler who allowed himself to be overcome; and now, to the warrior, He showed Himself as a warrior. This teaches that there is no condition of life in which we shall not find the Lord Jesus in full sympathy with His people. 2. Joshua's doubt whether He was for or against him was soon set at rest. So will yours, if your heart is right with Him. 3. When Joshua knew who He was, he fell upon his face and worshipped. We have a like assurance that Joshua had. "All power is given unto Me." "Lo, I am with you alway." But if this be really given to us by the Holy Ghost, our attitude will be like Joshua's. (1) Deeply reverential (*Isa. vi. 5*). (2) Entirely submissive to the Divine will (*Acts ix. 6*). 4. The first thing the Lord required—"Loose thy shoe," &c. So now, "Leave worldly cares, cut off carnal indulgences, and give yourself up wholly to Me." "And Joshua did so. . . . And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand, Jericho," &c. A similar promise is given to us. Jericho is a type of the world (*John xvi. 33*; *Rom. viii. 31*; *1 John iv. 4*). The promise was definite: "I have given." That set Joshua's mind at rest. Have we not many a promise as definite? Why should we

fear? (see 1 John v. 4). 5. But faith does not mean sitting still and doing nothing. The land was given to them, but they had to conquer every foot of it. The Christian conflict is no less a conflict because "a fight of faith." In order to conquer in "the good fight of faith," we want—1. The readiness of faith, which is found only in our realised perfect standing in Christ. 2. The prayer of faith. 3. Faith's recognition of the Divine presence. 4. Faith's reverential submission to the Divine will. 5. Faith's energetic obedience to the Divine commands. (*W. J. Chapman, M.A.*) *The Captain of the Lord's host still with us*:—We see in Joshua an observant man meditating over the plans of the morrow, and turning in upon his own thoughts and reflections, yet quick to note the presence of a danger. Every commander of men must have an eye in his head. He must be quick to note the presence of a foe or to detect danger. He must watch as well as meditate and pray. Joshua was quick to take in his surroundings, while he carefully weighed problems which pressed themselves upon him. What was he to do? It was when face to face with that perplexing question that Joshua looked up and saw an armed man. Could he let that man go unchallenged? Nay, he must have the courage to go up to him. That courage was the necessary condition of the revelation which Joshua was about to receive. The cowards in the Lord's army never receive such a vision as this, but the men who have forgotten themselves in their desire to serve their Lord. Now observe what Joshua first received. He received a clear revelation that the One to whom he had spoken was far greater than he had ever imagined Him to be. In other words, that the Captain of the Lord's host, who alone could ensure victory, was nearer to him than he had ever dreamed. Again, notice that the character of this revelation was adapted to the nature of the circumstances by which Joshua was surrounded. Now, when God appeared to Moses, He did not reveal Himself in the form of an armed man. He appeared to him in a flame of fire—a flame which lit up the bush, but did not consume it. Then God appeared in the mystery of fire: and that was just the kind of revelation that Moses needed. But now things were different. Joshua had to pass through experiences through which even Moses had not to pass. The religion of God had been now established. The law had been given, even the ceremonial instructions had been supplied; but now the nation had to find their way into the possession of the promised land. God had given them Canaan, it is true, but it was only on condition that they should, in His strength, conquer the inhabitants of Canaan. Thus the revelation which Joshua needed now was that God would fight for them and with them. He therefore appeared before Joshua, not as a flame of fire, but an armed man, with His sword unsheathed. Joshua thus learnt that the result of the conflict was not dependent upon his wisdom in planning, or upon his courage in prosecuting the campaign. This was supremely all Joshua needed to know. It is this that gives courage to all the true servants of the Lord—the assurance that they have merely to obey the command of their King in detail, leaving all the rest with Him. Next observe that the conditions of being permitted to receive any command from the Divine Captain are reverence and faith. No man can receive from Him orders for battle until he has learned to take the warrior's sandal from off his foot and bow in submissiveness before the great Captain of his salvation. It was when Joshua had learned the truest reverence, when he had realised that the very place upon which he stood was holy, that the great secret was given him how to take Jericho. The Lord bade Joshua order the priests first of all take the ark, and then command seven priests to blow the "seven trumpets of ram's horns" before the ark of the Lord, &c. That was an extraordinary command, and an extraordinary assurance, and they required very exceptional faith in God to act upon them. But the possession of that faith was the condition of victory. So is it still; if we have a similar faith, the triumph is ours. Now think for a moment of Joshua's thoughts after all this. He would soliloquise: "I have mourned over the loss of Moses: I mourn over it still; but now I see as I never did before that there is One who can make up for that loss. I have not to look to Moses, but to the Master who gave Moses his commission: and if obeying His command is all that is necessary for me, I too can be leader." The Lord's cause does not depend upon the life of any hero, however great he may be, and the prosperity of the gospel the wide world over shall not be restrained by any loss, but as long as the Church is faithful to its privileges and ready to obey the Master's command, we as the Lord's army shall go on conquering and to conquer, until at last the shout of victory will be heard, and every Jericho of worldliness and iniquity will be laid low. (*D. Davies.*) *Timely aid; or, a vision of the Captain of the Lord's host*:—I. THE TIME OF HIS APPEAR-

ANCE. 1. After attending to "religious duties," "circumcision" and the "Pass-over." Joshua knew what kind of beginning was likely to end well; unlike a number of modern Christians. 2. While pursuing his appointed work. "By Jericho." Probably alone, yet fearless of danger. "By Jericho" for some important purpose. God visits the working man. Moses, Gideon, David, Elisha, sons of Zebedee. The covetous and idle are rarely called by God to great work.

II. THE MANNER OF HIS APPEARANCE. 1. As supreme in command: "Captain of the Lord's host." Captain over Joshua. Whatever be our abilities, our titles, or our claims to office, we must yield them all up to the "Captain of the Lord's host." 2. As the very friend Joshua needed—in the character and dress of a soldier. 3. As justifying the war in which he was about to engage. There are wars in which God will engage—against sin and the devil. The victories of the Church are bloodless. 4. As encouraging him to wage it valiantly. "Drawn sword." Ready to take the defensive or the offensive. To Abraham He said, "I am thy shield." To the disciple He said, "Follow Me." III. OUR DUTY IN RELATION TO SUCH AN APPEARANCE. 1. To be found evincing an interest in Israel. "Joshua was by Jericho." 2. To be ready to lay ourselves at Jesus' feet, saying, "What saith my Lord unto His servant." Say anything, Lord, and I will do it. Appoint me any work, and I am ready to perform it. (*W. H. Matthews.*) *The Captain of the Lord's host*:—"Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" There is a great deal in this bold challenge which commends itself to our admiration. Joshua knew of no neutrality in the warfare of God. The stranger must be friend or enemy. Joshua was not like so many Christian soldiers of to-day, who, before declaring their principles, wait to find out their company, trimming themselves to the breeze, very pious with the pious, indifferent with the indifferent, and openly irreligious with the irreligious. But there is something amiss with the question, for it is rebuked. Joshua made the mistake of thinking of the warfare in which he was engaged as having the two sides—"our side" and "the other side." Whoever approached the host must come to aid "us" or oppose "us." And this view was all wrong. It was just like the Homeric idea of the gods descending to earth as partisans in human strifes, Apollo patronising the diligent offerer of hecatombs, Venus favouring this or that one of her mortal kindred. It was like the Romans expecting Castor and Pollux in their van to spread dismay in the opposing hosts. It was an idea of God which the Jews got in a certain stage of their national history, an idea of God as a patron deity, a national divinity, just as Chemosh was the national divinity of Moab. In due time, when the exclusive national spirit had done its work, this idea was destined to be swept away. The vision rebukes it now. "Nay," he says, "not for you, nor yet for your adversaries, am I come, but—as Captain of the Lord's host am I now come." "Not as a partisan," he would say, "but as a Prince am I come. Not such as you deem me am I, a welcome ally or a hated foe, come to mingle in the clash and din of earthly warfare, but as captain of an army in which Israel forms but one tiny battalion, I am come to take my place and give my instructions." What a struggle must have taken place in the mind of Joshua! Was not he the captain, divinely chosen by God, and consecrated by the laying on of the hands of Moses? Did not this matter touch the dignity of his office? At any rate, we may be sure—for Joshua was a man—that it touched his pride. Just as he was so full of plans, perhaps had got everything ready for the attack on Jericho, had seen exactly how this wall was to be scaled, how that apparently impregnable tower was to be battered down, how the troops were to be disposed with the certainty of victory—an unknown One comes to him, levels all his plans to the ground with a word, and proclaims Himself the Captain of the host. Longfellow tells the story of the same conflict in "King Robert of Sicily," but there is a difference. King Robert requires years of humiliation and discipline to bring him to the confession all must make before the Captain; Joshua wins his battle on the spot—a battle which showed his fitness for leadership more than when he fought with Amalek at Rephidim. And he won it, as many of the great battles in the world's history—although they have not scarred the fair fields of earth—have been won—on his knees. No longer looking up, he falls with his face to the earth. Oh, what bitter pain and self-abasement were there in that moment when the strong soldier of Israel bowed himself to the dust! Who can say how hard the struggle was? We are only told that the battle was won. "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" Then the Captain of the Lord's host gives His orders, tells of His plan—not at all like the plans of Joshua—how Jericho is to be taken, not by might or strength of armed men, but by the blast of the Spirit of God toppling down the

stupendous walls in which the heathen Canaanites put their trust. 1. Oh, that we imitated Joshua in his vigilance! We, too, are in the promised land. But Canaan, for us, as for Israel, is a battle-field. Enemies prowl around, mighty fortresses of evil frown before us, and it is only our blindness which prevents us from seeing the momentous issues which depend upon our wakefulness. Do we ponder much and often upon the charge laid upon us? Do we often rise from slumber, leave the host of sleepers, and go out alone to survey the field of the approaching battle? Let us not shrink from challenging the unknown influences which at such times touch our lives. "Try the spirits," says St. John; good or evil, they must be challenged, for God has made us creatures of choice, and He has willed that by choice (and not by instinct) we must obey Him. This is the mark of our manhood, the mark which distinguishes us from the beasts. 2. But let us avoid Joshua's error. There is no "our side" in the matter. There is God's side, and the side against God. The Persian poet, Jellaladeen, tells us that, "One knocked at the Beloved's door, and a voice asked from within, 'Who is there?' and he answered, 'It is I.' Then the voice said, 'This house will not hold me and thee'; and the door was not opened. Then went the lover into the desert and fasted and prayed in solitude, and after a year he returned and knocked again at the door; and again the voice asked, 'Who is there?' and he said, 'It is thyself'; and the door opened to him." All true Christian warriors have, with Joshua, learned this utter renunciation of self. The Jehu spirit, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord," is banished, and the spirit of Paul takes its place, "yet not I, but Christ that dwelleth in me." (*H. H. Gowen.*)

The heavenly Captain of the Lord's host; or, the vision at Jericho:—I. THE TIME OF THE VISION. 1. It was immediately after God had been publicly honoured and sought in His ordinances. Christian, wouldst thou see Jesus? Then consecrate thyself anew to the service of thy God, and seek Him in the employment of the means of grace. Especially exercise faith in the Lamb of God, and feed upon the paschal sacrifice in thy heart by faith. Honour thy God by thy devotion, and He shall honour thee by revelations of His glory and His grace. 2. It was immediately before the mighty campaign with the Canaanites. This is often the method of God's procedure. When a great trial is at hand, great revelations of His glory; transporting experiences of His presence are given in anticipation. It was thus with our Divine Master Himself. Before His temptation, the heavens were opened to His view; the Spirit descended upon Him in bodily shape; the audible voice of the Father declared that Father's love, relationship, and approval of Him. It was thus, again, that the disciples were strengthened to bear the trial to their faith in the betrayal, suffering, and death of Jesus. II. *THE ASPECT OF THE VISION.* Joshua's question is not the utterance of doubt and distrust, but rather of a hope and an expectation that crave a fuller confirmation. It is like the prayer of David, "Say unto my soul, 'I am thy salvation.'" Oh, it is a solemn thing to see the naked sword in the hand of the destroying angel standing over against us: a petition for a reassuring word from Him who wields that sword is no disgrace to a believer. A humble soul that is taught of God to know what sin is must oftentimes be conscious of sin and guilt enough to justify a prayer for a renewal of assurance, and to prompt the anxious question, "Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries?"

III. THE COMMUNICATION OF THE VISION. Lessons: 1. Let unsaved sinners read here a lesson of terror and alarm, and heed the call to repentance. His sword is in His hand. But still, still His long-suffering mercy defers the stroke of judgment. Wilt thou not repent and believe the gospel? 2. To those who have accepted His offer of grace, and who plead His precious blood as their title to pardon, there is nothing to dread in the person of their Saviour. Do you belong to the Lord's host? Then bow your heads and worship, for as Captain of the Lord's host is He now come. Say, can you trust this heavenly Guardian? Will you follow this heavenly Guide? He claims these of us all—full confidence, entire obedience. 3. Note that while God's people are reassured and delivered from the fear that hath torment, there is a reverence and godly fear, from which they are not excused, but with which it is their duty to approach their Saviour. This is the symbolism of the loosing of the shoe. (*G. W. Butler, M.A.*)

Captain of the Lord's host:—I. THE RELATION HERE INDICATED BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE. Ruler, Defender, and Leader of the Church on earth. 1. This He is by virtue of the sufferings and conquests of Calvary. 2. By the free choice of His people. II. *THE CHARACTER AND OFFICE IN WHICH JESUS HERE MANIFESTS HIMSELF.* Warrior with drawn sword (Rev. i. 16). III. *THE POSITION AND DUTY DEVOLVING UPON CHRISTIANS IN CONSEQUENCE OF THIS RELATION TO CHRIST.* The true ideal of the

Christian is not that of the shepherd with crook and pipe on sunny hillside; or even that of the pilgrim slowly toiling on, and leaning on his staff; but rather that of the soldier, with shield and helmet, fighting his way against doubts that agitate his mind, against fears that even disturb the serenity of hope, against fiery passions that threaten to overmaster his patience, against the flesh in all its varied forms of opposition to the Spirit, against the world and its allurements, against invisible enemies, &c. Over and above these single-handed conflicts with our foes, we are called upon as soldiers of the Cross to march forward with the host against envy, and wickedness, and sin; to fight for the overthrow of Satan's stronghold, at home and abroad. IV. CHRIST'S RELATION TO THE CHURCH INVOLVES THE ASSURANCE OF ALL NEEDED GRACE AND POWER FOR THE WARFARE. We have His word to direct us, His Spirit to give strength and guidance, His love to inspire us with zeal, His promise to assure us that the conflict shall end in victory. (*A London Clergyman.*)

Joshua's vision:—I. REALISE THE FACT OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE. Jesus Himself comes to this holy war. Joshua saw a man clad in armour, equipped for war. Cannot the eyes of your faith see the same? There He stands, Jesus, God over all, blessed for ever, yet a man. Not carnally, but still in real truth, Jesus is where His people meet together. Joshua saw Him with His sword in His hand. Oh, that Christ might come in our midst with the sword of the Spirit in His hand; to come to effect deeds of love but yet deeds of power; to come with His two-edged sword to smite our sins, to cut to the heart His adversaries, to slay their unbelief, to lay their iniquities dead before Him. The sword is drawn, not scabbarded, as alas! it has been so long in many Churches, but made bare for present active use. It is in His hand, not in the minister's hand, not even in an angel's hand, but the sword drawn is in His hand. Oh, what power there is in the gospel when Jesus holds the hilt, and what gashes it makes into hearts that were hard as adamant when Jesus cuts right and left at the hearts and consciences of men! The glorious man whom Joshua saw was on his side. In the midst of His Church, Christ carries a sword only for the purposes of love to His people. The Divine presence, then, is what we desire, and if we have it faith at once is encouraged. It was enough for the army of Cromwell to know that He was there, the ever victorious, the irresistible, to lead on his Ironsides to the fray. Many a time the presence of an old Roman general was equal to another legion; as soon as the cohorts perceived that he was come whose eagle eye watched every motion of the enemy, and whose practised hand led his battalions upon the most salient points of attack, each man's blood leaped within him, and he grasped his sword and rushed forward secure of success. Our King is in the midst of us, and our faith should be in active exercise. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" When the King is with His people, then hope is greatly encouraged, for saith she, "Who can stand against the Lord of hosts?" Where Jesus is, love becomes inflamed, for oh! of all the things in the world that can set the heart burning, there is nothing like the presence of Jesus. A glimpse of Him will overcome us, so that we shall be almost ready to say, "Turn away Thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me." Suppose that Christ is here. His presence will be most clearly ascertained by those who are most like Him. Joshua was favoured with this sight because he alone had eyes that could bear it. I would that all of you were Joshuas; but if not, if but some shall perceive Him, we shall still receive a blessing. I am sure this presence of Christ will be needed by us all. Go not to warfare at your own charges, but wait upon your Master, tarrying at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high. But Jesus Christ's presence may be had. Do not despond and say that in the olden times the Master revealed Himself, but He will not do so now. He will, He will. His promise is as good as ever. II. UNDERSTAND THE LORD'S POSITION IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE. "As Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." What a relief this must have been for Joshua. Perhaps he thought himself the captain; but now the responsibility was taken from him; he was to be the lieutenant, but the King Himself would marshal His hosts. Wherever Christ is, we must recollect that He is Commander-in-chief to us all. We must never tolerate in the Church any great man to domineer over us: we must have no one to be Lord and Master save Jesus. Down with thee, self, down with thee! Carnal judgment and foolish reason, lie still! Let the Word of God be paramount within the soul, all opposition being hushed. If we do not act with the Captain, disappointment will be sure to follow. One action brought defeat upon Israel. III. Our third rule is, WORSHIP HIM WHO IS PRESENT WITH US. Joshua, it is said, fell on his face to the earth. Worship is the highest elevation of the spirit, and yet the lowliest prostration of the soul. Worship

the Son of God! Then, when you have so done, give up yourself to His command: say to Him, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" When you have done this, I want you to imitate Joshua in the third thing, namely, put off your shoes from off your feet. Joshua, perhaps, had not felt what a solemn thing it was to fight for God, to fight as God's executioner against condemned men. He must put his shoes off, therefore. We never can expect a blessing if we go about God's work flippantly. IV. To conclude, let us now ADVANCE TO ACTION, according to the Master's command. Unconverted men and women, you are our Jericho, we wish to conquer you for Christ. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The Captain of the Lord's host:—I. A TRANSIENT REVELATION OF AN ETERNAL TRUTH. You will observe that there run throughout the whole of the Old Testament notices of the occasional manifestation of a mysterious person who is named "the Angel," "the Angel of the Lord," and who, in a remarkable manner, is distinguished from the created hosts of angel beings, and also is distinguished from, and yet in name, attributes, and worship all but identified with, the Lord Himself. If we turn to the New Testament, we find that there under another image the same strain of thought is presented. The Word of God, who from everlasting "was with God, and was God," is represented as being the Agent of Creation, the source of all human illumination, the director of Providence, the Lord of the Universe. "By Him were all things, and in Him all things consist." So, surely, these two halves make a whole; and the Angel of the Lord, separate and yet so strangely identified with Jehovah, who at the crises of the nation's history, and stages of the development of the process of revelation, is manifested, and the Eternal Word of God, whom the New Testament reveals to us, are one and the same. The eternal order of the universe is before us here. It only remains to say a word in reference to the sweep of the command which our vision assigns to the Angel of the Lord. "Captain of the Lord's host" means a great deal more than the true General of Israel's little army. It does mean that, or the words and the vision would cease to have relevance and bearing on the moment's circumstances and need. But it includes also, as the usage of Scripture would sufficiently show, if it were needful to adduce instances of it, all the ordered ranks of loftier intelligent beings, and all the powers and forces of the universe. These are conceived of as an embattled host, comparable to an army in the strictness of their discipline and their obedience to a single will. It is the modern thought that the universe is a Cosmos and not a Chaos, an ordered unit, with the addition of the truth beyond the reach and range of science, that its unity is the expression of a personal will. That is the truth which was flashed from the unknown like a vanishing meteor in the midnight before the face of Joshua and which stands like the noonday sun, unsetting and irradiating for us who live under the gospel.

II. THE LEADER OF ALL THE WARFARE AGAINST THE WORLD'S EVIL. "The Captain of the Lord's host." He Himself takes part in the fight. He is not like a general who, on some safe knoll behind the army, sends his soldiers to death, and keeps his own skin whole. But He has fought, and He is fighting. Do you remember that wonderful picture in two halves, at the end of one of the Gospels, "The Lord went up into heaven," &c. . . . "they went forth everywhere preaching the Word"? Strange contrast between the repose of the seated Christ and the toils of His peripatetic servants! Yes. Strange contrast; but the next words harmonise the two halves of it: "The Lord also working," &c. The leader does not so rest as that he does not fight; and the servants do not need so to fight as that they cannot rest. Thus the old legends of many a land and tongue have a glorious truth in them to the eye of faith, and at the head of all the armies that are charging against any form of the world's misery and sin there moves the form of the Son of Man, whose aid we have to invoke, even from His crowned repose at the right hand of God. If this, then, be for us, as truly as for Joshua and his host, a revelation of who is our true leader, surely all of us in our various degrees, and especially any of us who have any "Quixotic crusade" for the world's good on our consciences and on our hands, may take the lessons and the encouragements that are here. Own your leader. That is one plain duty. And recognise this fact, that by no other power than by His, and with no other weapons than those which He puts into our hands, in His Cross and meekness, can a world's evils be overcome, and the victory be won for the right and the truth. We may have, we shall have, in all enterprises for God and man that are worth doing, need of patience, just as the army of Israel had to parade for six weary days round Jericho blowing their useless trumpets, whilst the impregnable walls stood firm, and the defenders flouted and jeered their aimless procession. But the seventh day will come, and at the trumpet blast down will go the loftiest ramparts

of the cities that are walled up to heaven, with a rush and a crash, and through the dust and over the ruined rubbish Christ's soldiers will march and take possession. Do not make Joshua's mistake. "Art thou for us?" Nay! "Thou art for Me." That is a very different thing. There is a great deal that calls itself, after Jehu's fashion, "my zeal for the Lord," which is nothing better than zeal for my own notions and their preponderance. Therefore we must strip ourselves of all that, and not fancy that the cause is ours, and then graciously admit Christ to help us, but recognise that it is His, and lowly submit ourselves to His direction, and what we do, do, and when we fight, fight, in His name, and for His sake. III. THE ALLY IN ALL OUR WARFARE WITH OURSELVES. That is the worst fight. Far worse than all external foes are the foes that each man carries about in his own heart. In that slow hand-to-hand and foot-to-foot struggle I do not believe that there is any conquering power available for a man that can for a moment be compared with the power that comes through submission to Christ's command and acceptance of Christ's help. He has fought every foot of the ground before us. IV. THE POWER WHICH IT IS MADNESS TO RESIST. Think of this vision. Think of the deep truths, partially shadowed and symbolised by it. Think of Christ, what He is, and what resources He has at His back, of what are His claims for our service, and loyal, militant obedience. Think of the certain victory of all who follow Him amongst the armies of heaven, clad in fine linen, clean and white. Think of the crown and the throne for him that overcomes. Remember the destructive powers that sleep in Him; the drawn sword in His hand; the two-edged sword out of His mouth; the wrath of the Lamb. Think of the ultimate certain defeat of all antagonisms; of that last campaign when He goes forth with the name written on His vesture and on His thigh, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Think of how He strikes through kings in the day of His wrath, and fills the place with the bodies of the dead; and how His enemies become His footstool. Ponder His own solemn Word, "He that is not with Me is against Me." There is no neutrality in this warfare. Either we are for Him or we are for His adversary. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *A strengthening vision* (a Sermon to Soldiers):—The vision described in the text was God's way of teaching Joshua. It revealed to him the important truth, it showed him that the secret source of all splendid achievements was in the strength that comes from the realised union between God and man. When and where did this vision come to Joshua? It was on the eve of an expected battle. At any moment the first blood might be shed. Uncertainty was in every heart. Men recounted to each other as they walked silently about the camp the wonderful doings of Jehovah, their God. These Israelitish soldiers gathered hope from the past for the future, and so stood erect for expected duty. But it was a moment of supreme anxiety, for an untried matter lay before them. It was a moment of supreme anxiety, and heart-sickening suspense to every soldier who stood before that first stronghold they had to attack. What must it be to Joshua the commander-in-chief? Earnest thoughts about his duty, about his responsibility, would surely rise up within him at such a moment, and his heart must well-nigh faint at the difficulties and the dangers. Did ever soldier meet greater encouragement? At that moment, then, when Joshua for the first time was face to face with the difficulties and the dangers of that unexpected campaign, at this place with the grim fortifications frowning round him, this vision of the text appeared. It was an answer to that which was going on within him. It was a striking vision; the appearance of a soldier ready for battle to a soldier. But what did this man with the drawn sword in his hand mean? Joshua knew a conflict was certain, that there was a long and severe campaign before him, but what was it, victory or defeat? What about the issue? The vision leaves Joshua still in uncertainty and doubt, and so with a soldier-like promptness and courage he goes up to the man, and the thought that is in his heart appears at the very abruptness of the question: "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" That was what Joshua wanted to know. But no direct answer was given; instead came the majestic words: "Nay, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." I am thy fellow-soldier, but I belong to another army. I was with Moses as a guiding angel; I will be with thee as a soldier, the commander, the orderer of the battle. Thou needst not fear; to thy army there is a reserve of which thou knowest nothing. The Lord of hosts is with thee, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is on thy side. He arranges all this battlefield: thou needst not fear; thou art safe under His protection. So God spoke to Joshua, and the watchful soldier understood the message that was given to him, he recognised the reviving vision and bowed before the Divine presence. Faith in God is a great inducement to a good heroic life; the enthusiasm of faith is strength; "All things are

possible to him that believeth." But what does this vision of the man with the drawn sword in his hand reveal to us? Surely, first of all we are able to recognise this truth, that a soldier's life ought to be, must be, may be, looked upon as a vocation from God. The essence of an ideal soldier's life is self-sacrifice. To do your work because you must, to do it as slavery, to do as little of it as possible, to get away from it as soon as you can, and then to find your amusement or your pleasure in some wild form of self-indulgence, that is unsoldierlike and wrong. The Cross of Christ is the true symbol of a soldier's life. Self-sacrifice should mark it; duty to God and duty to man is that which lies hidden in its uniform. And again, surely the vision teaches us this, that in like emergencies English soldiers and English commanders may expect the same Divine revelation, a man with a drawn sword in his hand to appear to them. "I never knew," said a cultured Christian officer to me, "I never knew the delight of God's presence, I never realised it so thoroughly, as when in the darkness of the night we were crossing the deserts of Egypt to the unknown dangers of Tel-el-Kebir." And surely in these days of newness, when not only is a new England rising up about us, but a new army with new weapons, and with new modes of warfare and unexplored campaigns in the distance, it behoves us to believe that whenever war comes, if it be undertaken for the good of men and the glory of God, this vision of the man with the drawn sword in his hand will lead our army and inspire our officers and soldiers to noble deeds. This vision came to Joshua, but Joshua had a prepared heart. A man can only see that which he is prepared to see. Such a vision would not come to unprepared souls. Joshua had learned the lessons of fighting successful battles long ago. Years before this the first battle that Israel had ever fought, that at Rephidim, had been gained when Joshua was the leader, the chosen selected leader. An able, young, and capable leader he was then, and the army was made up of picked men. He was brave and enduring, and everything seemed to be on the side of the Israelites, but yet the final force was not with the fighting men, but up on the mountain-side. The final force was in the uplifting of hoary men's hands to God. Moses and Aaron and Hur, old men, stood on the mountain side and supplicated God while the young men fought. How goes the battle, do you want to know? You must watch the hands of Moses. When the hands of Moses are uplifted the children of Israel march grandly on, and when they drop down in their weakness the Amalakites spring forward, and neither good generalship nor hard fighting can keep them back. The secret of all true power is with God. We, men, cannot wipe off evil in our own strength or might, but God will drive it out. Not by a miracle, but He will work through willing men, and do His work thoroughly and well. We know there are difficulties and dangers in a soldier's life, but amid the difficulties and dangers we see deliverance; amid sin we see salvation; with the Cross of Christ before us we will never despair of men. We will never despair, for the Word tells us that Christ came into the world, not to condemn it, but to save it. Then, again, there are surely special times in a soldier's life when he needs special encouragement. There is war with its many horrors, mangled forms, vast heaps of dying and wounded; and at such a moment, in such a crisis, the memory of the Church at home, the hymns sung, the prayers offered, the teaching received, comes back and lightens up the darkest hour of a soldier's life. It tells him of hope in unexplored dangers, and in the last great danger of all, death. I have listened with tearful eyes from all sorts of men's lips of such strength being given them in hours of danger from hymns they have sung. Some thought comes, some stray thought, as it seems, which the Holy Spirit brings into their minds, that in the garrison towns of England prayers are being offered up for them. This thought comes in and gives the man a new gleam of hope, new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven. There is a touching incident in one of the books which Mrs. Ewing wrote about soldiers. She could enter into their tenderest feelings better than most people. She knew, too, by constant experience with soldiers, what religious associations could do for them, and what a power the Church of Christ, with its hymns, prayers, sacraments, and ministrations, could be to them. Jackanapes lay dying on the battlefield. He had given his life for another, as many a soldier has done. There stood by him his old major. Jackanapes said, "Say a prayer for me, a Church prayer. A Church prayer on parade service, you know." But the old major was not used to prayer and praise, and he could only say, "Jaconite, God forgive me, I am afraid I am very different to what some of you young fellows are." And there was a moment of silence, deep silence and terrible pain, and then the old major said with that charming simplicity which we so often find, "I can only

repent the little one at the end." Impressed with the conviction that what he could do, it was his duty to do, the old major knelt down and unbared his head and said by the dying boy reverently, loudly, and clearly, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God"—and then Jackanapes died, and how could he die better! God's love came before him at the last supreme moment. Oh, there is many a word heard in the church, heard again and again, falling upon unheeding ears, but which God hears, and which comes up again at God's appointed time. When an English soldier like Joshua has to face unexplored dangers, such words as the soldier hears in the church speaking of the love of God are so valuable. When the soul needs them most, when the man is about to fall into the hands of God, whose character he longs to know, then to recall thoughts of the love of God, it is to such gracious memories as we trust the services in the church will have that he looks. (*J. C. Edgehill, D.D.*) *Jesus our Captain*:—

I. OUR LEADER INSPIRES CONFIDENCE. He has never been defeated. In one of the Napoleonic battles on the Peninsula a corps of British troops were sorely pressed and began to waver. Just then the Duke of Wellington rode in among them. A veteran soldier cried out, "Here comes the Duke, God bless him! the sight of him is worth a whole brigade." So to the equipped warrior, under the ensign of the Cross, a sight of Jesus, our Leader, is a new inspiration. II. JESUS IS ABLE TO ASSURE THE VICTORY TO EVERY REDEEMED SOUL WHO IS LOYAL TO HIM. What a bugle-blast that is which sounded from the lips of the heroic apostle (Rom. viii. 37). To be a conqueror is to vanquish our enemies. But to "more than conquer" is to reap a positive, spiritual good from the battle itself. If life had no encounters we would acquire no spiritual sinews. III. EACH ONE OF US HAS A PERSONAL CONFLICT TO WAGE. No other human being can fight it for us. Some have to contend with a powerful passion, some with a besetting sin, some with a temptation from without; others with internal doubts and abominable suggestions by the adversary. IV. JESUS MET AND OVERCAME THE DEVIL. He is able to "destroy his works."

1. Jesus gives us the only armour which can protect us, and with it He gives the strength to wield the weapons. 2. Jesus makes intercession for us when the battle waxes hot. 3. These conflicts bring us into closer, sweeter sympathy with Jesus. 4. He flies to the relief of every redeemed follower who is ready to perish. (*T. L. Cuyler, D.D.*) *Christ the Captain of salvation*:—I. It is important to contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ in the SOURCE OF HIS AUTHORITY. 1. The authority of the Saviour is founded upon His essential Divinity. 2. While the authority of the Saviour, as the Captain of all the hosts of the Lord, is founded upon His essential Divinity, it is also to be taken as founded upon His mediatorial office. The special charge which He had of the hosts of the Lord, or the tribes of Israel, in another form of manifestation, must be regarded evidently and distinctly as the symbol of that covenant relationship which He holds, throughout all ages of time, to those who constitute the spiritual Israel and God's covenant people, out of every nation, tribe, and tongue. II. THE GLORY OF HIS OBJECTS. 1. These objects are glorious on account of their intrinsic importance. The literal object had in view by the Saviour, in the manifestation of Himself to Joshua, was one of much magnitude—the leading of the tribes of Israel to conquest and to the promised land, so that the promise might be fulfilled to these people, upon which they had been looking now for a long succession of ages. But the Lord Jesus Christ has been revealed as the great Leader of "the sacramental hosts of God's elect"; and it should be observed that this possesses an importance far beyond what, by any human being, hath been conceived, and demands all that can be rendered of the adoration and praise of the universe. 2. These objects are glorious by their extended influence. We are all aware of the influence of extent, either in increasing the evil of what is pernicious or in increasing the value of what is beneficial. According to the number of persons affected by a curse, we assign the magnitude of that curse; and according to the number of persons affected by a blessing, we assign the magnitude of that blessing. Let this principle be applied to the theme on which we now are meditating, and new honour will be found to be given to those objects which are proposed by the great Captain and Leader of the hosts of the Lord. III. THE CERTAINTY OF HIS TRIUMPH. 1. The grounds of this. (1) His Divinity. (2) His promises. 2. We must also recollect that the certainty of this triumph must also be connected with the exercise of certain influences over those minds who are interested in it. And if the triumph we anticipate in connection with our own salvation be secure, one influence to be inspired is that of—(1) Obedience; (2) fortitude; (3) gratitude. (*J. Parsons.*) *The Captain of the Lord's host*:—I. THAT BEFORE UNDERTAKING ANY DIFFICULT

ENTERPRISE, INDEED IN ALL OUR TRIALS AND DISTRESSES, IN ALL OUR WAYS, WE SHOULD DIRECT OUR THOUGHTS TO HEAVEN. Joshua "lifted up his eyes" to heaven, from whence he knew that his help would in due time come. So should our eyes not be lowered to the "earthly, sensual, devilish," but be lifted up to the noble, holy, pure.

II. THAT THE HELP OF GOD IS NOT MERELY TO BE PASSIVELY RECEIVED, BUT IS TO BE ACTIVELY SOUGHT FOR. Joshua not only lifted up his eyes: he also "looked." God helps those that help themselves. Men should all be, not merely idle waiters on God's bounty, but really "workers together with Him."

III. THAT CHRIST IS EVER READY TO HELP THOSE THAT LOOK TO HIM FOR SUCCOUR. The Captain of the Lord's host "stood over against Joshua with His sword drawn in His hand"—typical of Christ, prepared to afford His omnipotent aid to all who are fighting manfully under His banner, and striving by His grace to continue faithful.

IV. THAT WHEN FAITH HAS MADE KNOWN TO US HEAVENLY TRUTHS, REASON MUST DISCLOSE TO US THE EXACT BEARING OF THOSE TRUTHS. "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" Bringest thou with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell? Be thy intents wicked or charitable? Many a noble human soul, like stately galleys, has been lured to destruction by "phantom ships" in "the spirit land."

V. THAT IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY EARTHLY CONFLICTS ARE PALTRY AND UNIMPORTANT. Sectarianism must cease when Christianity reigns.

VI. THAT HONOUR SHOULD BE GIVEN WHERE HONOUR IS DUE. Joshua "fell on his knees," &c.

VII. THAT OBEDIENCE IS NOT THE LEAST OF THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES. When commanded by the Captain of the Lord's host to "loose his shoes," &c., he at once "did so." Obedience is a sign, not of servitude, but of intelligence. (*R. Young, M.A.*)

The true campaign.—I. THAT IN THE TRUE CAMPAIGN GOD HAS COMMITTED TO MAN A GREAT WORK. 1. An onerous work. We live in a world of evil. Corrupt principles, the mighty "powers of darkness," possess the world. They crowd our sphere of action; and, alas! they are encamped within us. The work to which we are called is their entire extermination, both from within and without. 2. A righteous work. The man who consecrates his energies to the downfall of evil, whose life is one earnest struggle against the principalities and powers of darkness, is acting evermore in accordance with the eternal law of rectitude. He is "fighting the good fight of faith," and if he is faithful he shall receive "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 3. An indispensable work. Never will you possess the Canaan of spiritual harmony, moral approbation, self-control, uplifting thoughts, heavenly affections, ever-brightening hopes, and free and blessed intercourse with the Infinite Father of spirits, without the expulsion of all evil from your soul.

II. THAT IN THE TRUE CAMPAIGN GOD BLESSES MAN WITH A GREAT LEADER. "The Captain of the Lord's host"—Jesus Christ, "the Captain of our salvation." 1. As a moral commander He is ever present when needed. 2. As a moral commander He is always ready. 3. As a moral commander He is all-sufficient.

III. THAT IN THE TRUE CAMPAIGN GOD REQUIRES A GREAT SPIRIT. Joshua here displays—1. A spirit of indomitable valour. 2. A spirit of reverent inquiry. 3. A spirit of solemn obedience. (*Homilist.*)

The Captain of the Lord's host:—Joshua's question, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" was a perfectly natural one for him to ask, at the sight of an armed man in an enemy's country; we can scarcely say he did wrong to ask it; but it seems as though the Lord inset the question with something like a rebuke. "He said, Nay." It seemed to Joshua that there were two sides, his own and the enemy's, between which the battle was to be fought out: he had to learn that it was not for him nor for Israel to gain the victory, but for the Lord their God. To teach him and all Israel this more plainly, the Lord gave him special commands as to the way the first victory was to be gained, in the taking of Jericho; this was to be done, entirely and plainly, by God and not by man; and for all the war that followed, though more was to depend upon human prudence and courage, they were still to know that they were fighting, not for themselves, but for their Lord; that they were not at liberty to act as they pleased, but were to act in entire obedience to Him. Is not this a lesson which we require to learn in the war we have to fight against the power of sin within and about us? The recognition of this would do something to calm and soothe the bitterness of men's minds about the questions of party that are so fiercely and frequently argued in our days. And as in public and party questions, so the same fault of selfwill comes into men's efforts after goodness in other matters also. Most people sometimes feel it would be easier for them to be good if they were in a different state of life from what they are, if they lived in a different society or neighbourhood, if their family circumstances were different; if they had a different business or employment in life, and the like; and they often set down

their own faults, as far as they are aware of them, to the blame of their neighbours or of the circumstances that they think are the great hindrances to their curing them. This is nothing but claiming to ourselves the right to command the Lord's host, instead of fighting in it as simple soldiers, whose duty only is to obey orders. Are we to expect the Lord to be "for us," not only so that He means and wishes us to get the victory, but so that He shall take every means that we choose to secure it, shall serve under our command, and make bridges over all the steep valleys and roads through all the different passes, and give us the chance of fighting the enemy just on our own ground, when we choose and where we choose? There is one source of difficulty in the way of duty of which it is especially wrong to complain or to want to have it altered so as to suit us, though it is perhaps the commonest of all—I mean the difficulties we find to our own right conduct from the conduct of other people. Here, if we ask whether the Lord is "for us or for our adversaries," the only possible answer is, "For both." He loves both equally. God gave Joshua and the Israelites the victory over the Canaanites only "by little and little," for this reason among others—that He desired to spare the Canaanites themselves as much as possible, and to give them time to repent if they would. Much more is it wrong and selfish for us to want any of our fellow-Christians swept out of our way—to think of them as mere spiritual enemies, or expect God to deal with them as mere temptations to ourselves, and hindrances to our own goodness. Patience and submission to God's will are the foundation of all excellence in the Christian character; just as discipline, and ready and unquestioning obedience are the most important of all qualities in an army of this world. It is when things are against you that your mind is tried and trained; you have to make the best of them, but you are not tempted to "seek great things for yourself"; if you escape disaster you will be satisfied, and that is hard enough. Now it cannot be useless for us to remember in our spiritual war, if we find things are against us, and that the operations in which we are engaged are unsuccessful, that it was under these conditions that the Captain of the Lord's host Himself fought out His great battle on earth. Judging it in a natural way, His life was a failure, His ministry a failure. He had fought the world for God, and had lost the battle. But His faith and obedience did not fail—rather it was perfected by His defeat. He still went on fearlessly until He had finished the work God gave Him to do: then He said, "It is finished!" and bowed His head and gave up the ghost. And then He had conquered. Let us, then, not be discouraged if we find that He gives us work to do that we do not like, or in which we do not see our way to success. It may be only that He means us so to win glory like His own—such as is won by the highest faith in Him, the faith that removes mountains. But whether that be so or not, we have to accept His orders and obey them. Do your duty patiently, and trust God for its having a good end. (*W. H. Simcox, M.A.*) *The vision for the great campaign*:—See the British fleet lying anchored at Spithead. It is in commission for an important expedition. Every ship has orders to be ready to sail at a moment's notice. Accordingly all are ready. Every officer, every man, every boy is aboard. The captains are assured that every preparation is completed; that all stores of every description are laid in; that steam is up, and that in a moment their ships can be under weigh. Why, then, do they not hurry seaward? Is not this delay a waste of precious time? No, for the admiral is not yet on board the flagship. The supreme, responsible, directing mind, on whose energy and ability the whole nation is depending, is not yet at his post. See, here he comes. Every ship acknowledges the little craft that bears his flag; he steps on the quarter-deck of the vessel he commands, the signal for departure is hoisted; all are off. Such an event as that will give some idea of the meaning of this part of the sacred narrative. Israel has received orders to enter on this momentous campaign. All things are ready for a beginning. They have crossed the river; they have been circumcised; they have kept the feast; they have partaken of the corn of the land; why, then, this pause? Because they wait for Him who is their Captain. Here on the plains of Jericho the typical Saviour and the true Joshua and Jesus, stand face to face. Yea, Joshua's work at that time was the work of Jesus; was the work of Jesus so peculiarly and definitely that Joshua must wait on Him for instructions. He who came the lowly Lamb comes here the mighty warrior, with a sword of judgment drawn and gleaming in His awful hand. He who came to save comes to destroy. This vision makes very emphatic what was clearly revealed before, viz., that this campaign is under the Divine sanction and direction. Divine skill plans the work. Divine power carries it forward. I. BEHOLD OUR CAPTAIN. We have a Leader in this great war. We

are not left to fight alone; herein lies our comfort. "He goeth before." We go not a warfare at our own charges. If Joshua was unfit for that conquest of Canaan by himself, how much more are we unfit for the fight against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. For Joshua, Jesus came, "The Captain of the Lord's host." For us Jesus comes "the Captain of salvation." And it is a comfort to think that this Leader of the people is one of the people Himself. In any war, which is the captain whom the soldiers love to follow? He who shares their lot most closely—he who, like Skobelev in the Turkish war, knows all their hardships and privations. He who sleeps with them in the trenches, eats the same coarse and scanty rations, and leads them into the thickest of the fight. Now, this great Captain of whom we speak acts in this very fashion. He has shared our lot in every particular, however hard, sin excepted. Also, like the warrior that appeared to Joshua, our Leader is thoroughly equipped for His work. His hand is drawn ready to smite. The word of truth is the royal weapon He wields in this war of grace and salvation; quick, powerful, sharp, effectual. He puts it in the hands of every faithful follower and bids him use it well. Again, Jesus is our Leader in virtue of Divine appointment: "The government shall be upon His shoulders." "To Him shall the gathering of the people be." Moreover, He is Captain in virtue of His own purchase. Jesus has the right to lead God's people, because He has died for them. He is made perfect, as the Captain of salvation, through suffering. Also He is our leader because of His own resources. These are infinite. Lastly, we would say, He is Leader because of His qualities. He is an able Leader, thoroughly fit to command God's army, a true King of men, always present, always ready. He is faithful to His word; wise in His plans; glorious in His achievements; ravishing in His perfections. II. See here also the FAITHFUL FOLLOWER. We know that Joshua stands prepared to follow this great Captain, because we remember his past obedience. By doing whatever duty comes to hand, under the eye of the great Leader, we prepare for higher achievements. Joshua's heart is also in his work. He is not slothful and indifferent. He is not careless and unconcerned. He is not fearful and oppressed, with no stomach for the fight. Thus the follower of Jesus should be a willing worker, full of energy and watchfulness, ever on the alert to do whatever in him lies to extend the Saviour's kingdom. Joshua is also brave. When this warrior started up before him, though he was startled he was not unmanned. Without moral courage there can be no nobility of character, no strength of soul, no effective work. And this brave man is also humble. He fell on his face before this majestic Presence. He was deeply conscious of the superiority of his Leader and of his own nothingness. Therefore his heart is also filled with reverence. He worshipped before Him. He took the shoes off his feet, for the place was holy. Men who have done anything great for God, men who have followed the Lord fully, have been always marked by a spirit of deepest reverence. The gravity, the solemnity of the work in which they are engaged, the consciousness of the Divine presence before which they walk, fills them with awe. Joshua was also docile and obedient. He put the question, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" And when he got the answer he did as he was commanded. Unquestioning, prompt obedience is due to Him who commands us with such unerring wisdom, who leads us with such invincible might. (*A. B. Mackay.*)

An inspiring vision:—Constantine, with his young, enthusiastic heart, was setting out on his war campaigns, when, they tell us, the appearance of the sky arrested his attention. As the eyes of the conqueror looked up into the heavens, behold, there seemed shaped to his vision a cross of fire, and beneath it, in letters of flame, were inscribed the Latin words, "*In hoc signo vinces*" ("In this sign thou wilt conquer"). It may have been a dream—it very likely was; but oh, there is truth in it! If you can see the Cross, you have got the vision that ennobles and enlivens, and brings conquering power to you in this life. "Where there is no vision, the people perish"; but when there is a vision—the vision of Calvary, the vision of the Lord Jesus—there is life, there is joy, there is peace, there is blessing. (*J. Robertson.*)

Joshua's vision:—There are moments when we see without seeking, what at other times does not appear to us, and will not appear. An inward eye that had been closed seems to open, and we stand suddenly in the presence of hitherto invisible things. Midnight, solitude, sorrow, a felt crisis in our lives—what revealings they have brought with them; and it was as though a veil had been rent in twain, as though a flash of lightning had illumined the darkness. We all have our occasional transient visions of something higher, grander, or more solemn than we are ordinarily sensible of. Joshua has now to begin afresh, in fresh

scenes ; another period of toil and endurance is opening before him. So we stand to-day upon the threshold of another year, waiting, after we have finished, to commence again. And, as he waited, gravely meditative, with earnest thoughts stirring in him concerning his duties and responsibilities, there came upon him the vision of the text ; for, unless he had been meditative and earnest, he would not have beheld what he beheld, we may be sure. It was the shining answer to what was taking place within him. One sees only that which one is tuned and prepared to see ; and, to catch inspiring glimpses, one must be aspiring. All things must be met by us half-way. For none but those whose hearts are kindling, does the bush burn with fire. May ours be the inner temper of mind to-day, to which angels of God shall be able to show themselves. But notice first the agitation of uncertainty in the breast of the son of Nun. "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" wondering anxiously what the apparition meant. You see, this was the form in which the future in the strange country appeared—a mighty man with a drawn sword in his hand. Yes, of course the future would be filled with the clash of war. Nothing but conflict could be expected ; conflict perhaps, severe and prolonged ; but what of the issue ? with whom would the victory lie ? with Israel or the enemy ? Ah, if he could but tell. Mystic form of the Future, wilt thou reveal it to me ? And it is with like uncertainty that we front now the new year. We have most of us lived long enough—we most of us know enough of life to discern, as we lift our eyes, a man with a drawn sword in his hand. That there will be more or less of disagreeable and trying encounter, is sure. We shall have difficulties to grapple with, in the sweat of our face. Temptations will assail us ; vexations and annoyances will have to be borne. But will it be, upon the whole, one of our happy and prosperous years ? Shall we get through it, however threatened or assaulted, unrifed and unharmed, without being sore wounded or overthrown in the way. The character of past years has varied. Some, notwithstanding many little ruffings and unpleasantnesses experienced in them, we have looked back upon with satisfaction and thankfulness, and have called them good years. Ah, we did well in them. They were marked by much sunshine. Our enterprises prospered ; our friendships yielded only sweetness. Other years, perhaps, we were glad to have done with. They are remembered as black years, in which the sun shone only at rare intervals, and for a brief space, between ever-returning clouds. The years have varied with us. In some, if we have had to fight, we have conquered. In others, the tide of battle has rolled against us, leaving us broken and mauled. "New year coming on apace, what hast thou to give me ? Comest thou promising peace and brightness, or big with thunder and gloom ?" We ask in vain, as Joshua did when he cried, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries ?" For observe, that question of his was not replied to. "Nay," said the armed angel, "I am no token, no prophecy of that, one way or the other." But what does he say to the wistfully inquiring man ? "As the captain of the host of the Lord I am now come." Here, then, was what Joshua saw, presently, in looking forward to the future. Not what was going to happen—not the victory or the defeat to which he was destined in marching against the Canaanites ; but, that it would not be himself alone at the head of the Hebrew army ; that One would be there, superintending and disposing, ordering and commanding, whom the people beheld not, even the very same angel of Jehovah's presence. He saw himself divinely overlooked and attended ; planning, manœuvring, fighting to the best of his ability, as the chosen general, under the constant eye and control of an unseen Generalissimo, who had His purposes, whose purposes were good and right, and would be always fulfilling themselves in and through all. It was thus that the Future answered his appeal, "What hast thou hidden for us in thy thick darkness ?" It answered, "God is here—caring, managing, ruling to the end ; the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." An inspiring vision, to have been borne in upon him as he stood alone in the plain, with the grim fortifications of Jericho frowning down on him, and thought of the work to be done, with its difficulties and dangers. Better, surely, than any glimpse or foreshadowing of coming events would have been. And if we be able to receive it, what can be more inspiring for us in our entrance upon the unknown land of a new year than the vision, not merely of an existence in the universe over and above all phenomena, and producing and sustaining them ; but of a living Being, transcendent in wisdom and goodness, whose purpose is our education and the education of the world, and who is working evermore, in whatever happens, in whatever chances and changes may befall, to forward it ; of One who is not only with us in our doings and sufferings, our aspirations and struggles, our mistakes and stumblings, but in

them with continuous tutorial intent; under whom we are pursuing our ends, by whom, in all paths, we are led, in whose kingdom we are from morn to eve, let it be with us as it may. Many earnest souls around us are starting afresh to-day, as they have come through the year that is gone, with no such vision. Joshua's angel does not manifest itself to them. Lifting their eyes, they behold nothing but the walls of Jericho and the encampment of Israel, and over all, an empty sky. Nor are they the less ready for the battle, or the less patient and strong, hopeful and brave, in essaying to conquer. And we may be sure too, that guidance and help from above, is theirs; for the presence and energy of the Captain of the Lord's host does not depend upon men's seeing Him. He is not absent or inoperative because they are unable to discern Him. Nevertheless, happy are they to whom He is visible. Let us be thankful then, if to-day, as we are girding our loins anew for the work of life, and for whatever life may bring—let us be thankful if we can behold with Joshua the angel of Jehovah's presence, and, in setting out, pause a little to entertain and foster the strengthening vision. "But what saith my Lord to His servant?" cried the son of Nun when he felt the august Presence about him, and bowed himself to the ground before it. "What saith my Lord to His servant? Ah! now that I have Thee here; now that Thou art revealed to me in the way, speak to me; tell me something. Surely, I shall hear some great thing from Thy lips—surely, some great secret will be whispered to me. With the Invisible Power thus consciously nigh me, I may expect wondrous words, important disclosures." We can understand and sympathise with the expectation, can we not? What might not God Almighty tell, we are apt to think, if He were once found speaking. So thought Joshua, waiting in awed anticipation with his face to the earth. And from the mystic Presence overshadowing him, what syllables fell? What was it that he heard to whom it grew vocal? "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." Was that all? That was all. No declaring of things that had been kept hidden, no weighty revealings. Only a plain and familiar admonition, to cherish and preserve within him a right temper of mind, a right spirit—to see to it that he walked reverently, and cultivated purity, as one who dwelt in a temple. That was all the heavens told him, when they leaned toward him with a word. "Take heed to yourself, to your character and conduct; be dutiful, be loyal to the vision that is yours. Recognise and answer the claim on you to be holy." And should we be disappointed, were the silent sky, in sending on a sound, to drop upon our ear no more than such an admonition as Joshua heard? What, however, do we need so much, for all present and future benediction, as to be taught a truer, finer ordering of ourselves? and what better, richer, more brightly fruitful new year's gift could we have from above than a deepened sense of duty and a fresh impulse toward reverent and noble living? Yes, oh yes, "Blessed are the lowly in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God." (*S. A. Tiptle.*)

CHAPTER VI.

VERS. 1-5. Now Jericho was straitly shut up.—*Shut up*:—An old writer says that every carnal heart is a Jericho shut up; God sits down before it and displays mercy and judgment: it hardens itself in a wilful security and saith, "I shall never be moved." What numbers of men there are who close their hearts and keep them barred against God! God might have thrown down the walls of Jericho at once, but you must remember that He uses means to accomplish ends. God required Israel to walk round Jericho. That was their part. God is not usually in a hurry. He can afford to wait until the seventh day before bringing down the walls. I don't read that the Israelites grew tired of waiting on this occasion. They went at it day after day quietly marching ahead. Here is a lesson of perseverance for us. We sometimes grow impatient. We see no good resulting from our own labours, and are disposed to murmur. (*Charles Leach.*) **Seven trumpets of rams' horns.**—*The blast of the trumpet* was, in the Jewish feasts, the solemn proclamation of the presence of God. And hence the purpose of that singular march circumambulating the city was to declare "Here is the Lord of the whole earth, weaving His invisible cordon and network around the doomed city." 1. Here is a confidence in the Divine

presence, manifested by unquestioning obedience to a Divine command. Joshua had spoken; God had spoken through him. And so here goes; up with the ark and the trumpets, and out on to the hot sand for the march. It would have been a great deal easier to have stopped in the tents. It was disheartening work marching round thus. The sceptical spirit in the host—the folk of whom there are many great-grandchildren living to-day, who always have objections to urge when disagreeable duties are crammed up against their faces—would have enough to say on that occasion, but the bulk of the people were true, and obeyed. Now, we do not need to put out the eyes of our understanding in order to practise the obedience of faith. And we have to exercise common sense about the things that seem to us to be duties. But this is plain, that if once we see a thing to be, in Christian language, the will of our Father in heaven, then that is everything, and there is only one course for us, and that is, unquestioning submission, active submission, and, what is as hard, passive submission. 2. Then here again is faith manifesting itself by an obedience which was altogether ignorant of what was coming. We, too, have to do our day's march, knowing very little about to-morrow; and we have to carry on all through life "doing the duty that lies nearest us," entirely ignorant of the strange issues to which it may conduct. So, seeing that we know nothing about the issues, let us make sure of the motives; and seeing that we do not know what to-morrow may bring forth, nor even what the next moment may bring, let us see that we fill the present instant as full as it will hold with active obedience to God, based upon simple faith in Him. 3. Then, here, again, is faith manifesting itself by persistency. A week was not long, but it was a long while during which to do that one apparently useless thing and nothing else. Familiarity would breed monotony, but notwithstanding the deadly influences of habit, the obedient host turned out for their daily round. "Let us not be weary in well-doing." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Religious work often seems impracticable.—When we are in great religious moods, in sublime spiritual ecstasies, in immediate and vital touch with God, we are not afraid to adopt apparently impracticable measures in carrying out the purposes of righteousness and wisdom. What could be more ridiculous, from a purely military point of view, than the directions given for the capture and overthrow of Jericho? They had no relation to the event. The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men. We cannot always judge things by appearances. We ourselves are often startled by the want—apparent, at least—of adaptation of means to ends. The religious method may always be called impracticable. It is very slow; it does not seem to work with any immediate effect. What can be duller, slower, than what is generally understood as teaching? Yet it is by teaching that the kingdom of heaven is to be prepared for. It is a very slow method. One gleam from heaven's own midday would startle the world more surely! Why not this sudden outburst of intolerable glory? Because there is no lasting in it, no power of duration and sustenance. Men cannot live upon such visions. Things that are not are employed to bring to nought things that are. Foolish things, little things, contemptible things, are used by the hand almighty to shake down towers and walls and temples and capitals, and bring them to nought before the throne of righteousness. Thus religion is not afraid of the impracticable—at least, of what may appear to be impracticable to those who look only upon the surface. Religion has never been afraid to claim prayer as one of its very pillars—the signature of its very power. What can, from the outside, be more futile and ridiculous than to be speaking into the vacant air—to exclude all living things upon the earth, and to speak to One we have never seen, and pour our heart's penitence, woe, hope, into an ear we cannot detect amid all the clouds which float through the heavens? Yet religion says, "Continue instant in prayer"; you have no other hope. Besides, processes may be long, and results may be brought about in startling suddenness. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

The seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times.—*The compassing of Jericho*:—1. The posture was a walking posture, as it had no direct or probable tendency for subduing the city, so it likewise seemed ridiculous to the rude citizens, who might well scoffingly say, "What are these foolish people doing? Have they not had a walk long enough for forty years in the wilderness that now they have a new walk round about our walls, and that once every day for six days together? They desire indeed to possess our city, but they may compass it long enough before that posture can conquer it," &c. Besides, this posture seemed perilous as well as ridiculous. Yet God will make Jericho as well as His Israel know that He can give victory to their feet as well as to their hands. God oftentimes delighteth to go some way of His own (which is not man's way)

and worketh His own will by such means, and in such a manner, as the world judges both perilous and ridiculous. As the greater was God's glory in effecting this great work, wherein Israel contributed nothing to it, so the stronger was Israel's faith in believing it should be effected, notwithstanding both the difficulty, danger, and improbability of means and manner. (1) The term of place or space of ground they walked was, negatively, not an acre, or furlong, or any such measures of miles, nor was it a half-turn, but positively, it must be a whole turn, a compassing the city round about. Had they not gone round about, all had not been their own. They had conquered no more than they had compassed, so had done their work but to half part. It looks more like children's play, in treading a maze, than any stratagem of warriors. All this was to teach Israel not to expect success from their own prowess or policy, but merely from the prescription and favourable presence of that God who can work what He pleaseth, even by the most contemptible ways. (2) The term of time unto which this action was extended, this compassing the city, must be done once every day for six days together, but on the seventh day they must surround it seven times successively (vers. 3, 11, 13-16). Israel walks their circuit six times over for six days, and on each day return into their camp. Nothing was effected in order to Jericho's overthrow, so long a time they are held in suspense, for the exercise of their faith and patience. (C. Ness.)

Work which seems aimless :—God taught His people to work six days, apparently doing nothing. It is easy enough to work for Christ when ground is manifestly being gained. Fighting is not hard work when souls are won to Christ; when an enemy goes down at well-nigh every blow, and many captives are delivered. It is far harder work to toil and do nothing. Thus Carey laboured for a lifetime marching round letters and languages and dialects, and probably some wondered how he could call that work for Christ. So David Livingstone spent his life in walking up and down Africa, and some well-meaning and good men asked, "How can he call himself a missionary? He is merely a geographer," they said; "he has been discovering the water-shed of a continent instead of carrying to its thirsty inhabitants the Water of Life." So little did they know of what was being done; so little, perhaps, did Livingstone himself sometimes know. We can see now that in all that, to some, aimless marching, England's sympathy, America's sympathy, the sympathy of all Christendom, was being won for Africa; and that the heart of the whole Church of Christ was being brought to feel, "Those negroes must no longer be made slaves; those men and women must hear the gospel; the work of the great man who died upon his knees for Africa, and whose heart lies buried in Africa, must not be suffered—under God, shall not be suffered—to fall to the ground." It is very hard, however, to learn to do what seems to be nothing. It is hard for parents to teach their children, when all their labour seems so useless; fruitless work is hard for other teachers, and hard for preachers. God shows us here that it is enough for us to say, "Am I doing faithfully and prayerfully and zealously what my Lord has bidden me to do?"

A justifiable Sabbath work :—Was it not contrary to the spirit of the law to make no difference on the Sabbath? As the narrative reads we are led to think that the Sabbath was the last of the seven days, in which case, instead of a cessation of labour, there was an increase of it sevenfold. Possibly this may be a mistake; but at the least it seems as if, all days being treated alike, there was a neglect of the precept, "In it thou shalt not do any work." To this it has usually been replied that the law of the Sabbath being only a matter of arrangement, and not founded on any unchangeable obligation, it was quite competent for God to suspend it or for a time repeal it, if occasion required. The present instance has been viewed as one of those exceptional occasions when the obligation to do no work was suspended for a time. But this is hardly a satisfactory explanation. Was it likely that immediately after God had so solemnly charged Joshua respecting the book of the law, that it was "not to depart out of his mouth, but he was to meditate therein day and night, to observe to do according to all that was written therein," that almost on the first occurrence of a public national interest He would direct him to disregard the law of the Sabbath? What seems the just explanation is, that this solemn procession of the ark was really an act of worship, a very public and solemn act of worship, and that therefore the labour which it involved was altogether justifiable, just as the Sabbath labour involved in the offering of the daily sacrifices could not be objected to. It was a very solemn and open demonstration of honour to that great Being in whom Israel trusted—of obedience to His word, and unflinching confidence that He would show Himself the God of His chosen people. At every step of their march they might

well have sung—"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." The absurdity of their proceeding, to the eye of flesh, invested it with a high sanctity, because it testified to a conviction that the presence of that God who dwelt symbolically in the ark would more than compensate for all the feebleness and even apparent silliness of the plan. It was indeed an exception to the usual way of keeping the Sabbath, but an exception that maintained and exalted the honour of God. And, in a sense, it might be called resting, inasmuch as no aggressive operations of any kind were carried on; it was simply a waiting on God, waiting till He should arise out of His place, and cause it to be seen that (Psa. xlv. 3). (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

Vers. 6-11. Ye shall not shout . . . until the day I bid you shout.—*Joshua taking Jericho*.—I. ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF A GREAT LEADER—THE POWER TO REPRESS THE PASSIONS OF A NATION OF WARRIORS: "Ye shall not shout," &c. This was the command of a young ruler. The temptation of the young and inexperienced is impatience. We but gradually learn the lesson, "He that believeth shall not make haste." Joshua, however, had learnt this. It is easy to arouse a nation when new scenes suggest new possibilities, but it is difficult to suppress emotions at such a time, and to insist upon silence "until." This is one of the tests of rulership. Every general should be equal to this task. Joshua was. II. ONE OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT PEOPLE—WILLING OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMAND TO REPRESS THEIR EMOTIONS AT SUCH A TIME AS THIS. Joshua does not seem to have told them all that the Lord had told him. Their ignorance of the final issue made obedience to the command to go round Jericho for six days without giving vent to their feelings in one single shout the more difficult, and on that account imparted to it a grander meaning. At the outset the nation of conquerors had to conquer their own spirit. There must be a reserve of force. Only those who can be silent can shout to good purpose. So has it ever been with God's servants. They have had their seasons of delay. Moses in Midian; Christ's disciples tarrying in Jerusalem "until," &c.; Paul in Arabia; so here the people who could persist in their apparently meaningless rounds "until" they were bidden to shout, had the making of conquerors in them. The shout would have all the momentum of the delay in it. III. THE DIVINE METHOD OF ACCOMPLISHING TRIUMPHS: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit." The triumph thus gained is often the consummation of patient waiting and implicit obedience on our part. The world misunderstands the meaning of the apparent monotonous routine of Providence, and asks sneeringly, "Where is the promise of His coming?" All the while we know that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, and that every apparent delay hastens the final consummation. And "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (*D. Davies.*)

Vers. 12-27. The wall fell down flat.—*The fight of faith*.—Of uninspired poems, perhaps the most widely read are those which celebrate a siege—the siege of Troy. Homer and Virgil have sung in noble numbers the praises of the heroes in that world-renowned fight. Their qualities, deeds, reverses, successes, as thus recorded, will live as long as such poetry has a charm for the human mind. But, after all, the principles which animated Agamemnon, Ajax, Achilles, Nestor, Ulysses, and others of these old-world heroes, were very commonplace. The play of human passion, headstrong, self-willed, fierce, implacable, impure, treacherous, constitutes the base, shaft, and capital of these poetic columns. The whole thing is of the earth earthy. It is the fight of the flesh that we witness, not the fight of faith. In this chapter we have the record of a siege of another sort, the description of heroes of a different spirit. There an innocent city must be besieged for ten years because Paris ran off with a beautiful woman. Here, after a seven days' pause for possible penitence, the Lord's host executed judgment on a city of exceptional wickedness because God's patience was exhausted. There in long works elaborated by the genius of the world's great poets we have many pictures that command our admiration. Here in one little line the Holy Ghost presents a picture far more marvellous and sublime, when He simply says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." I. Consider, then, this fight of faith; and first of all mark the FOUNDATION OF THE FAITH whereby Jericho was overthrown. It was a well-founded faith, for it rested altogether on the Word of God. "What are the marching orders?" This is the only question faith asks; if it is convinced in regard to this, it can command mountains to be plucked up by the roots and cast into the sea. As it was in the

siege of Jericho so is it in the siege of Mansoul. All must be done in faith, or nothing is done to good purpose. Faith asks, What has God commanded? And the answer is clear as day: "Preach the Word." "Testify of Me." We have something more to do than to defend the faith, or to apologise for the gospel; we have to prophesy over the dry bones, knowing that in the power of that Word they will rise up an exceeding great army. II. Think also of THE TRIAL OF HIS FAITH. The whole thing looked like child's play. The means seem to human wisdom utterly, ridiculously inadequate to the end in view. Even so in our days faith is tried. What, it may be asked, are you to preach, preach for ever, to do nothing but preach? Again, it must have been a trial to Israel to wait so long. If going round Jericho is to accomplish the work, surely once round is as good as a thousand times. If one shout will lay the walls flat, why not shout the first day, and make short work of it? To try every mode of presenting the gospel, so as to reach the conscience and influence the life of those who hear, but never to see any good result therefrom; to labour in some degraded district to elevate the masses by the leverage of the gospel, and to see them sink back like dry sand into their congenial degradation; to teach in the Sabbath-school with earnestness and diligence, and never have the assurance that one soul is savingly touched; to train up the children in the family with careful pains and earnest prayers, and yet to find their hearts wayward and prone to evil—all these are sad and trying experiences under which the heart is apt to sink discouraged and to ask, Is this gospel the true power after all? For a cure to such faintness let us remember Israel. Perfect victory comes soon or late to every soul who works in the energy of God's Spirit as God directs. Not only the walls of Jericho but mighty mountains are beaten small by the worm Jacob. Still another part of the trial of Israel's faith must have been the thought of what their enemies had been saying and thinking. Say what we will, the opinions and thoughts of our fellows have an influence over us, and cause either gratification or discomfort. One of the severest trials to the faithful witness of Christ is his critics. Some of them are unfriendly, and their aim is to destroy his influence. Some of them are friendly; and their purpose is to extend his influence. If he is a foolish man, weak in faith, he will be spoiled by either of them. He should try to get all the good out of them that is in them; and if there is no good in them pay no more attention to them than the Israelites did to the men of Jericho. III. As we look at Israel in its march round Jericho we also see a good example of THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH. We have need to imitate these warriors, and to remember that faith without works is dead. Faith develops itself in and by docility. We can attain to victory, the Divine blessing can rest on our labours, only as we work according to the Divine plans, only as we obey His revealed will. IV. We have still further in the conduct of Israel before Jericho a display of THE COURAGE OF FAITH. Faith is brave as well as obedient. Displaying its banners in the name of the Lord, it can run through a troop, and overleap a wall. Faith never underrates difficulties; faith never despises danger; but obeying God, it never quails before them, even when it is most exposed. Walking in the path of obedience, it knows that the Lord will preserve it from all evil, and therefore its heart never fails. V. THE PATIENCE OF ISRAEL'S FAITH is also plainly shown. The faith of these warriors was enduring as well as courageous. This was like the finishing of their education so far as patience went. Much mischief is often wrought by that natural impetuosity which rushes forward before God has prepared the way, even as much ground is often lost by that lack of patience which faints in the day of adversity, and gives in before the work is done. Only by patient continuance in well-doing are great things accomplished. VI. Though the faith of Israel was strongly tried before Jericho, still it was not without true ENCOURAGEMENT. Faith can always derive strength from some quarter: it can live where all else would die. The command of God would encourage Israel. No word that He speaks is vain. Also the very way in which they marched would strengthen their hearts. They marched as God's people, with Jehovah's priests in their company, bearing the sacred ark of God's strength, before which all the might of man is weakness. The sacred number seven, moreover, interwoven with their work, showed that there was order and completeness in the task set before them, even though they might not be able to discover them. VII. Think, lastly, of THE TRIUMPH OF THIS FAITH. Nothing in Jericho was left alive. Thus perished the enemies of Jehovah. Israel's victory was complete. Behold in Jericho two things—the might of man, as revealed in these walls and towers and stalwart soldiers; the wisdom of man, as shown in their watchfulness, their care and precautions.

Behold also two other things—the foolishness of God in that aimless marching round the city; the weakness of God in the sound of these rams' horns, in the shout of these soldiers. See the effect; the walls are a ruin, Jericho is burned with fire, the place is desolate. Learn therefore that the weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men. (*A. B. Mackay.*)

The walls of Jericho:—In various directions we may find a counterpart of these remarkable experiences. I. IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. If Egypt represents our conflict with the world, and Amalek our conflict with the flesh, the seven nations of Canaan represent our conflict with the principalities and powers of wicked spirits, who resist our entrance into the heavenlies, and our practical realisation of what Christ has wrought for us. Who is there amongst us that does not know, or has not known, of something—a cherished indulgence, a friendship, a pernicious entanglement—reared as an impassable barrier to the enjoyment of those blessed possibilities of Christian experience which are ours in Christ, but which for that reason seem beyond our reach? That thing is a Jericho. Now it cannot be the purpose of God that anything, however deeply rooted, should shut His redeemed ones out of the heavenly places, which are theirs in Christ—even though it should be the result of their own sin, or mistake, the heirloom of early indiscretions, the entail of trespass off the narrow path. 1. Be still. The hardest of all commandments this. That our voice should not be heard! That we should utter our complaints to God alone! All this is foreign to our habits and taste. As death is the last enemy to be destroyed in the universe of God, so is the restraint of the tongue the last lesson learnt by His children. “Be still,” saith God, “and know that I am God. I will be exalted,” &c. And that soul may well be still and wait which has learnt that the Lord of hosts is beside it, and the God of Jacob is its refuge. To that Friend it hies to pour out its secret agony. In that home it nestles as in the covert of a great rock, sheltered from the blast. 2. Obey. As in this story so in grace, there must be co-operation between God and man. Only God can remove the difficulties that stand in the way of an entirely consecrated and blessed life, but there are commands and duties which it is incumbent on us to fulfil. In some cases we are withholding obedience that we should give at once. There are things which we ought to do which we are not doing. And there is equal danger in doing more than we should—endeavouring to scale walls which we are told to encompass; shooting before the word of command has been uttered; making the circuit of the city oftener than the once each day prescribed by the Divine ordering. It is so hard to feel that we do more by doing less; that we save time by resting quietly in our tents; that it is vain to rise early and late take rest, because He giveth to His beloved while they sleep. 3. Have faith. Look away from all your preparations, and even from your God-commanded acts, to God Himself; and as you do so your difficulties will melt away, that stone will be rolled from the mouth of the sepulchre, that iron gate will open of its own accord, those mighty walls will fall down flat. And it shall come to pass that the obstacle which threatened to make the best life impossible shall minister to such an unfolding of God's very present help as shall furnish fuel for praise in all coming years. II. IN CHRISTIAN WORK. The apostle speaks of strongholds that had to be cast down, and of high things that exalted themselves against the knowledge of God; and asserts that he did not war against such things according to the flesh, and that the weapons of his warfare were not of the flesh, but mighty before God for the casting down of strongholds, and for the bringing of every high and proud thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Our only hope is to act on strictly spiritual lines, because we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with the wicked spirits that lie behind all that is seen in this world of men and things. If we can overthrow the dark spirits that abet and maintain, we shall see the system which they support crumble as a palace of clouds before the wind. Let us be pure and holy, giving time to heart-searching in the presence of the Captain; let us lift up the sacrifice and work of Jesus; let us blow the gospel trumpet of alarm and summons to surrender; let us be much in silent prayer before God; let us cherish a spirit of unity and love, as the tribes of Israel forgot their differences in one common expedition against their foes; above all, let us believe in the presence and co-operation of God, and we shall see the old miracle repeated, and the walls of Jericho fall down flat. III. IN THE STORY OF THE CHURCH. This capture of Jericho is surely capable of being read as a parable of things that are yet to be. We know that the world lieth in the power of the wicked one. It has long boasted itself against God, with its mighty walls and gates, and it would seem as if the time will never come of which psalmists and kings have sung and spoken

in rapturous phrase. In the meanwhile the various tribes of the Church of Christ have been perambulating about the walls, subjected to much derision and mockery, though sometimes a sickening premonition of approaching judgment must steal upon the hearts of the votaries of worldliness. For nearly nineteen centuries the circuit has been made, the trumpet-blast uttered, the testimony maintained. And surely the seven days have nearly expired. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *The lofty city, He layeth it low* :—This incident teaches solemn truths as to God's character and working, and animating thoughts as to our duty as His soldiers. The true revelation of God is by His deeds, and the Scripture words of prophet or psalmist, which we call revelation, are all based upon and draw out the significance of the history. The page of which this siege is the first paragraph is written in blood, and is crowded with terrible entries; but it is a page in the revelation of God, and its message, once delivered, is not set aside, though completed, by the later pages, which tell of love as His very being. If God makes Himself known by His doings as men do, the dream of a God whose love is so flaccid that He cannot punish is baseless. But this same story reveals His long-suffering patience as well; for, not only had generations passed, during which His thunder was silent, but even at this supreme moment the cloud gathered slowly, and ample time was given to escape. The slow minute-hand creeps round the dial for a long silent hour; but when it reaches the sixtieth of the seconds, in each of which it might have been stopped, the bell rings out, and all is over. God waits, that men may turn; but if they do not turn God strikes, and the stroke is mortal. Now, all this is as true under the gospel as it was in the days of Joshua. The message of love does not contradict the message of law, nor the revelation of the Father set aside the revelation of the Judge. The lessons of stimulus for us are equally plain. The Epistle to the Hebrews points to the fall of Jericho as a triumph of faith, and emphasises the obedience to the strange command to compass the walls, and the patience which did it seven days, as the tokens of the Israelites' faith. So we may draw the lessons of the conquering power of faith over all strongest opposition, of the way by which faith becomes victorious, and of the tokens which will attest its presence. Jericho is a symbol of the evils against which the individual Christian has in his own life to fight, but still more of the banded and organised enemies arrayed against the Church. The great Babylon shines through the little Jericho, and its fall comes about in the same fashion. The faith which these fierce sons of the desert exercised was in form rude enough; but, however little of a spiritual or refining aspect it had, it was still real confidence in God's help, and that, in its poorest form, makes the weakest strong, and turns cowards into heroes. In its lowest operations, it will send men to dash themselves against stone walls with desperate bravery, and to meet death as joyfully as a bride. Christians, who should have it in its highest and purest energy, ought not to be less brave in the harder conflict which is laid upon them—against evil in their own hearts and the organised iniquities of society. The one victorious power is that of absolute confidence in God's help. Eloquence, learning, strategy, organising power, machinery, and wise methods, are all very good; but an ounce of faith is worth a ton of them when the question is how the walls of Jericho are to be got down. It will beget these qualities, they will never produce it. Mark how faith conquers. It does so by bringing the might of God into the field. Faith is not the battering-ram which beats down the walls, but only the hand which swings the ram. God's power is, if we may say so, set loose to work through our faith; and that faith is mighty, because it opens the door for the entrance of His omnipotence. The slow marches round and round the doomed city, and the war-cry, at last did not effect the capture; but they were the tokens of the faith which brought into play the power which did. We may learn, too, the tokens of faith. They are docile obedience and perseverance therein. It is a slow task to leaven society with the principles of the gospel, which will destroy deeply rooted and long-continued abuses. But we have to "keep pegging away," to use Abraham Lincoln's homespun heroic phrase. If we can do no more, we can at least blow the trumpet which proclaims that God is here and summons Jericho to surrender. If we have to die before the seventh day comes, no matter. We shall have our share in the triumph all the same, and, wherever we are, shall hear the great shout which tells the fall of the bloody city, "to be found no more at all." (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Jericho captured* :—I. GOD WOULD HAVE HIS PEOPLE WORK. We daily insist upon it that works do not make a man to live, but we equally insist upon it that spiritual life continually manifests itself by holy deeds. The soldiers of God's army, after they had crossed the

Jordan, were not to lie still in luxurious ease till Jericho's walls should crumble down by slow degrees; and though God determined to send Jericho to destruction on a sudden, yet His people are not to sit still upon some neighbouring knoll and expect the catastrophe: they are to labour, and Jericho is to fall as the result of their toil. Let us look at this work a little in connection with this narrative.

1. You will observe that the work to be done by Israel was universal. There was a place for each one to occupy. The men of arms were to go round the city, and with them the priests were to march also. Both the ecclesiastical and the military castes should be represented here. They must neither of them sit still. God would have His people work universally.

2. But, next, He would have them work in His own appointed way. They are not to go in a scramble—in a boyish race; there must be the soldiers in their troops, the priests in their array, and then again, the men of war to bring up the rear. God would have His people work according to His own revealed will. If I go upon a tour I do not expect to see certain sights which have been guaranteed to me by my friend, unless I agree to follow the little chart which he has mapped out for me. I cannot expect to have that sublime view of the Alps if I refuse to climb a certain spot and stand there and view the glacier and the snow peak glittering in the sun. And I cannot expect to have God's blessing in my ministry and in the Sunday-school class unless I keep to "It is written," and in all things have a tender conscience, and am jealous of myself lest I err.

3. Then, again, remember, they encompassed the city daily. So does God call His Church to work daily. The wheel must revolve again, and again, and again: it is that perpetual motion of industry which produces wealth, and it must be the ceaseless energy of our zeal which shall produce spiritual conquest.

4. Nor have we exhausted the metaphors with which our text supplies us, for surely we may add that God would have His people work in faith. We are told that, "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down." Is the preaching of the gospel a power? If you think it is not, never try it again. Is the gospel mighty to save? Will the gospel come out victorious? If you have any doubt slink back to your cowardly repose, but let the man whom God sends never doubt. If you have achieved no successes, if after fifty years your trumpet of jubilee was exceeding small, if after fifty years it was something like a ram's horn that had not been bored, and could not make any noise at all, yet still go on; your time for shouting has not come yet, but your time for compassing the city is always present. Go on with it, go on with it, and God will not permit you to end till you have won the victory. So let us notice once more under this head of work, they worked with patience and courage, God kept this people labouring in the presence of difficulty. Sometimes we get into the habit of shutting our eyes to difficulty; that will not do: faith is not a fool, faith does not shut her eyes to difficulty, and then run head foremost against a brick wall—never. Faith sees the difficulty, surveys it all, and then she says, "By my God will I leap over a wall"; and over the wall she goes.

II. GOD WOULD HAVE HIS PEOPLE WAIT. The delay must have sorely tried the faith and patience of the Israelites. There are a great many brethren who seem to be perfectly satisfied to rest at ease, but men of war do not generally seem to be of that temperament. When I was in the military prison at Dublin I observed a form of punishment there. Men were carrying large shot. A man took up a large shot and carried it to the end of the yard, and he afterwards had to pick that shot up and bring it back again. I said, "How is it you do not let them take all the shot to that end and pile them up there?" The officer said, "We used to do so but it was no use, for when the fellows had piled them up they felt they were doing something, but now we make them carry the shot from one end of the yard to the other, and then back again, and back again, and they feel they have to work hard and do nothing. That is always miserable work to the soldiers." Many of our soldiers at Sebastopol made bitter complaints at not being led to battle. And you will often have heard young military men say, that they hate the inactivity of peace, they want to be doing something. Now these men of war were kept for six days marching round and round the city, and they must have felt themselves to have been doing very little all that week. Though as men of war we would rather come to close quarters and see more done, yet as men of God we must keep to our posts of duty, and learn how to wait. Besides this, what rendered the waiting so very galling was (what must have struck their reason if it did not assail their faith) the utter desperateness of the case. How could they hope to win that city by simply going round and round? "Give me a good ladder," says one, "a rope-ladder and a couple of good irons at the end of it; just let me hear the clank upon

the top-stone, and I am your man to lead the 'forlorn hope,' and there are fifty thousand of us to follow, and we will soon have Judah's standard waving on the top, and make the sons of Jericho know what the sons of Abraham can do." But no; they must just march round the place till they have compassed the city twelve times. And so there are certain spirits apt to say, "Could not we do more by adopting these methods and such other expedients?" Now we know that God has His reasons for making us wait. It is for His own glory we doubt not. We know that all things work together for good, and, we believe, it will be ultimately for our profit. When I have read some masterly tragic poem, and verse after verse has dwelt upon the horrible portion of the tale, did I wish it shortened? Would I have the author leave out one of those dark verses? Not I. God is writing a great poem of human history, the subject is the victory of truth, the destruction of Anti-christ. Let the history be long. Who wants it shortened? who wants a brief story on so exceedingly interesting a subject as this, from so great an Author? III. GOD WOULD HAVE HIS PEOPLE WIN. The victory is very sure, and, when it comes forth, very complete. Nothing could be more so. It may be very sudden also, and it will be very glorious. But we shall get nothing by it, for when Jericho fell, nobody gained anything except to offer it unto the Lord; so that we have to persevere in disinterested service, just toiling on for the Master, remembering that when success comes it will all be His—every single atom of it—the glory will be to Him and not to us. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Lessons from the fall of Jericho*:—I. THE LESSON OF SELF-CONTROL. "Ye shall not shout" was perhaps a hard order to the enthusiastic young soldiers of Joshua. Yet by putting the seal on their lips and withholding arrow and missile they became victors. How grandly do the annals of biography illustrate this duty of controlling one's spirit! Under the clouds of aspersion, maligning of motive, slanders, and jeers that darken the sun of truth, a good man is often called to fight in the shade, to walk wearily and monotonously the round of duty in silence and in patience. He who endures the contradictions against himself is like the disciplined soldier who stands in the ranks, seeing the cowardly ruffian approach, pistol in hand; he receives death calmly rather than break ranks, fire without orders, or disobey commands. There are trying positions in life when we must wait silently till we see the whites of the enemy's eyes, or hold the linstock from the touch-hole even while the hostile broadsides crash through our ship's timbers. This hard and severe discipline makes noble characters and turns the common man into a hero. It infuses in the soul the right kind of fear—fear for the noblest, fear lest we fail in obedience to what ought to be obeyed. II. THE LESSON OF PERSEVERANCE. Jericho, the walled and apparently impregnable fortress, is but a symbol of foes in the heart and evils in the world. The conflict is lifelong. God calls us to what seems slow, tedious, patient methods. Sometimes He seems to shock all worldly sense and maxims by His providences, which make even His children, for a time, a by-word, a shaking of the head and wagging of the tongue to the ungodly. The intrenched evil spirits laugh. Sometimes there is a kind of enemy that cometh not forth but by prayer and by fasting. Abstinence and silence are laid upon us. Behold the Jericho in us—habitual faults, hereditary vices, bosom sins. Behold in the Christian's warfare—opposition of science, falsely so called, in philosophy, in criticism, in infidelity, in war, in intemperance, in vice, these are Jerichos that appear impregnable. The difficulties seem walled up to heaven. Nevertheless, we are well able, with God's help, to possess the land and to take every city. III. THE POWER OF FAITH AND ITS GAIN BY EXERCISE. This tax on Israel's courage—compelling men of war, whose yell in charging is part of their offensive power, to make silence a weapon—was laid on them for the strengthening of their faith. The whole affair appeared irrational. But to those loyally obedient to the command of a leader inspired of God, their act was in the finest strain of reason. The method selected, the means employed, were those of the wisest and bravest; for Joshua, their leader, was a tried man. Nor, without neglecting means, are we to think that the same means employed by others, even mighty men of old, will serve us without faith. (*W. E. Griffis.*) *The fall of Jericho*:—I. THE SITUATION OF THE ISRAELITES AT THIS TIME. The wilderness is behind them. They are standing on this side Jordan within the borders of the long wished for Canaan. But though in Canaan, the land is not yet theirs. A powerful nation is in possession of it, from whom they have still to take it if they would occupy it. And how are they to take it? They are without military resources of any kind. And have we not shadowed forth here the condition of many of God's servants in our world? your own spiritual condition perhaps at this moment? As you look

backward you can see that much indeed has been done for you. But now what is your situation? You are ready to say, "Almost as bad as it was at first. We thought we were saved for ever, but we see now that our salvation is but begun. Not only is heaven itself far off, but all that is heavenly and spiritual: it is yet to be won. And how is it to be won? We know not. We have as many difficulties before us as we have escaped, or more: and we are helpless as children." II. **THE TOWN THESE ISRAELITES HAVE NOW TO TAKE.** 1. It is a strong place. Oh, what a picture of Jericho within your hearts! Men of the world look on their souls as what we may call an open country. Talk to them of the holiness of the gospel and the happiness of the gospel, they never feel that there is anything within them which shuts these things out of them. But what do some of you think? or rather what do you know? If you are taught of God you will answer, "We know this—our whole soul is entrenched against Christ and His salvation. It is covered all over with fortresses which shut Him out." 2. It was a frontier town also. God gave them, you observe, a most formidable difficulty to overcome the instant they set foot in Canaan. And so it is in the spiritual life. Severe conflicts, we say, are for the aged Christian; heavy trials for the man who has first borne light ones: the Lord deals gently with those who are inexperienced in His ways. And this is quite true. But yet it frequently happens that the servant of God has some one great difficulty to get over in the very outset of his course. III. **THE MEANS BY WHICH THESE ISRAELITES TOOK THIS STRONG CITY.** 1. They were means which God had appointed. We no more know how to master Satan or our own evil hearts than we know how to control the sea or direct the clouds. The Lord therefore gives us instruction in all things. Our real wisdom is to be mindful of our ignorance. 2. These means seemed most unlikely to succeed. So, too, in the spiritual warfare. If we would have the strongholds of Satan pulled down in our hearts we must expect God to give us many strange commands, and deal with us often in a very strange manner. When we look to Him for strength He may answer us by making us feel our weakness; and when we are determined to be zealous and active, and take our enemies by storm, He may say, "Your strength is to sit still. In returning and rest shall ye be saved." IV. **THE PROBABLE REASONS WHY GOD APPOINTED THESE STRANGE MEANS TO OVERTHROW THIS CITY.** 1. A simplicity of obedience was certainly one thing this event was intended to teach these Israelites. God's commands, be they what they may, must not be trifled with. We are not to sit in judgment on them; we must obey them. 2. A simplicity of faith was also inculcated here. God loves to be trusted as well as obeyed. He delights in the confidence of His people. 3. The people were taught, too, by this transaction the importance of a patient waiting on God. He consults our good, not only in the things He gives us, but in the day and hour in which He gives them. They are not always ready for us the moment we wish for them. We must generally wait for as well as seek them. 4. And one thing more Israel must surely have learnt here—to give glory to God. And now let me speak to three classes of persons. (1) To those who are in a situation like that of these Israelites while besieging Jericho—such as are warring with some powerful evil which keeps them from the enjoyment of some spiritual good. You want that sin vanquished, and so does God; but He wants more. He wants all sin vanquished in you, and you made meet for His heavenly kingdom. (2) Others, it may be, have just gained such a victory as this. You are even now rejoicing over some bosom-sin which the Lord has enabled you to overcome. Happy are you! Never build that vile Jericho again. Never suffer it to be built. Watch over its ruins lest they should unawares be raised up. And this also I would say to you—rejoice still in the ruins of those guilty walls. Look forward to other victories. If bought with a Saviour's blood, you are destined to be conquerors still, and "more than conquerors," triumphant conquerors, "through Him that loved you." (3) But there may be some to whom all this is a riddle. "Seek to enter in at the strait gate." (C. Bradley, M.A.) *Jericho taken*:—I. **THE CITY WHICH WAS TO BE TAKEN.** How vainly they reckon who leave God out of their calculations! When He is with us no opposing host can harm us; but when He is against us no earthly walls can protect us. II. **THE MEANS BY WHICH IT WAS TAKEN.** These were very peculiar. 1. There was no natural fitness in the means to produce the end designed. 2. The means employed were such as would provoke the ridicule of the besieged. 3. The means employed produced no effect whatever for six days, nor even on the seventh, until the shout was raised at the last. III. **THE DISPOSITION THAT WAS TO BE MADE OF THE CITY.** It was to be accursed or devoted to God. The Israelites in destroying

the inhabitants of Jericho and the Canaanites generally were but the instruments in God's hand of carrying out His sentence. Lessons: 1. Retribution, though long delayed, comes at last. God's judgments have leaden feet, and so they come slowly; but they have iron hands, and so they strike deadly when they come. 2. Faith does what God says, and asks no questions. 3. At the sound of the trumpets of the priests the walls of Jericho fell down. By the preaching of the gospel the strongholds of sin and Satan are to be overthrown. 4. Let us not be impatient of results when we are doing God's commands. 5. Success in our working for God is His doing, not ours, and so the whole glory of it should be given to Him. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The siege of Jericho*:—Consider the circumstances of this event as calculated—I. To TRY THE FAITH OF ISRAEL. II. To GIVE A PLEDGE THAT GOD WOULD FIGHT FOR HIS PEOPLE. III. To SECURE ALL THE GLORY TO GOD. IV. To SHOW THAT JUDGMENT WOULD BE SURE TO FALL ON THE DEVOTED CANAANITES. (*C. D. Marston, M.A.*) *The overthrow of Jericho*:—Forty years before this God brought this people's fathers to this same point, and to this very opportunity, but faith in Him was at such a very low ebb that this deed could not be done. He got them comfortably packed away under the clod, and at last raised up out of their sons a more faithful generation to serve Him and to do His work. I can imagine that when the sough of that strange, mysterious band of people who had been creeping along the edge of the desert, so wonderfully guided, and so wonderfully fed, reached the people of Jericho, and when at last they themselves began to heave in sight, old men in Jericho would be saying to younger braves, "Be not afraid of them. These men's fathers came up against us, but when they saw the height of our walls, and the height of ourselves, their hearts melted within them like water, and we have seen nothing of them for almost a lifetime. Be not afraid of them." But they were wrong. I can imagine other men, who had been out doing the work of scouts and spies, saying as they gathered round their fires in Jericho and talked about the host that was on the way, "Ah, say not so. Whatever these men's fathers were, we have been out and seen the sons." The spies, no doubt, went back to Jericho and said, "Shut your gates! Man the walls! It is death or victory this time." There was something uncanny about the men and women who could so sing praise to an invisible God. And the advice was taken. Jericho was straitly shut up. They considered it no laughing matter this time. Only let God's truth, in power, come into the Church's heart, and this immediate triumph will be secured. Jericho will be straitly shut up. There will be a splendid division and separation, with a clear field and issue of conflict definitely presented—all Jericho there, and all Israel here, and the ground cleared in front for the contending hosts. But to-day, where are we? We do not know what is Jericho, and what is Israel. We are all here and there; all mixed, hopelessly, helplessly. But let us come near to God, as these Israelites after forty shameful years did. Let us gather round Him. Let us lift up our hearts in faith and prayer to Him. Then He will revive us, and this immediate sign will follow: the world will stop scoffing, the world will stop insulting. But then notice still further, that this was a victory won, by faith working through organisation. The cry on every hand is, "Organise, organise, organise!" I think that there is a little too much said about organisation. Still, we must not despise it, and we must not forget that God is not the God of confusion, but of order. God does His work by plan and system. I can imagine a small breed of Israelites—men far too like ourselves—who on the first day's round would have given vent to what we call "the rationalising spirit," and they would have said to their fellows, "Now, really, being Israelites has led us along some strange paths, but I will draw the line at this. As intelligent, sensible men, what mortal connection can there be between our walking round the walls with all this horn-blowing and tooting and the down-coming of these walls?" And do not the rationalists seem to have a deal to say for themselves? But when I put it that way, you see how stupid it would have been, judged by the after results. Always let us believe that faith in God is splendidly intelligent. And let me say, further, if any of us have doubts—and just because we are human we have them—let us adopt Joshua's plan. If you have doubts keep them to yourself. Do not give them to me. I have plenty of my own, and I will try and keep mine back from you. That is a grand plan for doubts. Shut the mouth upon them. Let them be hermetically sealed. Do not let them get the fresh air, and they will very likely wither and die. Less talking, and more walking. Less conferring with men, and more simple, sublime, stupendous faith in the Word of God. God has spoken, and God has sworn, "I will give Jericho into your hands, and its mighty men of valour.

Believe in Me." And it turned out that that was the highest wisdom. And, last of all, we see an organisation that was gloriously successful. On the seventh day they compassed the city seven times; and, as surely as God had spoken the word, the deed was done. He kept them from ventilating their doubts. He compelled them to look to Him, and to trust in Him. He poured contempt on all their wisdom and all their strength, so that their unbelief just withered away at the root, and died out in their hearts because it had nothing to feed upon. To-day, where are we? Just where the Israelites were; still, after all that has come and gone, only on the borders. The world still needs to be taken captive for Jesus Christ. The first thing is to get our own hearts, our own selves united—united round the Lord, and then knit together to each other as one man. You will always find in Scripture that, when God's people get united round about Him, nothing can stand before them. Here they were united, and Jericho fell without a stroke. (John McNeill.)

The fall of Jericho (A Sermon to Children):—What do we mean when we pray for the Church "militant here on earth"? We mean the fighting Church—the Church on the battlefield of the world. Christians are God's army, and every one—men, women, and children—must try to show that they are good soldiers of Jesus Christ. What do you think is required of a good soldier? I. First of all he must be BRAVE. It has been said that an English soldier or sailor never knows when he is beaten. The word coward does not seem to go well with the name Briton. But there's a better sort of courage than that of a fighting soldier; that is, the courage of a Christian, which enables him to do right at any cost; which enables him to bear sorrow and insult and loss for Jesus Christ's sake. We all like to hear about acts of bravery like that of the boy ensign, Anstruther, who at the battle of Alma planted the colours of the 23rd Regiment on the wall of the great redoubt, and then fell, shot dead, with the colours drooping over him like a pall. But the courage which is thought most of in heaven is the courage to do right. The child who is brave enough to say "No" when he is asked to do wrong; the boy or girl who can't tell a lie to escape punishment; the schoolboy who is brave enough to say his prayers with a whole bedroom of companions laughing and jeering at him—these are the heroes whose names are written in God's Book. II. What else must a good soldier be? OBEDIENT. Can you remember any one mentioned in the Bible who was a very tall, powerful, brave soldier, and yet not a good soldier, because he was disobedient? King Saul. If you really love the Lord, you will keep His commandments. A soldier must not do what he likes, but what he is ordered to do. Between you and the Paradise of God there lies a long journey, the enemy's country, where the devil and his angels will fight against you; but don't be afraid, only be brave and go forward, and follow Jesus your Captain, and you will be able to say, as Paul said, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (*British Weekly Pulpit.*)

The fall of Jericho:—In the campaign against Jericho the children of Israel appear at their best. Never before or afterwards did they act with greater unanimity or singleness of heart. There were noble individual souls such as Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, Samuel, David, and the prophets, whom the writer of the book of the Hebrews could single out as worthy of mention; but there were only two events in which the nation as a whole participated which were specified in that splendid summary; namely, the crossing of the Red Sea as on dry land and the marching around Jericho seven days. Had Israel gone forward as they began, their course in history would have been like that of some mighty river, rising in the mountains and carrying a crystalline current far onward towards the sea, its waters unsullied by continuous flowing but sweet and clear to the very end. What makes the fall of Jericho for ever interesting is the fact that it resulted from the faith and obedience of the many. In this contest Joshua was hardly more conspicuous than the humblest soldier in his army. The striking thing about the campaign is the sharp contrast between the protracted preparation and the suddenness of the catastrophe. This is often the case. The end comes quickly and easily because of the long and careful preparation for it, the means being adjusted to the end. Only one thing then is needed, namely, to trust in God and go forward. That is what Israel did and kept on doing until the time came to shout. Then, because the people had done their part, God did His part. The faith they showed was simple and implicit. It did not confuse the two spheres of action, theirs and His. They did the walking and shouting, He overturned the walls. He was the effective agent, they the instrumental agent. (S. E. Bushnell.) *The Christian conflict*:—I. GOD CAN USE THE FEEDLEST INSTRUMENTALITIES TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES. If ever

feeble instrumentalities were used, surely it was now. Feeble instrumentalities! God has often worked that way, and does so still. You remember proud Naaman! Many a time He has used the little girl, the little child, to bring men to acknowledge Him. What happened when the little child was born into your home? In the first place, it became the anchor which held the mother to her home as never before. But it did more than this. It was the connecting-link which bound together father and mother, husband and wife, in a closer bond of affection and oneness than the marriage ring. The ring was the beginning of the union, the coming of that little child was the completion of the union. Nay, it did more than this even. Impressed by the fact that the little one would look to you for guidance in matters of the soul and the better life, were you not forced to think how you had neglected such matters yourself, and for the child's sake, as well as your own, you were driven to the Cross to seek salvation? Such things have often happened, and we trust they may again. The Cross of Calvary was a feeble instrumentality. The preaching of a crucified and risen and glorified Saviour has often been regarded as a feeble thing. And yet, by the foolishness of preaching, God has won for Himself many thousands of the bravest and noblest champions of His cause. II. GOD WANTS ALL INSTRUMENTALITIES TO FIGHT AGAINST THE FORCES OF SIN. Look at ver. 9. It shows us that all the hosts of God were in that procession. God wants all, and the battle needs all. Armed strong men—men of courage, confidence, faith—let these pass on in front. Let them lead us in the battle. Priests, ministers, teachers—let them fall into line. And then the rereward—the people. God wants all! He wants you, and the cause needs you. Do you say you can't carry arms? You are timid, and possess but little or no strength? What of that? There is a place for you; see that you fill it. You can sustain and encourage those who are in front, and you will best do this by filling your place in the ranks. Do you say you can't preach? Do you tell us that it is impossible for you to take the pulpit or mount the platform, and address your fellows in eloquent words? You can support and pray for those whom God has called to blow the ram's horn and bear the solemn and sacred ark of the covenant of the gospel. You can march, you can share the conflict; God has a place for you. (*Chas. Leach, D.D.*) *The potency of inadequate instrumentalities*:—When we have clear indications of the Divine mind as to any course of action we are to advance to it promptly and without fear, even though the means at our disposal appear utterly inadequate to the object sought to be gained. No man goeth a warfare at his own charges in the service of God. The resources of infinite power avail for that service, and they are sure to be brought into play if it be undertaken for God's glory and in accordance with His will. Who could have supposed that the fishermen of Galilee would in the end triumph over all the might of kings and rulers; over all the influence of priesthoods and systems of worship enshrined in the traditions of centuries; over all the learning and intellect of the philosopher, and over all the prejudices and passions of the multitude? Who could have thought that the efforts of a poor German student in Berlin, on behalf of some neglected children, would expand into the widespread and well-rooted "Inner Mission" of Wichern? Or that the concern of a prison chaplain for the welfare of some of the prisoners after their release would develop into the worldwide work of Fliedner? Or that the distress of a kind-hearted medical student in London for a batch of poor boys who "didn't live nowhere," and whose pale faces, as they lay on a cold night on the roof of a shed, stirred in him an irrepressible compassion, would give birth to one of the marvels of London philanthropy—Dr. Barnardo's twenty institutions, caring for three to four thousand children, in connection with which the announcement could be made that no really destitute child was ever turned from its doors? When Carey on his shoemaker's stool contemplated the evangelisation of India, there was as great a gulf between the end and the apparent means as when the priests blew with their rams' horns round the walls of Jericho. But Carey felt it to be a Divine command, and Joshua-like set himself to obey it, leaving to God from whom it came to furnish the power by which the work was to be done. And wherever there have been found men and women of strong faith in God, who have looked on His will as recorded in the Scriptures with as much reverence as if it had been announced personally to themselves, and who have set themselves to obey that will with a sense of its reality and a faith in God's promised help like that of Joshua as the priests marched round Jericho, the same result has been realised: "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Discipline*:—1. Was it not of the nature of discipline that the men were to have

arms, and yet were not to use them? It is hard to have the weapon, to see the thing that is to be done, and to know that the proposed thing could be done by the use of the weapon, and yet to allow it to remain in disuse. This is part of the continual discipline of life; this is what we are all called upon to do to-day. We do not use all our faculties; sometimes we have almost to strip ourselves of our distinctive faculties, or to let them lie in disuse, and to be doing everything by doing nothing. This is part of a deeply-planned scheme of education. This is how Jesus Christ Himself conducted His own life in the sight of men. He did not use all His faculties; He did not call into requisition all His resources; He was quiet when He might have been restless, calm when He might have excited a tumult which would have had all the effect of an unexpected and irresistible storm. When one offered to defend Him, He said, "Nay, not thus; thou dost not understand the spirit of the kingdom; thinkest thou that I could not now pray unto My Father, and He would send twelve legions of angels, which would look all these petty enemies into dismay? We must not use all our resources. We have the strength, but do not resort to the tyranny of using it. Some things are to be accomplished by submission, patience, meekness; knowing the righteousness of the cause, we await the issue with imperturbable calm. But what a lesson this is to those who are impatient! Life without discipline is life without dignity. 2. Was it not, further, of the nature of discipline for the men to be in the midst of plenty and yet not touch it? (vers. 18, 19). To keep men back from things which they could so easily use and so naturally appropriate, and to remain in comparative poverty in the very midst of abundance, is not easy. When we do not want the things, it is no trouble to let them alone; but when they are round about us, urging themselves upon us, and are almost clamorous in their appeal that we should appropriate them, to stand in their presence as with folded arms, and look upon them, not with contempt, but with a judgment that values them, yet with a conscience that will not appropriate them, is an attainment in religious manhood which we must not expect to secure without long training. This is part of the mystery of providence. Here it is that character discovers its quality. We are in reality what we are in critical circumstances. It is the exceptional hour that is the key to the lifetime. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 3. Is it not in the nature of discipline to be in great excitement, and yet not to express it? "And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout" (ver. 10). The instruction seems easy. Obedience under such circumstances would be most difficult. Who can keep down excitement—honest and honourable excitement? To shout under such circumstances as are described in the text is natural. Inborn instincts may be profaned, and the very voice of God within the soul may be mistaken. The whole kingdom of heaven is hindered in some instances because people will not hold their tongues. God knows when His people should shout, speak, pray, work; the distribution of parts, functions, duties, is with God. Here we clearly see that much detail must go before great results. It is not for us to take this work out of the Lord's hand. Be patient in the detail. It seems a long time since we began going round this awful hell. It seems to be encroaching upon us, rather than we seem to be encroaching upon its heat. Travel on! It is the fifth day; to-morrow is the sixth day; and the day after is the seventh day. "The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple." "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." How quickly he falls! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **They burnt the city . . . and all that was therein.—Too polluted to be spared:**—Great were their offences whose possessions were too polluted to retain any value or become of any service to the people of God, and who not only themselves became a curse, but all that they had. This not unfrequently discovers itself in the transfer of ill-gotten wealth—a curse comes with it, which a new possession does not wipe off, but consumes and withers as though cankered and moth-eaten. It was not to enrich His people with the spoils of conquest that the Captain of their salvation led the march of triumph, but to inspire them with a holy detestation of sin, and especially the corruptions and impurities of idolatry, as the just cause of His vengeance. Nothing so entirely unfits men to live in this world, and so soon hastens them to another, even to depriving them of the common pity and forbearance of God, as the corruptions of idolatry, the sanctified impurities of a false religion. This proves infinitely worse in its nature, and unspeakably more dangerous in its influence, than would the positive absence

or total obliteration of all that bears the name of sanctity. In this view the admonition receives peculiar force as addressed by the apostle (1 Cor. x. 20, 21). (*W. Seaton.*) **The silver and the gold . . . they put into the treasury.**—*Booty given to God*:—Other cities would be conquered and their booty be divided among the people, but in this case all was to be given to God. No one was to be richer for those marches and that tremendous slaughter except as every one was richer when the treasure was dedicated to God. It was enough to be delivered by His help from so formidable a foe, who held the two main passes to the hill country above, an enemy too powerful to be left unconquered in their rear. Besides, all that was God's was theirs. As well might a son begrudge the increasing wealth of his father in whose prosperity his own interests were enhanced. But the fact that one man, Achan, did covet and then conceal a goodly Babylonish mantle, with some silver and gold that he found, shows how real was the temptation, yet how magnificently it was resisted. Only one man among all those thousands played the thief. How splendid, then, was the fidelity of the many! (*C. S. Bushnell.*) *Seems not this too severe to forbid the soldiers the spoils of the city?*—1. It was wonderful continency in the soldiery, now wanting all things of country provisions, by their so long wandering in the wilderness. 2. Jericho was the firstfruits of that cursed country, so must wholly be devoted to God, and offered up a whole burnt-offering. 3. The hungry soldiers might have been so gluttoned with the spoils of this rich city that it would in all likelihood have made them fitter for idleness and luxury than for marching forward in a martial conquest of Canaan. 4. The whole army being thus admonished by the prohibition of their expected prey, might understand that the conquest of Jericho was accomplished solely by the almighty power of God, and not by any of their prowess and valour, as was afterwards done in subduing all the other cities. 5. This severity was exercised upon this city at their first landing in Canaan, to strike the greater terror upon the other Canaanitish cities, which they had to conquer, and, if possible, to bring them to repentance and submission. (*C. Ness.*) **Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive.**—*Rahab saved*:—It has not been the lot of Rahab to share the devout interest which has been lavished on Mary Magdalene. Our Correggios, Titians, and Carlo Dolcis have not attempted to represent the spirit of contrition and devotion transfiguring the face of the Canaanite girl. And this is not surprising. Rahab had never seen the human face of Jesus, nor heard the words that dropped like honey from His lips. But though she was not one of those whose contrite and holy love painters delight to represent, she belonged to the same order, and in some respects is more remarkable than any of the New Testament penitents. For her light was much dimmer than theirs who lived in the days of the Son of Man. She was utterly without support or sympathy from those among whom she lived, for with the exception of her own relations, who seem to have been influenced by herself, not a creature in Jericho shared her faith, or showed the slightest regard for the God of Israel. But the time has now come for her to reap the reward of her faith and its works. In her case there was but a short interval between the sowing and the reaping. And God showed Himself able to do in her exceeding abundantly above what she could ask or think. For she was not only protected when Jericho and all its people were destroyed, but incorporated with the children of Israel. No doubt the scarlet cord was hung from her window, as had been arranged with the spies. And a happy woman she no doubt was when she saw the faces of her old guests, and under their protection was brought out with all her kindred and all that she had and led to a place of safety. It is a blessed time, after you have stood fast to duty while many have failed, when the hour comes that brings you peace and blessing, while it carries confusion and misery to the faithless. How thankful one is at such a moment for the grace that enabled one to choose the right! What do we not gain by patience when we do the right and wait for the reward? One of the pictures in the Interpreter's House is that of "a little room where sat two little children, each in his chair. The name of the eldest was Passion, and of the other Patience. Passion seemed much discontent, but Patience was very quiet. Then asked Christian, 'What is the reason of the discontent of Passion?' The Interpreter answered, 'The Governor of them would have them stay for his best things till the beginning of the next year; but he will have them all now; but Patience is willing to wait.'" The case of Rahab was one of those where whole families were saved on account of the faith of one member. The head of a Hebrew house was eminently a representative man, and by a well-understood and recognised law his family were implicated in his acts, whether for good or for evil. But in this case the protector of the family, the

member of it that determines the fate of the whole, is not the one whom the law recognises, but his child, his daughter. A woman occupies here a higher and more influential place, in relation to the rest of the family, than she has ever held at any previous time. The incident comes in as a kind of foreshadow of what was to be abundantly verified in after-times. This narrative shows it to be in the line of God's providence that sisters and daughters shall prove instruments of deliverance to their relations. It is blessed when they are so even in earthly things, but far more glorious when, through faith and prayer and unwearied interest, they are enabled to win them to Christ, and turn them into living epistles for Him. But let us now advert to the reception of Rahab and her household into the nation and Church of the Israelites. At first they could be treated only as unclean until the rites of purification should be performed. In the case of Rahab this was doubly necessary—owing to her race, and owing to her life. Thereafter they were admitted to the commonwealth of Israel, and had an interest in the covenants of promise. The ceremonial purification and the formal admission signified little, except in so far as they represented the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Ghost. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." When the enemy ensnares a woman, wiles her into the filthiest chambers of sin, and so enchains her there that she cannot escape, but must sink deeper and deeper in the mire, the case is truly hopeless. More rapidly and more thoroughly than in the case of a man, the leprosy spreads till every virtuous principle is rooted out, and every womanly feeling is displaced by the passions of a sensual reprobate. "Son of man, can these bones live?" Is there any art to breathe the breath of purity and pure love into that defiled soul? Can such a woman ever find her home on the mountains of spices, and hear a loving bridegroom say, "My love, my undefiled is but one"? It is just here that the religion of the Bible achieves its highest triumphs. We say the religion of the Bible, but we should rather say, that gracious Being whose grace the Bible unfolds. "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God." Jesus Christ is the Prince of Life. Living faith in a living and loving Saviour can do all things. We wonder whether Rahab obtained much help in her new life from the fellowship of those among whom she came when she joined the Church. If the Church then was what the Church ever ought to be, if its outstanding members were like the three fair damsels, Prudence, Piety, and Charity, in the Palace Beautiful, no doubt she would be helped greatly. But it is not very often that that emblem is realised. And strange to say, among the members of our Churches now we usually find a very imperfect sense of the duty which they owe to those who come among them from without, and especially out of great wickedness. It is quite possible that Rahab was chilled by the coldness of some of her Hebrew sisters, looking on her as an intruder, a reprobate, and grieved because their select society was broken in upon by this outlandish woman. And it is quite possible that she was disappointed to find that, though they were nominally the people of God, there was very little of what was Divine or heavenly about them. So it often happens that what ought to be the greatest attraction in a Church, the character of its members, is the greatest repellant. Will the day ever be when every one that names the name of Christ shall be a living epistle, known and read of all men? But however she may have been affected by the spirit of those among whom she came, Rahab undoubtedly attained to a good degree before God, and a place of high honour in the Hebrew community. It was well for her that what at first arrested and impressed her was not anything in the people of Israel; it was the glorious attributes of their God. For this would preserve her substantially from disappointment. Men might change, or they might pass away, but God remained the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

Cursed be the man . . . that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho.—*The unprosperous builder*:—Here is a terrible denunciation, under a curse, of the destruction of the family of that person that should labour to build up Jericho again. As in blessing there are three things considerable, that come near one another—a blessing, a prayer, and a prophecy—so is it likewise in cursing: there is a prayer that God would pour forth His vengeance upon the enemies of the Church, and a prophetic prediction that God will do it. "Cursed be the man before the Lord." That is, let him be cursed indeed. That that is done before the Lord is truly and solemnly done. This was a solemn curse, a heavy curse, and it did truly light upon him. And let him be cursed before the Lord, however the world bless him. "That riseth and builds this city Jericho." Why would not God have Jericho built again? 1. Partly because He would have it a perpetual remem-

brance of His goodness and merciful dealing with His people, passing over Jordan and coming freshly into Canaan; for we are all subject to forget. If this city had been built again, the memory of it would have been forgotten; but lying all waste and desolate, the passers by would ask the cause—as God speaks of His own people—“What is the reason that this city lies thus?” And then it would give them occasion of speaking of the mercy of God to His people. And likewise it would give occasion to speak of the justice of God against the idolatrous inhabitants, whose sins were grown ripe. 2. And likewise it was dedicated to God as the firstfruits. Being one of the chief mother cities of the land, it was dedicated and consecrated to God as a thing severed; it was to be for ever severed from common use. There are two ways of severing things from common use: one by way of destruction, as here the city of Jericho; another by way of dedication, as the gold of Jericho. God would have this city severed from common use, as a perpetual monument and remembrance of His mercy and justice. 3. And likewise for terror to the rest of the inhabitants; for usually great conquerors set up some terrible example of justice to terrify others. Now, this being one of the first cities after their passing over Jordan, God would have the destruction of it to strike terror, together with this sentence of a curse, upon all that should build it again for ever. 4. And then that this terrible sentence might be a means to draw others to come in to God’s people to join with them, and submit, and prevent their destruction, seeing how terribly God had dealt with Jericho. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) *The curse of Jericho*:—I. Let us listen to THE CURSE PRONOUNCED. Such an act of destruction was clearly directed in that law which Joshua was to ponder day and night. It was the first city that Joshua had taken, and he was bound to act according to the directions laid down by Moses (*Deut. xiii. 15–18*). Joshua therefore had no choice as regards Jericho. Other conquerors, for their own pride and self-glorification, have ordained that fair cities should be levelled with the dust and their sites sown with salt. Thus was it with Troy, Carthage, Sidon. Joshua did this as he did all things, in obedience to the Divine command. Jericho was “cursed before the Lord,” i.e., from God’s presence and by His sentence. But did this dreadful destruction serve any good purpose? Yes, truly. Here we have sermons in stones, far more intelligible and emphatic even than those with which the book of nature is filled. To begin with, inasmuch as they are tokens of a just and long-deferred judgment on wickedness, they sound a loud note of warning to the impenitent. Especially do they display the terrible nature of the sin of idolatry and its consequent evils. Would they not be impressive witnesses against Israel in every evil day of apostasy? And would they not also give encouragement to every faithful heart that strove to follow the Lord fully? Pious souls could read these words writ in large characters on every one of them, “Not by might, nor by power, nor by wisdom, but by faith, is the victory won”; and the practical conclusion was plain: “Faithful to God, you can never know defeat.” Thus these stones would also emphasise the truth, that in the greatest triumphs and the most brilliant successes there is no room for pride or boastfulness or self-sufficiency on the part of man. Always these stones would say, “His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory.” What a stimulus therefore to truthful and healthful effort would these stones become! II. But the time came when THE CURSE WAS DESPISED. It may seem incredible that a curse so plain, so terrible, so memorable, should be thought so little of, but when we read the Divine record we can clearly trace the causes of this sinful audacity. To begin with, there was a popular cause for this despal. It was done in a day when Israel’s God was forgotten, when spiritual life was very low, when public sentiment was degraded, when open impiety reigned in high places, and only one solitary man stood out an open witness against the evils of the day. The very sins for which Jericho was destroyed were rampant and popular in Israel (*1 Kings xvi. 30–33*). How significant are the words, “In his days.” There were many bad, but none worse than they. It is also instructive to notice that the builder was a Bethelite. Hiel had come under the full influence of all the evil principles that were rampant. He was born and bred, he lived and died, at Bethel, the metropolis of idolatry, the place in which Jeroboam had set up his calf. There was also a sceptical cause which led to the despising of the curse. Unbelief was at the bottom of Hiel’s impious act, as it is the root of every evil work. Perhaps he had reasoned thus. The curse, if there ever was any force in it, must have spent itself by this time. Unbelief forgot whose curse this was. It could not get beyond the lip of Joshua to the will of the changeless and almighty Jehovah. Or perhaps Hiel had said: “It is nothing but

an old wives' fable, unworthy of credence; an old-fashioned jingle, without a particle of meaning; an apocryphal curse, to explain an apocryphal miracle: or at the very utmost, granting that it has some historical basis, it can be nothing more than the expression of Joshua's ill-nature and ill-feeling, and therefore is a fossilized manifestation of the narrow, bitter, bigoted age in which he lived. The supposition that it is a Divine proclamation is utterly absurd, utterly inconsistent with the nature of things. It would be neither just nor wise nor loving in God to do so. Such a curse as that does not commend itself to my conscience, reason, or heart, and therefore it is unworthy of credence." Hiel, having stood in the way of sinners, would not be long in sitting in the seat of the scornful. And perhaps the governing and most potent of these concurrent causes was a purely materialistic one. Hiel may have said to himself and others, "You see I am a practical man of business. I am neither a prophet nor a prophet's son. Profit, not prophecy, is my *forte*. Now look, did you ever see such a splendid site?" (Had Hiel lived in our days he could have drawn up a splendid prospectus for a limited liability building company.) "And what a delicious climate this valley enjoys; even in mid-winter the air is bright and balmy. And see, the building material is lying around, ready to be used. The site can be got for an old song, on account of that ridiculous superstition about Joshua, which has scared so many chicken-hearted noodles. Do you shake your head and say there may be some truth in it? What care I? I see plainly how I can make money out of this. You to your books and me to my buildings, and every man to his own trade." It was not so very difficult then for Hiel to despise the curse of Joshua; even so it is not difficult for any one to despise the curse of the gospel. The spirit of the age, whether as expressed by common talk, or the newspaper press, or current literature, is in favour of such a despal. There are also sceptical reasons which conduce to the same end. The record which contains this curse is old and not trustworthy, say some. The curse is decrepit and antiquated. The edge of the sword of judgment is blunt and its blade is rusty. The Lord is slack concerning His threatenings. We are too enlightened and liberal nowadays to believe in these things. But perhaps the great reason why men will not take heed to this curse is because they are so absorbed in the things of time and sense that they can think of nothing else. III. NOW NOTICE THE FULFILMENT OF THE CURSE. Hiel was full of his great life-work. The plans have been drawn, the trenches have been dug, the stones arranged and prepared, multitudes of labourers engaged. There is to be a grand opening ceremony at the laying of the foundation stone; therefore the members of his family and his numerous relations and friends flock from all quarters. It is a most auspicious occasion. But in the midst of the ceremony his firstborn is seized with a sudden sickness; he falls in a swoon, and is carried away from the crowd. But by and by a messenger with a sorrowful countenance returns and whispers into Hiel's ear, "Abiram is dead." It was a terrible blow, in this hour of his father's triumph to be cut down. But perhaps, his friends would say, the excitement of the ceremony was too much for him. He had never been very strong, and was complaining for some time, and this must have been heat apoplexy, a sunstroke. But though Abiram's death was a great interruption, the work must be carried on all the same. At last it is all but finished. There is nothing left but the putting up of the gates. Absorbed in his great undertaking, he has been able to drive away ominous thoughts and what he calls superstitious fears! But there is growing on him, as he nears the completion of the work, a nervous anxiety that he cannot drive away. On one thing he is resolved—there shall be no public ceremonial at the closing of the work, as there was at the commencement. He will superintend the putting up of the gates himself, and not permit any of his children to be present. As he was thus busily occupied at the finishing touch of his great work, a messenger arrived in hot haste from Bethel, fourteen miles distant, with the doleful news, "Segub is dead." Thus was the curse of Joshua concerning Jericho fulfilled. Learn from this how faithful are God's words, the terrible as well as the gracious. No jot or tittle of His truth ever fails. His word may remain in abeyance for many years, but the lapse of time can never destroy its vitality, "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever." See also how infatuated is unbelief. Every blow hardens rather than softens. Behold also the bitter fruits of unbelief. Pleasant and profitable Hiel thought his work would be; perhaps this very speculation was more for his children's benefit than for his own; but the solemn narrative teaches that there can be no lasting profit for us or ours if we run contrary to God's Word, if we deny His will. IV. But we can turn to a more grateful scene, and consider THE REMOVAL

OF THE CURSE. Jericho was rebuilt in disobedience to a command, in defiance of a threatening, and at the awful cost of the builder's children; yet it was not demolished. God had better things in store for it. His prophets and His people were permitted to dwell there, and though there was much that was pleasant and attractive in it, it was an uncomfortable residence. The curse seemed to hover over it and linger within its walls (2 Kings iii. 19-22). Thus the curse of Joshua is removed. Strange cure this; the old curse met by the new curse; the old word of judgment removed by the new word of healing. "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters." How strange that the salt of the new curse should abolish the bitterness of the old spring—passing strange. Yet can we not here see the symbol of higher truth? Can we not see Jesus and His salvation in this strange action of that prophet so like Himself? Each human being is like Jericho. "The city of Mansoul," "the house we live in," is it not like Jericho, pleasant for situation, fair in its outlook? Our powers and faculties of mind and body, the possibilities of our nature, are all that could be desired; yet the water of spiritual health is naught and the ground barren. We are lying under a curse. But see, the Saviour comes. The wonder-working wood for the bitterness of Marah and the wonder-working salt for the spring of Jericho, both picture that cross and passion by which Jesus has removed the curse. Yes, and the world itself is also like Jericho. Is it not fair and beautiful; most pleasant for situation? Every prospect pleases. But there is a deadly drawback, "The water is naught and the land barren." Death reigns. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, waiting." Yes, waiting; waiting the coming of Him who brings healing and life and fruitfulness with Him; to welcome whose arrival all creatures will shout for joy, for there shall be no more curse. His presence will bless us with Eden again. (*A. B. Mackay.*)

CHAPTER VII.

VER. 1. But the children of Israel committed a trespass.—*Corporate responsibility*:—This is here attributed to the whole people, which was really the act of but one man or one family. This is not because of any guilty participation in this trespass by others; there is no intimation that any others of the people were involved in a like crime. Nor is there any implication that others were privy to the crime of Achan, and by concealment of the fact became its abettors and sharers in its guilt. In all probability his act was not known or suspected beyond the limits of his own family. Nevertheless, Israel was one people, and it is here dealt with as one corporate body. There was criminality in the midst of them. And it was necessary that it should be disavowed and punished, in order that the people might be freed from all complicity and connection with it. (*W. H. Green, D.D.*)
Destruction a duty:—Many a thing which is attractive in itself ought to be destroyed; and if it ought to be destroyed, it ought not to be preserved. The contents of a saloon, or of a gambling-house, books and pictures which are harmful in themselves, which are, by their owners or by the public authorities, devoted to destruction, ought to be destroyed. To preserve any portion of them, under such circumstances, would be a wrong on the part of him whose duty it was to destroy them. To preserve a private letter which is entrusted to one to destroy is not in itself an act of theft, but it is an inexcusable breach of trust; and if no one else in the world is ever harmed by it, the one who preserves the letter is the worse for so doing. The destroying of that which ought to be destroyed is as clearly one's duty in its place, as the preserving of that which ought to be preserved. (*H. C. Trumbull.*)

Vers. 2-5. They fled before the men of Ai.—*The true measure of strength*:—In every estimate of work to be done by men, or by money, the moral element ought to be taken into account as an important factor. Napoleon's thought was that "God is on the side of the heaviest battalions." But Napoleon did not consider the relative weight of battalions by God's method of weighing them. One man's strength may be as "the strength of ten, because his heart is pure"; and where two thousand righteous men would be more than sufficient for a work of God, twenty thousand wrong-hearted men may fail. The true measure of the strength

of any local Church is in the number and power of its godly men and women, not in the show of its men and women of wealth and intellect and social standing. One good teacher in a Sunday-school has more real power there than a score of unworthy ones. And it is with money as with men. The need of the Church in both the home and the foreign field to-day is not so much mere money, but better gifts. Ten dollars with a blessing will count for more in God's work than ten thousand dollars without a blessing. It is not true that one man's money is as good as another's, nor that money gained by one means is as good as money gained by another. (*Ibid.*)

Joshua's lesson after the defeat at Ai:—Jericho, according to the Divine promise, had fallen before Israel. It was evident that this remarkable event had happened through the direct interposition of the power of God. It is scarcely to be wondered at that such a triumph bred self-confidence. And, flushed with their recent and easily-gained success, the victors were in haste to add to their laurels by the conquest of Ai. Here was an unlooked-for catastrophe. The Lord's chosen people discomfited and dispersed in their second battle, a ground of insulting and contemptuous rejoicing given to the idolatrous Canaanites. And thus the Divine purpose stood, apparently, in danger of disgraceful frustration. Such thoughts were evidently jostling each other, like a medley crowd, in the mind of Joshua. And, confused beyond the possibility of calm reflection by their influence, he casts himself in despair before the ark of the Lord. With what wonderful illuminating power must the answer have come to him, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou upon thy face"! What a call to common-sense action on the lines of faith is here! A little reflection might have shown to Joshua that the fault, whatever it was, could not lie at Jehovah's door. In place of useless whimpering over the past, vigorous examination was needed to remove the lurking evil. Sanctification, as before Jericho, was urgently required. And as for the honour of the name of the Lord, it was never in danger. This first defeat would give caution to the warriors of Israel, while, under the improved conditions about to be set up, it would act as an unfailing lure to the victors of Ai. Now this leaf out of the life of a good servant of God is well fitted to teach us many useful lessons. I. A LESSON AS TO THE RIGHT TREATMENT OF A DIVINE MYSTERY. It is easy to conceive of Joshua as emulating the example of a rationalist, had the prototype of that much-belauded school existed in his time. In that case he would have called the leaders of his army together, and subjected them to a severe cross-examination. He would have proposed a long list of questions as to the condition of the arms of the people, the manner of their leadership and its blunders, the time and apparent causes of the panic. And having exhausted his critical powers in the vain endeavour to discover some adequate cause for the catastrophe, he would have proceeded to distribute blame all round. At the same time, sapiently shaking his head over the problem, he would decide to "rest and be thankful" without further efforts at the conquest of the country. Or he would set himself to prove conclusively that after all the success at Jericho was due to accident, or purely natural causes, and that the whole scheme of Canaan conquest was based on a mistake. In this he might, not improbably, easily find scientific heads to help him. There would be sages who would invoke the aid of the discoveries of their time to show that the Jordan was divided, and the walls of Jericho fell from the operation of ordinary physical laws. The phenomena were special, but not supernaturally so. Or Joshua might have chosen a third course, and abandoned himself to surly grumbling or useless repining at the hard lot of a popular leader under a so-called "theocracy." Joshua's primitive faith—or, as some would say, simplicity—was far wiser and more useful. And just as, turn the compass as you may, the needle will point to the pole, so, let circumstances be what they might, Joshua's trust always drew him towards God's oracle. The man of the world might call it childish, fatalistic credulity. At all events the issue proved it to be the right, the wisest thing to do. In like manner our true wisdom lies in taking our difficulties to God. Second causes, in the shape of natural law, human ignorance or frailty, have their sphere in the economy of the Divine government, but God is supreme over all. II. IT IS NOT ALWAYS SAFE TO TRUST OUR ZEAL FOR THE DIVINE HONOUR. Doubtless Joshua thought with Elijah in later times, "I have been very zealous for the Lord of hosts," while he was really only fathering Israel's sin upon Jehovah. And similar mistakes are not unfrequently made by godly men, and often with the best intentions. There are some facts which exist, and some which are threatened, which seem to reflect upon the nature and government of God. And in order, as it is supposed, to conserve Jehovah's honour, infinite effort is expended to cast doubt upon the facts or to qualify the declarations. Could

we but touch the bottom of such "zeal for God" we might be surprised to discover that after all there is more in it which—unconsciously, it is true—tends to conserve human weakness and sin rather than the glory of our Divine Ruler. A similar remark applies to very much in our own estimate of the success of the gospel. Often we hear, and perhaps oftener are tempted to indulge in our hearts, doubts as to the power of the glorious gospel. Progress is so slow that men are quick to discover that the machinery of evangelical ministry has become obsolete, and its teachings effete. But the lesson ought rather to be earnest inquiry as to our fitness or otherwise for the success we crave. Is the cause in ourselves, or our easily improvable methods? Or does the hidden mischief lie in those with whom we work? There needs but the removal of "the accursed thing" for success to return to us, and our despondent dirge shall then speedily become a song of victory.

III. THE narrative, moreover, suggests to us THE RIGHT METHOD OF REGARDING AFFLICTIONS. It is wise here to have a fixed belief in an overruling Providence, but we must not allow this to hinder our full cognisance of second causes. And it will be well for us if in any special trial, while we are ready, with all submission, to bow to the Divine decree, we carefully ask what there is in us of indiscretion or sin which has procured, or been accessory to, our sufferings; and then, in earnest reliance upon Divine grace, let us seek altogether to remove it.

IV. SANCTIFICATION FOR GOD'S SERVICE OFTEN INVOLVES THE SEARCHING OUT AND REMOVAL OF HIDDEN AND UNSUSPECTED SINS. There was only one Achan in the camp, and his offence was known only to himself and God. Nevertheless, no success can rest on the arms of Israel until he is found out and destroyed. Let us not forget the important lesson which this is so well fitted to teach. Sin comes to us in such insidious ways, and uses agents so dear to us, that it succeeds in taking up its abode in our hearts before we are aware of its presence. Have we an Achan in the camp? If so, let us seek to extirpate the evil. (*J. Dann.*) *Israel defeated at Ai*:—

I. THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE AT HUMAN SIN. This was not a new lesson to the Israelites. At Sinai, at Kadesh, at Peor, it had been taught them; but, under new temptations, they needed renewed instruction. Sin unrepented and unforsaken provokes God's changeless displeasure. Such displeasure is a part of eternal justice. We magnify the grace of God, but grace is only a fragment of His character; it co-exists with justice.

II. THE MANY MAY BE PUNISHED FOR THE SINS OF ONE. God does not deal with men as individuals only. There is a corporate unity of the family, the Church, the State, which He regards; and, as the good deeds of one benefit all, the sins of one bring evil upon all. In this matter, God's thought is often not as ours. No modern leader, after the sack of a city, would be surprised to find an Achan in every tent. Might not, then, the one have been pardoned for the sake of the self-restraint of the many? At least, might not the guilty one have suffered all the consequences of his crime, without involving his innocent fellows? Such questions we are not competent to decide. Only a far-seeing Wisdom, which can fully fathom motives and forecast all the results of individual sins, can tell when to be gracious and forgiving, and when to punish. The war against the idolatrous races of Palestine was not to degenerate into pillage, a school for covetousness and selfishness for the victors; and so, at the beginning, such a lesson was needed as would make each afraid of private transgression, and also watchful of others.

III. THE DEFEAT AT AI ILLUSTRATES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HUMAN SAGACITY AND DIVINE GUIDANCE. The Israelites were so strangely unteachable that they did not clearly distinguish between the two. The victory at Jericho was clearly not theirs, but God's. But, in the flush of victory, this was forgotten. Israel rejoiced in her own success. Prosperity brought presumption, out of which grew the ill-advised expedition against Ai. It is easy for the Church to repose confidence in the stability and strength of her own organisation, and in smoothly-running ecclesiastical machinery, to find the sure augury of her success. Then some spiritual Ai must needs recall us to the truth that the victories of the kingdom of heaven are "not by might nor by power," but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts.

IV. THERE IS GREAT DANGER IN UNDER-ESTIMATING THE POWER OF AN ADVERSARY. The easy success at Jericho made Israel over-confident. A Southern historian of the rebellion has recorded his opinion that the first battle at Bull Run was a serious misfortune to the Southern cause. It led to mistaken confidence. Great numbers of volunteers left the Southern army and returned home, believing the war ended. Thoughtful writers at the North agree that it helped the Northern cause, for it taught us not to despise the enemy, and set clearly before us the magnitude of the conflict. And this has its parallel in the conflicts of the spiritual life. After Jericho, Ai. There is no commoner mistake

than the belief that following some great victory will be peaceful conquest, the rest of Canaan. There is no earthly Canaan. V. It is **FOOLY TO TRUST IN PAST EXPERIENCES**. The three thousand men who went up against Ai were full of confidence which grew out of the successes at the Jordan and at Jericho. They assumed the presence and guidance of God because of His past deliverances. They knew what had happened; from this they formed a doctrine of probabilities of what would happen. They learned the truth of the maxim, "It is a part of probability that many improbable things will happen." We cannot measure our present relation to God by the past. The past may give us ground for hope, but there is no science of spiritual probabilities. "There are factors in the spiritual life which can change the face of things to any extent, and which hide from all calculations of the probable." Christian progress is by "forgetting the things that are behind." Have we a living faith to-day? (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *The diseases that stop England's mercies*:—In this chapter you have a treatise concerning Achan's sin, branching itself into three parts; one concerning the commission of the sin, the second concerning the discovery of it, and the third concerning the punishment thereof. Oh, what unexpected ways and means hath God to bring out men's sin to light. Three thousand men flee before the men of Ai, and thirty-six men are slain, and this was made the means of discovery of Achan's sin; who would have thought that there should have been such a discovery as this? The work was hindered by this defeat, and that sets them on work to search out the cause, and shows—1. That afflictions should set us on work, to search out our sins, and the cause of them. 2. That sins shall not always be pocketed up, but shall be discovered, though never so secret. 3. That God hath strange ways to discover men's sins. First, where God is in a way of mercy towards His people, there sin does make a stoppage in His proceedings; so here God was in a way of mercy towards His people, carrying of them into the land of Canaan, but in the way they sin, Achan plays the thief; mark what a stoppage this made in the way of mercy; so you have it in chap. xxiv. 20, Jer. xxviii. 9. Sins committed when God is in a way of mercy are a slighting of mercy. Again, those mercies that come unto God's people come unto them in the way of a promise, and therefore if men do not keep the condition, God takes Himself free, and will turn Himself out of the way of His mercy. You have an expression to this purpose (Num. xiv. 34). God never gives His people any mercy, but He gives it them in a way of mercy. He does not think it enough to give them that which is mercy, but He will give it them in a way of mercy. But now if God should be in a way of mercy towards His people, and they sin against Him, and He should go on to give them the mercy, they would be hardened in their sin, and so it would not come unto them in the way of mercy. Therefore, if God be in a way of mercy towards His people, and they sin against Him, He will break off the course of His mercy, and go another way, and there shall be a stoppage made in these proceedings. Why should this be, that so small a sin should turn the great God of heaven out of the way of His mercy? Achan commits but a small sin, and what a mighty stop is made in the way of mercy! For answer three things—1. There is nothing between God and us. I may boldly say thus much, that men sin a great sin in saying their sin is small. 2. Sometimes what falls short in the greatness of the sin is made up in the number of sins. It may be that the number of your little sins amount to the greatest sin. 3. God will make good His name to the utmost, and His name is, "A jealous God." But what evil and hurt is in this, if a final stoppage be not made? Is it nothing in your ears, and in your hearts, that the Lord should turn out of a way of mercy? If there be a stoppage made in England's mercy, though but present, there is an obstruction in all your comforts: you are sensible of the obstructions of your body, will you not be sensible of State obstructions, of Church obstructions? Again, when a man does not rely and live upon God's all-sufficiency, when God hath appeared in that way. Abusing of God's instruments which He raiseth up for to do His work by, doth exceedingly provoke and make a stoppage in the mercy of God. Carrying on the work of reformation, and the great affairs of the Church, upon the shoulders of human prudence, will make a stoppage in the way of mercy. As prayer and humiliation do exceedingly further the work of God in the hands of His people, so the falling and slacking of the hands in these two works doth make a stop in mercy, and hath done in our mercy. An unthankful receiving of the mercies that God hath given us, and a slight beholding of the great works He hath done before us lately, is another sin that hath made a stoppage in our mercy. The last sin that makes a stop in England's mercy is a worldly disposition, whereby a man hangs back unto the

great work of God, and the glorious reformation that is now a-doing. I shall show you it is a hard thing to appease God's anger when it is gone out. It must be done, and that quickly. I shall show you what you shall do, that you may do it. Therefore it is an exceeding hard thing and very difficult to appease God's anger. If the sea break over the banks, and there are but few to stop it, it is hard to do; if fire hath taken two or three houses in a street, and but few to quench it, it is hard to do: the fire of God's anger is broken out, and there are but few to quench it: it is a hard thing, therefore. Again, God seems to be engaged in the way of His wrath. Oh, it is a hard thing to turn God from His anger! But it must be done, and done quickly. There are six things that Joshua did here, when they fled before the men of Ai. 1. He was very sensible of God's stroke that was given to them, for he says, Lord, would we had been contented in the wilderness. 2. He was humbled under God's hand, for it is said, he rent his clothes, and fell down upon the earth. 3. And he prayed, and cried mightily unto God, as you read in the chapter. 4. And he put away the evil of their doings. 5. And he punished Achan, the offender. 6. He made a holy resignation. And there must be a concurrence of all these six things if we would bring God back into the way of His mercy towards England. (*W. Bridge, M.A.*) *Sources of weakness*:—1. Here is a Church with all the outward elements of strength, prosperity, and efficiency. The mass of members are orderly and in good standing. But it has a "name to live while it is dead." God frowns upon it. And why? There are notoriously unworthy members in it—perhaps rich and influential—and they are tolerated year after year. And there is not spiritual life and conscience enough in the body to cast them out! And so the whole Church is cursed for their sake! 2. Here is a city numbering 800,000 strong, with hundreds of Churches and able pastors, and scores of thousands of respectable members, and education and schools and wealth, and all the elements that should insure social virtue and general thrift, and God's abundant and abiding blessing. But there is a moral blot upon it. There is an "accursed thing" winked at. A handful of corrupt officials are suffered to rule it and curse it. Gambling, drinking, crime, are suffered to run riot. There is power in the mass, in the Christian element, to put it down, stamp it out. But it is not invoked. And so the whole city has to suffer the shame and ignominy and loss. The pulpit, the Church, virtue, law, are all shorn of their strength. For God will not wink at such things, if His people do; and so "Ichabod" is written on that city. 3. Here is a community in which a horrible crime has been committed—a man shot down in cold blood for his fidelity to truth or virtue or the public welfare. The blood of that man God will require of that entire community, unless they exhaust every resource of law and society to bring the guilty to punishment! We may narrow the circle to the individual, and the principle will still apply. One sin in the heart will neutralise a thousand virtues in the life. One secret offence will make a man a coward in the face of the world. One moral weakness will spoil a whole character. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *Defeat through miscalculation*:—This old story of the battle at Ai is paralleled in all its essential features in every age and country. Some unrecognised weakness, some unforeseen turn of events, confuses the most careful calculations and neutralises the most elaborate preparations. Probably the splendid military strategy of Napoleon was never more clearly illustrated than in his plan of the battle of Waterloo; and yet a little strip of sunken road, which was overlooked in the preliminary survey of the engineers, threw all his calculations into disarray and lost him the battle and the empire of Europe. Some unnoticed defect in the machinery negatives the skill of the captain and the seamanship of the crew of the Atlantic steamer. It was only an insignificant bubble of air, overlooked in the foundry when the steel was wrought, but it resulted in weakness in the core of the main shaft, and in the supreme hour of trial there is failure and disaster. Some lack of fibre in character, and the time comes when the man who supposed himself sufficient for anything finds himself unequal to the emergency. And these unforeseen interferences and checks are nowhere so common and so potential as in the department of religious life. A low type of piety is not necessarily or probably the result of a resolution to be satisfied with a certain level of spiritual attainment. I believe that at heart the majority of Christian men and women desire and attempt to be and do the best and most possible, but there is some defect of will, some infirmity of temper, some unwillingness to surrender to God what may be considered an unimportant particular, and so long as that hindrance is in the way, our prayers and struggles for better and larger growth are unavailing, and the influence of that obstacle continually makes itself more and more felt for evil. And what is true of

the individual Christian life is true also of the life and progress of the Christian Church as a whole. That Church has made great advances and won not a few triumphs at various periods and in certain directions. At the same time it is true that the Church ought to have accomplished greater things, ought to be doing far more than it is to-day. It is God's Church, and He abides in it, and that of itself is a warrant for imperial greatness. What conquest is too vast to be expected when the Lord of hosts marshals the forces that are enlisted to win it? With such portents and prophecies of triumph, why should there be any discouragement, or half-heartedness, or laggard marches, or unwilling hands, or partial successes? Why was not the promise fulfilled long ago, that "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ"? A great deal is said in our time about the need of a working Church. There is another need quite as great—the need of a Church through which God can work. It is not the method and spirit of the working of the Church, so much as the way and the extent in which and to which it is wrought upon of the Divine Spirit that determines its efficiency. It is the folly of the Church of this age that it spends so much ingenuity in devising machinery and too little time in preparing the way of the Lord and making His paths straight. No wisdom, nor eloquence, nor marvel of contrivance can make good the lack of a devoted and submissive spirit that waits and waits and still waits with the inquiry: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Let us have that in the Church, a singleness of union with God, and then, through the membership, the converting energy from on high will flow unhindered, and men be reached and transformed. (*E. S. Atwood.*) *Hindered by sin*:—1. As a matter of fact, there are unexplained checks in human progress. We wonder why we do not advance more surely and quickly. 2. Such checks bring Divine providence under criticism and suspicion (vers. 6-9). This is an easy refuge for men. Providence has had to sustain many a slander. It seems the handiest of all things to blame the mysteriousness of the Divine way. Who ever says, "The fault must be within the house itself; let every man in the house be examined; somebody is to blame for this mystery—who is it?" But it is easier to sit down under the supposed comforting doctrine that all this is meant for our good; it is chastisement; it is part of the mysterious process of human education. At the same time it must be remembered that the sufferer himself may not be personally guilty. Certainly Joshua was no criminal in this case; yet Joshua suffered more than any other man. Here we may find the mysteriousness of the Divine action. This is not an action of mere virtue, as it is socially understood and limited; it is the very necessity of God: He cannot touch "the accursed thing"; He cannot smile upon fraud. A new light is thus thrown upon sovereignty and God's elective laws. God elects righteousness, pureness, simplicity, nobleness. He will forsake Israel if Israel forsake Him. The Lord gives the reason why we are stopped. We must go to Heaven to find out why we are not making more money, more progress, more solidity of position. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 6-9. Joshua . . . fell . . . before the ark of the Lord.—*Joshua's plea before the ark*:—The ark was the centre of mercy to Israel, and the glory of the tabernacle, their refuge in trouble, their security in danger, and their deliverance in distress. Here they mourned, and made supplication, where the cause only could be known, where relief only could come. From hence had proceeded all their pardons, their conquests, and possessions. But for the ark and the mercy-seat above, its propitiatory covering, Israel had been a lost people, and long had perished in want or conflict. No such seat of grace and habitation of mercy in Ai. The God of glory was still in the sanctuary of His people, though an accursed thing was in the camp. And where but to God in Christ, the true ark of the covenant and token of His gracious presence, can the afflicted, the oppressed, or the convicted go? This is their peculiar privilege, their constant need, and their never-failing resource. The pleadings of Joshua are a fine specimen and example of a true supplicatory spirit. It was before the ark, that grand and expressive type of Christ. Nothing in the worship of the spiritual sanctuary, no act of prayer or praise, no penitential pleadings or humiliations, can be acceptable, but as offered in the name, and through the mediation, of our Divine and glorious peace-maker, the Lord Jesus. Though the fears and apprehensions of unbelief mingle some infirmity with the pleadings of this great intercessor for Israel, yet there is impressive beauty and strength in his expressions, but in none so much as those which discover a mind tenderly affected for the glory of God, the honour of His name, and the prevalence

of His truth. "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" Oh! this was the grand point, the highest consideration, and beyond which pleading could not go. This failing, no other could avail. And still here is all the force of pleading, as from it all the cause of prevailing. This name, with all its glory and honour, is in Christ known to the Church and published to the world, a name ever dear to God, and dearer than a thousand worlds. This will prevail above all the distresses of the Church, all the triumphs of her enemies. Peace and pardon, and every blessing of providence, grace and glory, are insured to the believer, so that he who rests here can never perish or be conquered. (*W. Seaton.*) *Deep affliction*:—When Achilles heard of the death of Patroclus his grief was so great that he cast himself on the ground as one that could not be comforted.

"With both his hands black dust he gathers now,
Casts on his head and soils his comely brow,
Foul ashes cling his perfumed tunic round,
His noble form lies stretched upon the ground."

Here we have a grief similarly expressed, but more pathetic and noble. Joshua shows here again that he was a perfect leader. In all the affliction of the people he is afflicted. All the feeling of dismay in the camp is concentrated, as it were, in him. His great capacity for leadership gives him greater capacity for suffering. Thus is it always. He who is most interested in the cause of Christ, he whose heart is most enthusiastic, will be most cast down by defeat. The man whose soul is most sensitive to sin, most fully alive to the commandments of God and the demands of truth, has the keenest sensibility, and therefore suffers most in a region of rebellion. That is to say, the more real spiritual life there is in the soul, the more suffering must there be. The sorrow of Jesus is the deepest because the love of Jesus is the highest. Joshua's sorrow, it is very plain, was sincere and unfeigned. There was no acting here. And his grief was as unselfish as it was sincere. His chief sorrow is for the people. Their fate, their prospects, are his chief concern. Joshua's perplexity is very great. This indeed is the biggest element in his trouble, and two parallel questions manifest it—"What shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies?" (ver. 8), and "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" (ver. 9). If things continue as they are, and lead to their natural issues, "What shall I say? What wilt Thou do?" I have a difficulty in regard to my words. I have a difficulty in regard to Thy ways. What shall I say? What conclusion am I to come to? What construction am I to put on this event? Joshua makes no allowance for defeat. The chances of the glorious game of war have no place in his reckoning. Joshua cannot reconcile this defeat, unimportant though it may seem to some, with three grand facts wherein lay his chief confidence. The fact of the Divine presence—"Is God with us after all?" he might ask. The fact of the Divine promise—"Has God indeed spoken?" The fact of the Divine power—"Is God able to give unbroken victory?" The sad fact of defeat seemed to go in the face of these other facts. But to Joshua these other facts were as patent as that over which he mourned; hence his consternation. He is dumbfounded. And surely this noble sorrow, this believing consternation of Joshua, should be a reproof to many. We believe that there are individuals and congregations who would be more perplexed and confounded by a spiritual victory than by a spiritual disaster. But Joshua had a second question, which is the expression of a still deeper cause of perplexity. His first question, "What shall I say?" rose from his faith in God. His second question, "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" arose from his fidelity to God. Thus Joshua's second question becomes a powerful plea before God, commanding His attention and drawing forth a reply. And it is well to notice here for our encouragement in any spiritual emergency that in the very trouble of Joshua's soul there exists the germ of good hope. Joshua, just because he knows, feels, and owns his trouble before God, is every moment helping forward the solution of the difficulty. To know that we are beaten may be a bad thing in ordinary warfare; hence Napoleon's complaint against the British troops; but it is not so in the spiritual fight; rather is it essential to continued success. Let us imitate Joshua in his godly sorrow. But trouble came upon Israel as well as upon their leader. As a single grain of colouring matter will tinge gallons of water, so one sin will affect a whole people. Achan's transgression influenced for evil the whole of that nation. His little leaven leavened the whole lump. No man can confine the effects of any sin within the small compass of his own personal experi-

ence. Just as in the heart of a rich city a collection of squalid and filthy dens may spread disease and death in its finest mansions, so the wicked, wherever found, become centres of spiritual infection, and no soul near them is safe; hence, just as men wisely seek in self-defence to improve the physical conditions of the poorest dwellings, so should we, if for no other motive than the preservation of our own spiritual health, labour in all directions, and in every possible way, to improve and elevate the masses. And if this principle holds in the body politic, much more powerfully does it manifest itself in the body mystic, *i.e.*, the Church of the living God. Here the influence of sin is most acutely and quickly felt. Hence the constant care that should be manifested in casting out every particle of the leaven of sin. He who takes heed to his own heart and life, keeping them clean and pure in the sight of God, edifies the brethren, and is health and strength and joy to all the body of Christ. He who is careless and sinful, must, like Achan, be a troubler of the house of God. Yes, and he himself must be miserable. What joy had Achan in all his ill-gotten gains? The rust of gold, like some strong Satanic acid, ate into his soul, to his unspeakable torture. Every transgressor sooner or later will find, like Achan, that in every sin lies its own punishment, and therefore escape is impossible. And Achan's act had an evil influence upon the Canaanites as well as on himself and Israel. The effect of this defeat at Ai would be to harden their hearts, to make them persist in their rebellion. How often does the success of the wicked turn out their destruction. Applying these things to the work of the Lord in our days, we are reminded by the effect of Achan's sin on these Canaanites of the evil that is brought on the world through the unfaithfulness of professing Christians. We must remember that not only the honour of the Master and the prosperity of the Church are connected with our faithfulness, but also, to no inconsiderable extent, the spiritual state of the world around. Therefore let us take heed as we name the name of Christ to depart from all iniquity, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. (*A. B. Mackay.*)

Vers. 10-15. Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?—Get thee up:—To trust God is manifestly our duty. We are commanded to put our trust in Him. Trust in God is also a crowning means of safety and prosperity. Exceedingly great and precious promises are made to confidence in God. Watch over and cherish your trust in God. Cherish it by the study of the promises of your God. Cherish it by intercourse with God; and make this trust in God strong by giving it plenty of work to do. The more you exercise this principle, the stronger will it become. Trust in God is a manifest duty. But there are other obligations. We are under obligations to personal exertion. To trust is one duty; to exert ourselves is another: and although some persons would think that these two things cannot work together, they not only can, but they do work together in the experience and in the life of every man who is really walking with his God. Joshua, as you know, was leading the people forward to the entire conquest of Canaan. God has shown Israel's captain marvellous deliverances, and, as is common in our own life, after these wonderful deliverances there comes a check. And so entirely does this prostrate him, that God his helper has to rebuke him, and say to him in the language of rebuke, "Get thee up: wherefore liest thou upon thy face?" Now, it strikes me that there are not a few who are in the position of Joshua. 1. In the first place, there is the doubter, depressed and paralysed by his doubts. I say to that man, "Get up—get thee up, and inquire—get thee up, and call upon God—get thee up and search the book of God—get thee up and think, and meditate—get thee up and converse with sober, intelligent, wise, kind-hearted, Christlike disciples." Follow out your beliefs, and speak of that which you know. Then deal with your doubts. Do not let these doubts tarry. Do not let them become normal and constitutional. Regard them as a something to be taken away from your heart if possible. 2. We might, also, address these words to those who have fainted under the struggles of life. The words of those who have fainted in the day of adversity are such words as these, "All things are against me." "I shall one day fall by the hand of mine enemy." "Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." Well, under depressing thoughts like these, those who have become weary in the struggle of life sink into prostration; and we say to such, "Get thee up." Out of most troubles there is a present way of escape, and a future way out of them all. Your trouble may be poverty. Why conclude that God means you to be poor all your days? Get up, and look if there be a way out of that poverty. Your trouble may be bodily weakness and sickness. Why conclude

that you are to be an invalid all your days? Get thee up, and look. See if there be a way of escape from this bodily infirmity. Out of many of our troubles there is, I say, a way of escape; but we require to get up, and to look for the way of escape. All that we require in such circumstances is strength to wait. The working together of the various events of life is of course a process. That very idea of working together involves a succession of effects and of results. The good must come. 3. Perhaps, too, there is that class of person known by the common name of backslider. It is a serious thing to go back. But the man who has gone back is not in a hopeless state. He ought not to despair. Thanks be to God, I can appeal to your hope. I can in the name of God say, "Return unto the Lord, and He will return to you." He will heal your backsliding; He will love you freely; He will be as the dew to you, and you shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine. Only, only, return to the Lord. 4. Those who are hindered and disheartened in their godly enterprises, as were many of the companions of Nehemiah, in connection with the work of rebuilding the city and rebuilding the temple. Now God sent Haggai to say to the people, in substance, just what He said to Joshua, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?"—for by His prophet God spake thus: "Is it time for you to dwell in ceiled houses while God's house lies waste?" "Get thee up: wherefore liest thou upon thy face?" Now, just see that self-prostration and inertness are wrong. For, in the first place, it is God who speaks to us thus: "Get thee up"; God, whose power is almighty; God, whose resources are unsearchable riches; God, who is ever working to keep us up, and to lift us up, and who, when He has helped us ten thousand times, has His hands stretched out to help us still; God, who proffers His interposition to the weak and to the needy. And He speaks, observe, to our will, and to our hearts. By the use of these words He is seeking to work confidence, resolution, and determination. "Get thee up." He is appealing to our hopes, that He may comfort us by hope. There is no evil for which there is no remedy. The position, therefore, of a man of God is not that of prostration. Even when he is confessing his sins, his position is not that of prostration. Prostration is not his posture. His right position is to stand up like a man before God. Oh! do not thus lie prostrate on your faces. Do not yield to your despondency and despair. I speak to you men of God, and I may say to you, "All is right. All is right in Heaven concerning you: and if there be things wrong down here, Heaven can set them right." It may be, too, that there is some accursed thing that is producing your present perplexities and your present difficulties. I know not what that accursed thing may be. Perhaps it is sinful trust in yourselves; perhaps it is undue reliance on your fellow-creatures; perhaps you have done wrong in endeavouring to obtain an instrumentality to assist you that is not holy, and that is not heaven-approved. What the accursed thing may be a little honest inquiry will soon discover. By the power of God, I say, get rid of it; but, even before you get rid of it, get up. You cannot see the accursed thing while you are thus spiritually prostrate. You cannot see what you ought to do while you are thus spiritually prostrate. Whatever may be the cause of your present difficulty and depression, it is your duty to get up, and stand before God upright as a man. (*S. Martin.*)

God's voice to the desponding:—I. DESPONDENCY SOMETIMES OVERTAKES THE GREATEST MEN. 1. Examples: Jacob, Elijah, David, &c. 2. The causes of despondency are numerous: remorse, disappointment, forebodings, failure, &c. II. DESPONDENCY MUST BE STRUGGLED AGAINST: "Get thee up." 1. Regrets for the past are useless. What is done cannot be undone. 2. There is urgent work to do. Resolute, earnest activity is required. 3. Despondency exhausts strength and unfits for work. Despair unstrings nerves, relaxes muscles, prostrates energies. 4. Effort will shake off the oppressive load, and give fresh energy to your soul. (*Homilist.*)

Israel hath sinned, . . . stolen and dissembled.—*The sinfulness of sin*:—I. THE SUCCESSIVE STAGES OF SIN. "When Achan longed, he ought to have resisted; when he planned, he ought to have stopped before taking; when he had taken, he should have cast it away instead of stealing; when he had stolen, he should have freely confessed it; and when it was buried he ought to have dug it up again." II. THE AGGRAVATED GUILT OF SIN. 1. It was a transgression of righteousness: "Israel hath sinned." 2. It was a transgression of the law of gratitude. Achan ignored the covenant altogether. 3. It was a transgression of God's word: "Which I commanded them." 4. It was the transgression of good faith. Under the specific condition of not touching the spoil, the victory had been granted, and Achan had "even taken of the cherem." 5. It was a transgression of honesty and truth: "They have stolen and dissembled also." 6. It was a transgression of Achan's own

conscience. Had he not felt it wrong to put the devoted things "among his own stuff," he would not have hidden them. III. THE WIDE-REACHING EVIL OF SIN.

IV. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SIN AND UNBELIEF. Achan had no real faith—1. In Divine omniscience. Had he really believed that God saw him, he could not have taken of the spoil. 2. In Divine punishment. Had he been convinced that he would have been "devoted," he would have resisted the temptation. 3. In the Divine Word. To disbelieve in the punishment was to disbelieve Him who had threatened to destroy. (*F. G. Marchant.*) *Secret sin*:—We have a mournful interest in sin. Three characteristics of sin are seen in Achan—1. Sin is secret; that is, from men, not from God. 2. Sin is gradual. Captivates the senses: "I saw." Captivates the desires: "I coveted." Captivates the soul: "I took." 3. Sin is the herald of a curse: "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked." Note its effects. I. ON JOSHUA—THE LEADER. 1. Changed the hero into a coward. His heart became as water. 2. Changed the man of faith to a doubter (ver. 7). 3. This in spite of his Divine call and his great ability. So secret sin affects the leaders of the Church to-day. II. ON ISRAEL—THE CHURCH. 1. Changed victors into victims. They fled from before Ai. Sin is weakness as well as wickedness. Sin deters the progress of the Church. 2. This in spite of the Divine covenant. That covenant was to give the land to the true sons of Abraham—the faithful: "If ye be willing and obedient," &c. 3. This, too, in spite of previous victory at Jericho. They won at Jericho, for they were all sanctified. They failed at Ai, for there was sin in the camp. One secret sinner may ruin a Church's worth. III. ON ACHAN—THE SINNER. Did not sin gain for him much spoil? Yes—and more. He got gold and brave apparel, but he also got for his secret sin—1. Public shame. 2. Public punishment. Sad as are the effects on others, the secret sinner feels them most of all. The remedy is—1. Not inactive grief: "Wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" (ver. 10). 2. Active search for hidden sin (ver. 13). 3. Entire sanctification of all (ver. 13). (*James Dunk.*) *Secret sin discovered*:—Sin as a rule is committed under a false and pernicious impression, namely—(1) That it will never be known, or (2) if found out, in some way punishment will be avoided. If sinners did not deceive themselves on these points there would not be half the sin in the world there is. I. THERE IS AND CAN BE NO SECRET THING IN GOD'S UNIVERSE. Every sin, though no human eye or ear takes cognisance of it, is seen as soon as conceived by the all-seeing eye. That sin a secret when high Heaven knows it all! II. THERE IS IN SIN ITSELF THE ELEMENT OF EXPOSURE AND RETRIBUTION. Sin, like every other natural and moral force, works out certain results, physical, spiritual, and moral, and those results are not under man's control; they are the developments of law. The transgressor is impotent. He cannot stay the Almighty Hand, which, by means of the law of cause and effect, has its firm grip upon him. He is no longer master of himself, much less of his secret. And a thousand influences are working upon him and closing in upon him, all tending to disclosure and final retribution. III. ALL THE LAWS OF GOD'S UNIVERSE ARE PUT IN REQUISITION TO EXPOSE SIN AND BRING IT IN DUE TIME TO PUNISHMENT. 1. His physical laws. They even cry out against sin, as in the case of the inebriate, the glutton, the adulterer, &c. The heavens and the earth conspire to track and fasten guilt upon the murderer. 2. His moral law. Under its flashes and thunder peals many a guilty soul has quaked and been driven to confession or suicide. Conscience, echoing God's law, makes cowards of sinners; makes life an insupportable burden, drives them from home and makes them wanderers on the earth, as Cain was. 3. His providential law. A thousand agencies and forces are set to work to expose and punish transgression as soon as it is committed. Earth, air and water, science, art, and human law, all furnish evidence to point out and convict the criminal and bring him to judgment. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *The punishment of sin*:—1. How necessary to Christian success is the presence of God. 2. When that presence is withheld, there is generally a cause. 3. When the presence of God is withheld, the Christian should be humbled and make inquiry before God. 4. Sin is the cause of the Divine displeasure, and must be searched out. 5. Mark the progress of sin. He who parleys with sin is half-way towards embracing it. 6. Behold the fatal termination of sin. (*J. G. Breay, B.A.*) *Sin a reproach and hindrance*:—Sin, that accursed thing which God hates is a hindrance and a reproach to any people, viewed either as a nation or as individuals. I. LET US LOOK AT THE SIN OF THE JEWS, AS A NATION, IN PERSISTING TO DESPISE AND REJECT JESUS OF NAZARETH. Now, what a shame and reproach are the Jews exposed to for their sin in rejecting Christ, the anointed of God! From what rich blessings

also are they excluded in consequence of their not admitting Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world! What an accursed thing, too, is the sin of idolatry to any nation! Those people who are ignorant of the one living and true God, through Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, and who are bowing down to stocks and to stones, are in the lowest state of misery and degradation. But further. Those nations which are professedly Christian nations are frequently seen to encourage some great evil, which operates against their prosperity, and which is a reproach to them. In no country which is called a Christian country should any laws be enacted which are likely to be detrimental to the religion of Christ. Now, whenever this is the case, it is a reproach to any people, and a great hindrance to their prosperity and comfort.

II. We come now to a CLOSER APPLICATION OF OUR SUBJECT, AND TO CONSIDER IT IN REFERENCE TO INDIVIDUALS. You are all Christians by profession. But remember, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly." Are ye living in the commission of gross sins and scandalous vices, while ye claim, in virtue of your baptism, to be the children of God, and heirs according to the promise? Ye are a reproach to the Lord's people, and a cause to them of much sorrow and anguish of heart. Remember that a day is coming when He, who is at present waiting, on thy true repentance, to be gracious unto thee and to save thee, will appear as thy terrible adversary to destroy thee. But further. May not sin, the accursed thing, in some degree be found among the real servants of God as well as among His enemies? How important, then, and necessary is it that believers should be continually aiming to mortify the remains of inbred corruption, and to be fortifying themselves against the inroads of sin by following after righteousness and holiness of life. (*W. Battersby, M.A.*) **Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.—God's part in the war:—**I. SUCCESS IN WAR IS A BLESSING WHICH IS GIVEN BY GOD. By this I mean that it does not depend only on the armaments which are fitted out, or the perfection of our war machinery, or the number of our troops, or the sagacity of our leaders, or the power of our enemy, whether we shall be successful in the end. It is clearly told us in Scripture—so clearly that there is no excuse for the man who disbelieves it—that God keeps the ultimate results of war entirely in His own hand. Perhaps there is no other department of human affairs in which Jehovah has so frequently in Scripture asserted His prerogative as that of war. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." And once more we find that Jehovah retains for Himself the name of Commander over all the armies of the earth. II. SO LONG AS WE CHERISH SIN, WE CANNOT EXPECT GOD TO GRANT US SUCCESS IN WAR. I do not mean to say that success is always given to the holiest—that victory is the guarantee of rectitude and defeat the sign of sin; for God oftentimes tries His people by afflictions, and permits the wicked for a time to prosper. We are not sufficient judges of these things. But the only ground on which we can well expect the blessing of success from God is, surely, that of walking uprightly before Him; and when we cherish sin wilfully and consciously within our breasts, neither this nor any other blessing can we expect Jehovah to bestow upon us. It was the sin of one man in the camp. It is the same with us. For public and national sins we are indeed called to mourn this day. They form a long black roll. They are too many for enumeration. But we have also our private, our individual sins to mourn. They are concerned in our disasters. There has been a vainglorious boasting—a self-sufficient confidence in the prowess of our soldiers, and the irresistible force of our arms, as if we could not fail. We thought we were presenting to the world an unequalled spectacle. We have not been relying, as a nation, upon the help and sufficiency of Jehovah. Until we come to a more fitting state of heart—till our self-confidence be less—till our recognition of Jehovah be more—till we feel that we are less than nothing and vanity—till we feel that all our sufficiency is of God—we can by no means look that the Omnipotent should scatter our foes before us and humble them in the dust. (*J. E. Cumming, D.D.*) **Covetousness in the Church:—**I. A HEINOUS TRANSGRESSION WAS COMMITTED. Some pursue the acquisition of wealth with quiet plodding industry, not appearing to be the subjects of much excitement, but associating greediness with wariness and caution, never permitting themselves to swerve from the contemplation of the end, or the employment of the means for attaining to it. Others, again, in the emphatic language of Scripture, have "hasted to be rich." The appetite has been suddenly and uncontrollably kindled, either by a combination of internal suggestions or by the fatal facilities and opportunities which of late have been so signally multiplied. It must, however, here be remembered that there are other forms of covetousness besides that which consists in the craving and the pursuit of

wealth. The love of fame, the love of power, and the love of sensual pleasure—all these constitute covetousness; and such covetousness also we conceive to have intruded itself much into the hearts of the professing people of God. II. A MOURNFUL CONSEQUENCE WAS INCURRED. 1. Observe the consequence, as relating to the individual himself. God, by virtue of His essential omniscience, was aware of the perpetration of the sin; notwithstanding its concealment He saw it done, and He instantly arranged a series of events, by which, in the most impressive manner, there might be immediate detection, and then condign and adequate punishment. There is nothing but what is naked and manifest before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; and as God knows the sin, so also God punishes the sin. Sometimes He punishes covetousness, when it is remarkably revolting in its operations, by judgments similar to the one which is recorded here—the abrupt termination of life, either by the hands of men or by judgments from His own power, which cannot be misapprehended or mistaken. Or, frequently, God punishes covetousness by mental anxiety and dissatisfaction; by the loss of that for which they have craved, so that it becomes to them as though it had never been; by social disgrace, contempt and dishonour; by the ruin of bodily and intellectual health, and by an abandonment to remorse and despair. Always God punishes covetousness, when it constitutes and is cherished to the last as a master passion, by an exclusion from His favour, and from the abodes of His celestial glory. Ye professing Christians see to it that, under the cloak of your religion, you hide nothing and cherish nothing of a spirit which is deadly wherever it is indulged. And let us all endeavour, with constant anxiety, to remember that “God will not be mocked”; and that “it is a fearful thing” to fall into His hands. 2. Again, we are also to trace the consequences, as relating to the community to which the individual belonged. For important reasons, the welfare of the whole people of Israel was affected by the individual transgression. You will now be prepared for the statement we have simply to advance—that the prosperity of the Christian Church has been much checked, and that its progress has been grievously retarded, by the covetousness and by the worldly conformity of those who have professed to be connected with it. III. A MOMENTOUS DUTY WAS REQUIRED. It was that the people should “put away the accursed thing” from them. 1. There is comprehended here uncompromising separation from all that is polluted and pernicious. 2. There must also be devoted engagement in direct effort for the advancement of the Divine glory. There ought to be, throughout the whole of the Christian Church, one spirit of devoted, unweary, and incessant activity in the proclamation of the unsearchable riches of Christ. And, in connection with personal labour, there must be pecuniary contribution. The property which has been vouchsafed to man as a stewardship is to be taken away from the service of mammon, and devoted to the service of the Saviour, is to be taken away from the service of Satan and devoted to the service of God, and of souls, and of salvation. There must also be prayerfulness—incessant and persevering prayerfulness—prayer involving matters as wide as the universe can supply; that our own souls may be spiritually established, and may prosper; that the souls of our fellow-saints may be aroused, revived, and preserved. (*James Parsons.*)

Vers. 16–19. **Achan . . . was taken.**—*Achan's sin*:—1. Look at it in itself. It was sacrilege—a robbing God of what He had directed to be devoted to His glory and appropriated to the use of His sanctuary. 2. View it in its circumstances. It was committed immediately after the offender, together with the rest of the people of Israel, had solemnly renewed their dedication to God in the ordinances of circumcision and the Passover, and after the most signal display of almighty power; and it was committed when God had declared that the person who should be found guilty of such a sin should be accursed. 3. Look, too, at Achan's sin in its effects. In consequence of it, God had withdrawn His favour and His help from His people; they had sustained a humiliating defeat, in which six-and-thirty of their number had been slain; and had the sin not been punished, it would have procured the destruction of the whole nation. (*W. Cardall, B.A.*) *Achan's trespass*:—A vessel in full sail scuds merrily over the waves. Everything betokens a successful and delightful voyage. The log has just been taken, marking an extraordinary run. The passengers are in the highest spirits, anticipating an early close of the voyage. Suddenly a shock is felt, and terror is seen on every face. The ship has struck on a rock. Not only is progress arrested, but it will be a mercy for crew and passengers if they can escape with their lives. Not often so violently, but often as really, progress is arrested in many a good enterprise that seemed to be prospering

to a wish. There may be no shock, but there is a stoppage of movement. The vital force that seemed to be carrying it on towards the desired consummation declines, and the work hangs fire. In all such cases we naturally wonder what can be the cause. And very often our explanation is wide of the mark. In religious enterprises we are apt to fall back on the sovereignty and inscrutability of God. "He moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform." It seems good to Him, for unknown purposes of His own, to subject us to disappointment and trial. We do not impugn either His wisdom or His goodness; all is for the best. But, for the most part, we fail to detect the real reason. That the fault should lie with ourselves is the last thing we think of. We search for it in every direction rather than at home. It was an unexpected obstacle of this kind that Joshua now encountered in his next step towards possessing the land. Hitherto Joshua had been eminently successful, and his people too. Not a hitch had occurred in all the arrangements. The capture of Jericho had been an unqualified triumph. It seemed as if the people of Ai could hardly fail to be paralysed by its fate. The men of Israel were not prepared for a vigorous onslaught, and when it came thus unexpectedly they were taken aback and fled in confusion. As the men of Ai pursued them down the pass, they had no power to rally or retrieve the battle; the rout was complete, some of the men were killed, while consternation was carried into the host, and their whole enterprise seemed doomed to failure. And now for the first time Joshua appears in a somewhat humiliating light. He is not one of the men that never make a blunder. He rends his clothes, falls on his face with the elders before the ark of the Lord till even, and puts dust upon his head. There is something too abject in this prostration. And when he speaks to God, it is in the tone of complaint and in the language of unbelief. Like Peter on the waters, and like so many of ourselves, he begins to sink when the wind is contrary, and his cry is the querulous wail of a frightened child! After all he is but flesh and blood. Now it is God's turn to speak. "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" Why do you turn on Me as if I had suddenly changed, and become forgetful of My promise? Then comes the true explanation—"Israel hath sinned." Might you not have divined that this was the real cause of your trouble? Is not sin directly or indirectly the cause of all trouble? What a curse that sin is, in ways and forms, too, which we do not suspect! And yet we are usually so very careless about it. How little pains we take to ascertain its presence, or to drive it away from among us! How little tenderness of conscience we show, how little burning desire to be kept from the accursed thing! And when we turn to our opponents and see sin in them, instead of being grieved, we fall on them savagely to upbraid them, and we hold them up to open scorn. How little we think, if they are guilty, that their sin has intercepted the favour of God, and involved not them only, but probably the whole community in trouble! How unsatisfactory to God must seem the bearing even of the best of us in reference to sin! The peculiar covenant relation in which Israel stood to God caused a method to be fallen on for detecting their sin that is not available for us. The whole people were to be assembled next morning, and inquiry was to be made for the delinquent in God's way, and when the individual was found condign punishment was to be inflicted. The tribe is taken, the family is taken, but that is not all; the household that God shall take shall come "man by man." It is that individualising of us that we dread; it is when it comes to that, that "conscience makes cowards of us all." But before passing on to the result of the scrutiny, we find ourselves face to face with a difficult question. If, as is here intimated, it was one man that sinned, why should the whole nation have been dealt with as guilty? We are to remember that practically the principle of solidarity was fully admitted in Joshua's time among his people. The sense of injustice and hardship to which it might give rise among us did not exist. Men recognised it as a law of wide influence in human affairs, to which they were bound to defer. Let us think of Achan's temptation. A large amount of valuable property fell into the hands of the Israelites at Jericho. By a rigorous law, all was devoted to the service of God. Now a covetous man like Achan might find many plausible reasons for evading this law. "What I take to myself (he might say) will never be missed. Nobody will suffer a whit by what I do—it cannot be very wrong." Now the great lesson taught very solemnly and impressively to the whole nation was, that this was just awfully wrong. The moral benefit which the nation ultimately got from the transaction was, that this kind of sophistry, this flattering unctious which leads so many persons ultimately to destruction, was exploded and blown to shivers. That sin is to be held sinful only when it hurts your fellow-creatures, and especially the poor

among your fellow-creatures, is a very common impression, but surely it is a delusion of the devil. That it has such effects may be a gross aggravation of the wickedness, but it is not the heart and core of it. And how can you know that it will not hurt others? Not hurt your fellow-countrymen, Achan? Why, that secret sin of yours has caused the death of thirty-six men and a humiliating defeat of the troops before Ai. More than that, it has separated between the nation and God. Many say, when they tell a lie, it was not a malignant lie; it was a lie told to screen some one, not to expose him, therefore it was harmless. But you cannot trace the consequences of that lie, any more than Achan could trace the consequences of his theft, otherwise you would not dare to make that excuse. Is there safety for man or woman except in the most rigid regard to right and truth, even in the smallest portions of them with which they have to do? Is there not something utterly fearful in the propagating power of sin, and in its way of involving others, who are perfectly innocent, in its awful doom? Happy they who from their earliest years have had a salutary dread of it, and of its infinite ramifications of misery and woe! (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

A great crime:—I. The crime of Achan was marked by **DISOBEDIENCE**. The remembrance of the solemn covenant between God and His people rendered the disobedience very aggravated. The act of Achan was a glaring breach of its conditions. II. It was also an act of **THEFT**, a breach of the eighth commandment. There was, on the part of Achan, a definite and deliberate breach of trust; as much so as if the crime had been embezzlement or forgery. And it is very plain that this act was deliberately planned and carried out. Achan's action was not that of a man suddenly overcome by temptation. His act was most deliberate. It was also inexcusable. There was no pressing want or demand upon him to coerce right principle. III. **DECEIT** also characterised Achan's conduct. So is it always. Lying and stealing are twin brothers, inseparable. The words "committed a trespass" might be more literally translated, "deceived a deceit." The whole transaction occurred under cover of a cloud of guile. He not only stole, but also tried hard to cover his offence with craft. IV. Achan's conduct also revealed **UNBROTHERLINESS**. He wished in an underhand way to get the better of his brethren, and that was bad enough; it showed how utterly selfish he was. But he had also been warned that such conduct would be visited not only on the perpetrator himself, but on all the people (chap. vi. 18). Accordingly his act was unbrotherly and unpatriotic. The real enemy of God's people is not opposing strength but inner corruption; not the quibbles of the infidel but the carelessness of the Christian. Achan's wedge of gold was a more formidable weapon against Israel than all the swords of the aliens. The grand lessons here taught are, that while the holy are invincible, the defiled must be defeated; and "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house." V. Still further, Achan's conduct revealed **INGRATITUDE**. And this was all the more sad, because Jehovah was no hard master, eager to gather all to Himself and leave His servants as little as possible. Each of them will have plenty in good time. There is sufficient for each and all, and for their children after them. Surely He may well demand the firstfruits as His due. VI. Achan's deed betokened **IMPIETY**. It was the act of a godless heart. Could Achan have believed that God spoke true, when He warned the army of the evil that would come upon them if they disobeyed His command? Nay, he did not believe the Divine word. Neither did he believe in the Divine knowledge. Whom did Achan conceive the God of Israel to be? One like the blind and deaf deities of Canaan—a god who could not see and understand. His act was an invasion of God's rights before His very face; the alienation of His property under His very eyes; the devoting to private use that which He had devoted to His glory, and therefore it amounted to daring and impudent sacrilege. Is such a sin as Achan's extinct? Is there no unjust getting in these days? no "getting of treasures by a lying tongue"? Is there no undue grasping in these days? Has God no claim on any portion of what we possess? (*A. B. Mackay.*)

Found out:—One man spoiled the unity, spoiled the success. It is put in plain English: for the sin of one man the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and they all suffered. For that unity, that solidarity, is a reality far more than we think. God counts a great deal upon it. If one member suffer, the whole body suffers. If there is health, there is general health. If there is sickness, we are all enfeebled and hurt by that sickness. It is somewhat like what takes place in connection with our electric telegraph system. Messages and communications are flying to and fro, say, between the different parts of an army in a foreign country engaged in a foreign campaign, one being in complete accord and close communication

with the other, when suddenly there is a breakdown. Suddenly the generals in each host cease to be able to communicate with each other. United movement is impossible: united counsel is impossible. Why? Because, at some one place the enemy, by means of a spy, has tapped the wire; and all this communication of theirs is being turned not for them, but against them. At some place the wire is tapped and the communication is taken off and is used by the enemy. So with Israel. At one point the tide of the Spirit's power that was circulating through them all was deflected. By one unfaithful man the whole tide of God's energy was shed helplessly down to the earth. The problem on that day was this. There was one man who had broken the chain. A leakage was taking place at one point, at one particular man, an ordinary man, a man who but for his sin would never have been heard of in the world. Oh, see how staring, glaring, conspicuous a man becomes by sin; not by cleverness, not by intellectuality, not by wealth, not by culture, not by rank, not by wearing clothes, and taking positions, but by this dirty thing—sin. Sin makes a man conspicuous who otherwise, as I have said, would not have been heard of—an ordinary man in the ranks of men. There is that missing link; there is that break; there is that leakage; there is that sinner. The problem is, how to find him out—how to have the damage repaired, how to have that man detected, and either put right or put out. And the problem is intensified thus. The man knows what he has done, and the man will not tell. We have the same thing still. This accursed thing is in us, namely, that our heart shall depart from the living God; our heart shall forget its purpose; our heart shall turn aside to sin, and outwardly we shall brazen it out with our very Leader and defy Him, and deny so far as we are concerned, that we are responsible—that the blame lies at our door. There was no confession. The Lord was not helped in the least. He had to take judgment in hand. Joshua was nonplussed; and if God Himself had not come, Israel's history as a successful people would have come to a close at this very point. We talk in our homely proverb of the difficulty, the impossibility, of finding a needle in a haystack. That familiar phrase receives a moral illustration here. What God has to do is to find out the one sinner among these assembled thousands, when he is keeping as dark as the grave. God could have come and simply taken that unclean thing, Achan. He could have taken him "neck and crop" without all this process. God could have gone straight to him, and put His hand upon his shoulder, and hurled him out into the outer darkness at once. Why take all this time—tribe by tribe, family by family, man by man? Surely that was mercy. That was in Achan's interest. He gave the poor, infatuated fool time, space, place, room to repent; and as he saw Nemesis evidently on his track he had time to cast himself down before Joshua, and to exclaim, "Stop! I confess! I am the man." Had he done so, this story, I am convinced, would have been one of the brightest stories of mercy in God's book, instead of one of its darkest, almost without a ray of light. Achan was taken. That same God is the God of the New Testament Church. I do not know how it may be with you: but this is the kind of preaching I was brought up under, and I have seen no reason to turn from it—a God of inflexible righteousness and holiness, who will not allow sin to go unpunished. Now do not stand up blatantly and ask whether I have ever heard of the Cross and the New Testament. I have been to the Cross. This story is intensified by the Cross. At the Cross we behold at once the goodness and the severity of God. At the Cross we learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the dazzling, blinding holiness of God, as well as the mercy that is intershot through all. Sin is no metaphysical abstraction. It is not a mere arrangement of the letters of the alphabet. It is not a mere thing of theology or of philosophy. It is a deep, dark, abominable thing found in the hearts of men; and if God spared not the angels that sinned, how shall He spare us? No, it was no exaggeration. It was no "trouble for nothing." It was no mere cry. God was justified. There was a stone in the machine, and God found out the stone and took it away; and then the wheels ceased to grate and jar and move heavily. There is a stone in the machine yet, in the moral machinery of God's Church and of God's world. I may be that stone, and I may be concealing what I am—concealing it behind the profession of the ministry, concealing it behind preaching to you on this very subject. You may be concealing it behind the office of the elder. You may be concealing it behind a great anxiety to keep the table of the Lord and the communion roll pure; and I say that this is needful, and it is a good sign and a good thing that the Church should conserve and be anxious about her purity before God and man; and yet it may be part of the dress that we put on, to look as

Achan looked. For while the judgment processes were going on Achan, very likely, held up his head and looked round. "It is not I, at any rate"; and the nearer it came the more brzen he looked; "It is not I." So our very scrupulosity and care in connection with God's house and book and day may belong to the Pharisee within us, the Achan, the hypocrite. God Almighty alone could have detected this man, and God Almighty Himself had to take the judgment work in hand. I am speaking to Achan here, and I want to let you know that you will get all you are working for. The day comes when the sweet gales of mercy no longer shall blow—when you will hear no more about cleansing blood—when there will be nothing but "a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries"—when your sin shall be proved on you, and in you, and to you, and before an assembled world, with no chance for ever of getting its curse and its power lifted away. It is coming. God will here lead us now to confession, or there to too late confession and doom beyond remedy. (*John McNeill.*)

Achan a representative man:—There is nothing old in these words. Achan is "taken" every day. Achan is sure to be "taken." If we are practising the policy of Achan, the fate of Achan we can never avert. What a representative man is Achan! Does he not represent those, for example, who are continually taking great risks? What a life some men lead! But the mystery of it is that Achan represents also men who have no need to take risks. They have plenty; they have sweet homes. They need not go out of their own doors for a single pleasure. Yet they covet just a little more: it is only one acre to complete the estate. Achan committed a sin which is common to us all, in so far that he felt it extremely difficult to subordinate the personal to the communal. He might have said—and in so saying he would have talked good, round English—"What can a wedge of gold matter in all this great heap of wealth? What is the difference one Babylonish garment more or less? Who will be the worse for my taking it? Nobody need know. I want a relic of this event, I want a keepsake; this has been a very wonderful miracle, and I want to keep in my house some memorial of it; I could turn these things into good, moral uses: I could preach sermons upon them, I could derive lessons from them. It cannot make any difference where thousands of men are concerned if I take one wedge of gold, two hundred shekels of silver, and a goodly Babylonish garment—they are all but a handful, and who will miss them? In fact, there will be no reckoning; things in connection with a battle are done so tumultuously and so irregularly that none will ever think of looking up such a handful of spoil as I may seize." That is the exaggeration of individualism; that is the lie which man is always telling to himself. It is the falsehood which enables him to cheat the body politic: "What can it matter if I do not vote? There are thousands of people who want to vote, let them enjoy themselves, and I will take mine ease. What can it matter if I do not keep the laws of the company—the municipal or other company? The great majority of the neighbours will keep them, and as for any little infraction of them of which I may be guilty, it is mere pedantry to remark upon it. Who cares for the body politic—the body corporate?" We are being taught to respect that so-called abstraction; but the lesson is a very difficult one to learn. When shall we come to understand fully that there is a corporate humanity, a public virtue, a body politic, with its responsibilities, laws, duties—a great training-school in which individualism is subordinated to the commonwealth? Does not Achan represent those who create unnecessary mysteries in the course of Divine providence? It is the concealed man who could explain everything. It is the thief behind the screen who could relieve all our wonder, perplexity, and distress. We have to search him out by circumstantial evidence. If he would stand up and say, "Guilty!" he would relieve our minds of many a distressing thought even about the Divine government. We wonder why the people are delayed, why the battle goes the wrong way, why the heathen pursues the chosen man, and beats him down, and scorns his assaults. We speak of God's mysterious way. It is a mistake on our part. The silent man, skulking behind the arras, could explain the whole affair, and relieve Divine providence of many a wonder which grows quickly into suspicion or distrust. Look at the case in one or two remarkable aspects. 1. Consider Achan, for example, as a solitary sinner. He was the only man in the host who had disobeyed the orders that were given. "Why arrest a whole army on account of one traitor? Let the host go on." So man would say. God will not have it so. He does not measure by our scale. One sin is a thousand. 2. Think of Achan as a detected sinner. For a time there was no prospect of the man being found out. But God has methods of sifting which

we do not know of. 3. Then look at Achan as a confessing sinner. He did confess his sin, but not until he was discovered. And the confession was as selfish as the sin. 4. The picture of Achan as a punished sinner is appalling. Who punished the sinful man? The answer to that inquiry is given in ver. 25, and is full of saddest yet noblest meaning. Who punished the thief? "All Israel stoned him with stones"—not one infuriated man, not one particularly interested individual, but "all Israel." The punishment is social. It is the universe that digs hell—the all rising against the one. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord.**—*Kindness to the sinner*:—There was infinite kindness in that word "my son." It reminds us of that other Joshua, the Jesus of the New Testament, so tender to sinners, so full of love even for those who had been steeped in guilt. It brings before us the great High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, seeing He was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin. A harsh word from Joshua might have set Achan in a defiant attitude, and drawn from him a denial that he had done anything amiss. How often do we see this! A child or a servant has done wrong; you are angry, you speak harshly, you get a flat denial. Or if the thing cannot be denied, you get only a sullen acknowledgment, which takes away all possibility of good arising out of the occurrence, and embitters the relation of the parties to each other. But not only did Joshua speak kindly to Achan, he confronted him with God, and called on him to think how He was concerned in this matter. "Give glory to the Lord God of Israel." Vindicate Him from the charge which I and others have virtually been bringing against Him, of proving forgetful of His covenant. Clear Him of all blame, declare His glory, declare that He is unsullied in His perfections, and show that He has had good cause to leave us to the mercy of our enemies. No man as yet knew what Achan had done. He might have been guilty of some act of idolatry, or of some unhallowed sensuality like that which had lately taken place at Baal-peor; in order that the transaction might carry its lesson it was necessary that the precise offence should be known. Joshua's kindly address and his solemn appeal to Achan to clear the character of God had the desired effect. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Confession of sin to God*:—God's omniscience should indeed make us ashamed to commit sin, but it should embolden us to confess it. We can tell our secrets to a friend that does not know them; how much more should we do it to Him that knows them already? God's knowledge outruns our confessions and anticipates what we have to say. As our Saviour speaks concerning prayer, "Your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask," so I may say of confession, your heavenly Father knows what secret sins you have committed before you confess. But still He commands this duty of us; and that not to know our sins but to see our ingenuity. Adam, when he hid himself, to the impiety of his sin added the absurdity of a concealment. Our declaring of our sins to God who knows them without being beholden to our relation; it is like opening a window to receive the light which would shine in through it howsoever. Now there is no duty by which we give God the glory of His omniscience so much as by a free confession of our secret iniquities. Joshua says to Achan, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him." (*R. South.*)

Vers. 20, 21. Achan answered . . . I coveted and took.—*The eye, the heart, and the hand*:—I. **THE EYE AN OCCASION OF SIN.** We will suppose that Achan came into contact with this Babylonish garment in the course of his duty. He could not help seeing it, and therefore there was no harm in seeing it; in the simple contact of this garment with his eye, and of this silver and gold with his eye, there could be no wrong; this was a permission of Divine Providence. The sin was in the looking at it. He saw; and instead of turning his eye away from the temptation, he continued to look, and he looked until he coveted, and he coveted until he took. And we will suppose that you cannot help seeing things which suggest the thought of doing wrong, and which excite the desire to do wrong; but you can help fixing your eyes upon them, and keeping your eyes intent upon them. II. **MARK THE PROGRESS OF SIN.** It was an evil thing to continue looking; it was a greater evil to desire to take. The desire springing up, what did Achan with respect to it? Instead of trying to quench it, he fed it. He let imagination fly and work, and, under the influence of that imagination, and the thinking connected with that imagination, the desire to possess this garment, and to lay hold of this silver and gold, became in his heart exceedingly strong, and mastered him. Under the power of that desire he stretched forth his hand and took. Just see here the progress of the sin—I saw, I coveted, I

took; I first took that which was doomed to be destroyed, and then I took that which was devoted to the service of my God. III. LOOK AT THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN. When Achan saw, and coveted, and took, the taking promised him great things. There is nothing in the universe so deceitful and so treacherous as doing wrong. Doing wrong always promises some good result, and doing wrong has never yet realised it, nor ever can. IV. LOOK AT THE COWARDICE OF THE TRANSGRESSOR. He hid these things. He first put them among his furniture. I dare say he thought that there would be no notice taken of it. Then, when a stir is made about the matter, and the lot begins to be used, what did he? Instead of having the courage and manliness to remove suspicion from his fellows, and to say, "I am the sinner," he hides in the earth, in the midst of his tent, the treasures and the garment which he has taken. This seems to be a general fact in connection with sin: "The wicked fleeeth when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion." V. LOOK AT THE FOLLY AND THE MADNESS OF PERSISTING IN TRANSGRESSION. The wages of sin, what are they? You see this illustrated here. "The wages of sin is death." Achan, instead of gaining anything by this transgression, lost all. He lost not only the spoil he had taken, but he lost even life itself. Now this is God's arrangement, that he whose transgressions are not pardoned shall die, and shall die a second death. Tell me, then, what is a man profited if he gain the world, and die that second death? (*S. Martin.*) *Achanism; or, self-seeking a hindrance to the victories of Christianity*:—I. This principle applies to THE EFFORTS OF MEN TO PROMOTE THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANITY. It is common to hear Christians mourning their spiritual barrenness; regretting their little progress in the great work of self-discipline and personal sanctification. They refer the cause sometimes to the circumstances in which they are placed, and sometimes to the profitless ministry which they attend, whereas there is some Achan within—some unholy principle or passion that is neutralising every effort, and rendering the spirit powerless to strike one conquering blow. II. This principle applies to THE EFFORTS WHICH INDIVIDUAL CHURCHES MAKE TO PROMOTE CHRISTIANITY IN THEIR OWN NEIGHBOURHOOD. Some sweeping system of discipline must come before your efforts to evangelise will be of much avail. The tares must be plucked from the wheat. III. This principle applies to THE EFFORTS WHICH THE GENERAL CHURCH IS EMPLOYING TO PROMOTE CHRISTIANITY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. The self-seeking spirit hinders the spread of the Gospel. 1. By preventing that agency which is indispensable for the purpose. Self-sacrifice. 2. By prompting that agency which must necessarily neutralise its aim. Priestcraft. Slavery. War. (*Homilist.*) *Achan*:—I. THE GRADUAL PROGRESS OF SIN. II. THE DECEITFUL NATURE OF SIN (*Job xx. 12-15; Hab. ii. 11*). III. THE CERTAIN DETECTION OF SIN. IV. THE AWFUL PENALTY OF SIN. V. THE ONLY WAY OF FORGIVENESS OF SIN. VI. THE UNCERTAINTY OF A LATER REPENTANCE. (*T. Webster, B.D.*) *Sin's progress*:—I. THE GLANCE: "I saw." II. THE GREED: "I coveted." III. THE GUILT: "I took." (*Thomas Kelly.*) *Achan's sin*:—I. THE FASCINATION: "Babylonish garment." II. THE FEELING: "I coveted." III. THE FELONY: "I took." IV. THE FEAR: "I hid them." V. THE FATE: "Israel stoned him." (*Ibid.*) *Achan and his sin*:—I. THE TEMPTING SIGHT: "A goodly Babylonish garment," &c. II. THE COVETOUS HEART: "I coveted them." III. THE GRASPING HAND: "Took them." IV. THE CRAFTY ACTION: "Hid." V. THE JUDICIAL SEARCH: "Joshua sent," &c. VI. THE LAWFUL SEIZURE: "They took them." VII. THE RELIGIOUS CEREMONY: "Laid them out before the Lord." VIII. THE MERITED RETRIBUTION: "Stoned him." IX. THE ADMONITORY MEMORIAL: "Raised over him a great heap of stones." X. THE APPEASED AVENGER: "So the Lord turned," &c. (*J. Henry Burn, B.D.*) *Achan's sin*:—God, who looks deeply into the hidden springs of human conduct, is careful to lay a special emphasis upon the more subtle evil of covetousness. It deserves attention that, along with murder, theft and lying, it has one entire commandment to itself. Drunkenness, violence, sensuality, luxurious living, corruption and bribery are doubtless making havoc with reputations, with human life and with immortal souls. But who shall say how often these open vices draw their inspiration or the means of gratification from "the love of money, which is," in very deed, "a root of all evil"? Many of the more violent sins are like fire in dry stubble—they burn out rapidly. But avarice is like those fish which can best thrive in Arctic seas—it flourishes in the chilly blood of old age. I. In turning our attention to the dealings of God with Israel concerning Achan's transgression let us briefly REVIEW THE FACTS. II. These dealings of God with Achan's family and with Israel because of one man's sin bring before us in a startling shape that great mystery—FELLOWSHIP IN GUILT AND IN

SUFFERING. Bishop Butler states a fact of daily experience when, in his irrefutable reply to objections against the mediation of Christ ("Analogy" pt. ii. ch. v.), he reminds us that nearly the whole of what we enjoy or suffer comes to us through our relation to other men. Every thinking man can see for himself that the conduct of parents shapes the destiny of their children. Drunkenness, sensuality and gluttony stamp themselves upon the offspring that is yet unborn. The more obvious operations of the law are visible to our feeble eyes. How much farther it extends is known only to God or as He reveals it to us. When the attempt is made to break the force of this analogy by saying, "It is all natural," that same sagacious thinker reminds us that "natural" means are appointed by Him who is the Author of nature. So it appears that, explain the facts as we may, deny them if we dare, we cannot get rid of the principle so long as we hold to a belief in an almighty Creator. III. From this discussion, notwithstanding our imperfect apprehension of its great theme, CERTAIN CONCLUSIONS SEEM TO FOLLOW WHICH ARE OF IMMENSE PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE. 1. How vain to hope for escape from punishment so long as sin remains unrepented of! 2. A wise regard to our own happiness will make us deeply interested in the welfare of our neighbour. God holds us accountable in this regard to an extent that many seem not to dream of. 3. It especially becomes parents to consider the influence which, in the nature of things, they must exert over the destiny of their children. Not miserable Achan only, but far better men, as Noah, Lot, Eli, and David, are sad examples of this. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked, but He blesseth the habitation of the just." 4. Among other duties it is incumbent upon such parents to consider well what place shall be made in their plans for "goodly" garments and for shekels of gold and silver. There may be, there often is, a place for such things, but it becomes us to consider the text upon which our Lord preached that wonderful sermon, the parable of the rich fool: "Take heed and beware of covetousness," &c. (*W. E. Boggs, D.D.*)

Achan's crime, confession, and punishment:—In the progress of the evil, temptation entered by the eye, that chief inlet of corruption to the heart. He might be characterised by all that was evil: an evil eye, an evil heart, and an evil hand. Correct imitator of the first transgressor! David's distress and dishonour originated in the same course; and so did the covetousness of Ahab, who could not see Naboth's vineyard without conceiving the purpose of making it his own. Thus the eye, exquisitely nice in construction, beautiful in form, and precious in use, formed too for purposes of purity and pleasure, is pressed into the service of sin, and has opened to the heart, that deep and rising fountain of evil, that spring of moral corruption, endless forms of sin and allurements. In the advance of sin the temptation laid hold of his affections, those strong ties of inward life, and too frequent controllers of outward action. The first conceptions of evil, and its last impressions, are in the heart: the eye is but as a servant in its employ. When I saw, &c., then I coveted them. The only thing that remained was to make them his own, for which we may conceive many palliating considerations were admitted, matured by unbelief. Oh! to what cruelties and outrage have forbidden desires, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, impelled on many who, in love of power, wealth, and pleasure, have not only laid hands on what God has prohibited, but, with property, taken away the very lives of its owners! "I took them." The hand, as the eye, now became the servant of the heart to perfect its evil wishes. Ah! little did he consider that the whole progress of this action was marked with a curse—the sight, the desire, and the act of sin, and that therein he had even appropriated a curse from which he would never be able to free himself. "And, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent." What perplexities did these riches bring! a thousand embarrassments felt, before a place could be found for their deposit!—at last, his tent; not among the things seen, nor were they deemed safe in the privacy of his most concealed possessions, but, as though dead to his heart, and never again to see the light, he gave them burial beneath his tent! Neither friend, nor wife, nor children, could be entrusted with the secret. Oh! that any should transact what fear or shame induces them to conceal from the observation of others, and even sometimes what they could not endure their nearest friends should know! But what can all avail when men cannot hide themselves, or any of their actions, from the eye of infinite purity, which sees into every dark recess of infidelity and corruption. In this instance of confession one melancholy reflection arises—it was out of the order of mercy as to this life, and therefore unavailing. Instead of preceding detection, it was after conviction, and but the desperate necessity of his case, wanting the ingenuousness which ever characterises the sincere

penitent as the hater of his own offence. Whatever his situation in the next world, it may be viewed as a faint picture of their ineffectual confessions and unavailing miseries who shall appear convicted and condemned at the bar of God. The awfulness of the sentence naturally throws our reflections upon the aggravations of the offence. "He that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath." The reason assigned vindicates the severity of justice. "Because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel." Achan acted against the mightiest displays of vengeance and love, the obligations of favours received, and the awful severities of justice executed upon idolaters. To all the wonders of providence and grace displayed through many years, the interposition of power so recently experienced in the destruction of Jericho, added new claims of obedience. The covenant relation in which he stood to God as one of His professing people, and the instructions of revelation with which he was favoured, gave an aggravation to his offence, beyond whatever could characterise the sin of idolaters. The ruinous consequences that followed. Many the evils which had resulted to others, but the most awful fell upon himself and family. To the loss of men, the distress of the camp, the triumphs of the enemy, and the dishonour cast upon the Divine name, ensued the execution of a sentence the most exemplary. How terrible this scene of judgment, more awful than the burning of Jericho. For how small a portion of ill-gotten gain, and how short a time, did he lose life, and all the good to be enjoyed in the land of Canaan. All Israel concurred in the execution of the sentence: it is so spoken of as though every man had cast a stone, and every one thrown fuel to the fire. How awful their case, and how aggravated their crimes, when even those they have lived among are employed by God, as the executioners of His justice. (*W. Seaton.*)

The Babylonish garment:—I. We find, in the case of Achan, that THE WANDERING AND WANTON EYE WAS THE FIRST AVENUE OF MISCHIEF. Yet this is the very function to which the great Teacher appeals as the first guardian against sin: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." There is an eye in the heart as well as in the head, and Christ, knowing how easily the one is decoyed, enjoins wakefulness upon the other. Keep both open, and let the eye of the conscience supervise and test all that the eye of sense may contemplate. I once went into a garden where a lady and her little child were engaged in putting in some spring roots and seeds. By some mischance, the little plants had got mixed up with some which were only worthless weeds. The child, anxious to be busy, was thrusting all alike indiscriminately into the soil, till the mother checked the little eager hand, and said, "Bring them to me, and let me see them before you put them in, that I may tell you which to plant and which to throw away." And there was an added pleasure in this work of testing and submitting which made the child not only more useful but more happy. And thus, when the child-eye of the sense beholds something which seems goodly and fair, let it be brought to the inspection of the mother-eye of the conscience before it is taken and sown and assimilated into the soil of character. "I saw." The spirit of these times, and of modern habits, addresses itself to this avenue of the heart. The eye of the voluptuary is opened to let in the comely procession which turns the world into a huge Babylonish seraglio. His life is a closing dalliance among hours, till the fever of ignited lust attains its climax of delirium, and then, having conceived its progeny of illusions, brings forth its only permanent offspring—death (Jas. i. 15). The eye of the man of luxury is opened to turn the world into one vast Babylonish kitchen, and the great problem of living is, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink?" We know the guerdon and the result of all such entral-worship. The meat turns to worms within the pampered lips, and the consequential sequence is—"whose god is their belly, whose end is destruction." The eye of the slave of commerce looks at the world as one great Babylonish mart. There is the wedge of gold, appearing and re-appearing in a thousand shapes. Now it is a lump of solid bullion, now it is melted, minted, stamped into coin; now it is bartered for scrip, now cropping up in consols, now in coupons, now in debentures (a coffin and a grave being the simple end of all the race and turmoil); but through all the changes the wedge is at its wedge-like work, splitting asunder, as it is driven home into the fibres of the life-character, all that gives life its buoyancy, or character its weight, until the whole fabric of the manhood is shivered and destroyed, and the mart becomes a mausoleum, as sin, perfected, brings forth death. And the eye of the proud or the votary of fashion turns the world into a vast Babylonish shop. Life is one interminable Regent Street. There is the goodly Babylonish garment folding and unfolding, and as it rustles

while the smiling courtiers hold it up, first in this light, then in that, it seems to whisper a silken accompaniment to the anxious duct of prudery and foppery which the dolls of fashion are for ever singing, "Wherewithal shall I be clothed?" Lust! Luxury! Commerce! Fashion! They all come like besiegers to this gateway of the eye, and try to storm it. It is the first and the last of these, perhaps, which most hotly assail young men—lust and fashion, both kindred evils, both sore enemies of the soul. The lust of the eye and the pride of life. Beware of them! II. SEEING IS WANTING. There is a covetousness of the sense which looks and craves; there is a covetousness of the soul which looks and learns. The first is the lust which consumes itself to death; the second is the patience which watches unto life eternal. Be yours the wiser choice. Don't shut your eyes upon the beauty of the garment or the richness of the gold, but look, that you may adorn the spirit with the beauty, and enrich the soul upon the wealth. III. FATAL GRADATION—the eye, the appetite, the act. The glance, the greed, the gathering. The look, the lust, the larceny. I see a man before me in this place who has looked upon the office and position of another, and who has longed for it, and has begun to take it, by falsehood and innuendo against his character. I see another who has grudged a neighbour his good fortune, and has tried to steal his wedge of gold by driving in the wedge of scandal and detraction to destroy his credit. IV. THE SAME PATH MUST EVER LEAD TO THE SAME END. The lust is soon satiated, and then begins to crave and rage again. The Delilahs who charmed can charm no more; all they can do is to point the white and taper fingers with which they beckoned in derision at your shame, and part the coral lips that smiled you into sin to hiss the taunt, "The Philistines be upon thee." The tresses that you played with are stiffened to Cassandra's snakes, to sting you into fiercer pain. The luxury is soon gone. The Babylonish kitchen is soon empty, and all that is left is but the reek of the past banquet, which sickens and repels. The gold is soon spent, and only emptiness remains. The Babylonish garment is soon threadbare and worn out, and shabbiness, nakedness, and chill are all that linger now. The path along which you look with wanton eye leads to lust, and the lust to sin, and at the end of all is nothing but a grave. The last garment is the shroud—the last shekel is the funeral fee—the last beckoner is death. (*Arthur Mursell.*) *Covetousness:*—The man in the text, in one view, it should seem at first sight, was an object of pity; for gold and silver and fine clothes, to be had for carriage, formed a great temptation. Hence arises a question, why doth providence put in our way such agreeable objects, and yet forbid us to touch them? Let us give glory to God by acknowledging that by such means we are exercised, first as creatures to discover the natural grandeur of our own passions, the incompetence of the world to make us happy, and if reason be not asleep the all-sufficiency of God. Next, these exercises try us as servants, and by the emotions of depraved passions we become acquainted with the natural rebellion of an evil heart, that disputes dominion with God. By an habitual deadness to these, because God commands it, we discover the true religion of a renewed mind, and enter on the enjoyment of conscious rectitude, a preference of virtue, the felicity of heaven. Why, then, do we blame Achan? Because he was not a boy, for none but men above twenty bore arms, and he was old enough to know that he ought not to have disobeyed his general, or his God. Because he was a Jew, and of the tribe of Judah, and had been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Because he must have heard what mischief, the golden calf, the iniquity of Peor, and the murmuring at Kadesh had brought upon his countrymen. Because he knew God had expressly forbidden plunder. Had he exercised his understanding, some or all these reasons would have cooled his passion for perquisites. In like manner we say of ourselves. We have temptations and passions; but we have reason, too, to resist them. We have passions; but we have had a Christian education, and have been apprised of the danger of gratifying them. We have passions; but we have eyes and ears, and live among people who daily die for gratifying the same passions which we feel. We covet; but God says, "Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbour's." To covet is to desire beyond due bounds. God hath set these due bounds. He hath bounded passion by reason, and reason by religion and the nature of things. 1. Covetousness is unjust. Let the prince enjoy the privilege of his birth; let the man who hath hazarded his life for wealth possess it in peace; let the industrious enjoy the fruit of his labour; to transfer their property to myself without his consent, and without putting something as good in the place, would be an act of injustice. Only to covet is to wish to be unjust. 2. Covetousness is cruel. A man of this disposition is obliged to harden his heart

against a thousand plaintive voices, voices of poor, fatherless, sick, aged, and bereaved people in distress; voices that set many an eye a-trickling, but which make no impression on a covetous man. 3. Covetousness is ungrateful. Shall the whole world labour for this old miser, one to feed him, another to guard him, and all to make him happy, and shall he resemble the barren earth that returns nothing to him that dresseth it? This is a black ingratitude. 4. Covetousness is a foolish vice; it destroys a man's reputation, makes everybody suspect him for a thief, and watch him; it breaks his rest, fills him with care and anxiety, excites the avarice of a robber, and the indignation of a housebreaker; it endangers his life, and, depart how he will, he dies unblest and unpitied. 5. Covetousness is unprecedented in all our examples of virtue. It is Judas, who hanged himself, and not such as Peter, whom covetous men imitate. 6. Covetousness is idolatry. It is the idolatry of the heart, where, as in a temple, a miserable wretch excludes God, sets up gold instead of Him, and places that confidence in it which belongs to the great Supreme alone. Achan, and all such as he, cause a great deal of trouble, and to pass everything else let us only observe what covetous men do with their wealth. "Behold, it is hid in the earth in the midst of my tent." Observe a miser with his bag. With what an arch and jealous leer the wily fox creeps stealthily about to earth his prey! He hath not a friend in the world, and judging of others by himself, he thinks there is not an honest man upon earth, no, not one that can be trusted. 1. Remark his caution. He turns his back on his idol, trudges far away, looks lean, and hangs all about his own skeleton ensigns of poverty, never avoiding people in real distress, but always comforting himself with the hope that nobody knows of his treasure, and that therefore nobody expects any assistance from him. 2. Take notice of the just contempt in which mankind hold this hoary mass of meanness. He thinks his wealth is hid; but it is not hid, his own anxious side-looks betray the secret. People reckon for him, talk over all his profits, omit his expenses and losses, declare his wealth to be double what it is, and judge of his duty according to their own notions of his fortune. One lays out his good work for him, another rates him at so much towards such a charity, and all execrate him for not doing what is not in his power. 3. Mark his hypocrisy. He weeps over the profligacy of the poor, and says it is a sad thing that they are brought up without being educated in the fear of God. He laments every time the bell tolls the miserable condition of widows and orphans. He celebrates the praise of learning, and wishes public speakers had all the powers of a learned criticism, and all the graces of elocution. He prays for the downpouring of the Spirit, and the outgoings of God in His sanctuary, and then, how his soul would be refreshed! What a comfortable Christian would he be then! Tell him that the gratitude of widows, the hymns of orphans, and the blessings of numbers ready to perish, are the presence of God in His Church. Tell him all these wait to pour themselves like a tide into his congregation, and wait only for a little of his money to pay for cutting a canal. See how thunderstruck he is! His solemn face becomes lank and black; he suspects he has been too liberal already, his generosity has been often abused. Why should he be taxed and others spared? The Lord will save His own elect; God is never at a loss for means, no exertions will do without the Divine presence and blessing; and besides, his property is all locked up, "Behold, it is hid in the earth in the midst of my tent!" Let us respect truth even in the mouth of a miser. This ignoble soul tells you that he would not give a wedge of gold to save you all from eternal ruin; but he says God is not like him, God loves you, and will save you freely. This is strictly and literally true. There have been thousands of poor people besides you who have been instructed and animated, converted and saved, without having paid one penny for the whole; but this, instead of freezing, should melt the hearts of all who are able, and set them a-running into acts of generosity. I conclude with the words of Ambrose. "Joshua," said he, "could stop the course of the sun; but all his power could not stop the course of avarice. The sun stood still, but avarice went on. Joshua obtained a victory when the sun stood still; but when avarice was at work, Joshua was defeated." (R. Robinson.) *Achan's sin* :—"I coveted." What multitudes of sinners of that class are to be found—revenge, theft, adultery, murder, carried on in the feelings. This is the secret of the sudden falls and failures in society. Achan must have had a weakness for at least looking at questionable and unlawful things before this trouble. Woe to the man who cannot confront a bad impulse with the solid masonry of a good character! Unless we thus fence ourselves off from evil, our downfall will be only a matter of time. Only character, evolved from the principles of truth and righteousness, can withstand the seductive

influences of the world and the attacks of the powers of darkness. The influence of home and friends is all that keeps many people straight and respectable. Like coopers' casks, they are held upright and in shape by the hoops of external influences that surround them. Woe to the man whose restraints are all on the outside! The internal, more than the external, should suggest our conduct, and shape our activities. It is the Japanese, I think, who say that a snake is quite orderly and straight so long as you keep it in a bamboo stick, but the moment it gets out it begins to wriggle and act snaky. So there are many who are quite decorous and respectable while in the bamboo of home influences who show the old serpent and act snaky enough when such restraints are taken away. (T. Kelly.) *Achan* :—Jericho was one of the largest and richest cities in all ancient Canaan. At one time, indeed, and but for the terrible ban pronounced by Joshua, Jericho might have taken the place of Jerusalem itself as the chief city of ancient Israel. Jericho was an excellently situated and a strongly fenced city. There were great foundries of iron and brass in Jericho, with workshops also in silver and in gold. The looms of Babylonia were already famous over all the eastern world, and their rich and beautiful textures went far and near, and were warmly welcomed wherever the commercial caravans of that day carried them. "A goodly Babylonish garment" plays a prominent part in the tragical history that now opens before us. The rich and licentious city of Jericho was doomed of God to swift overthrow and absolute extermination, but no part of the spoil, neither thread nor shoe-latchet, was to be so much as touched by Joshua or any of his armed men. Nothing demoralises an army like sacking a fallen city. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life." And Joshua and all his men received a crown of life that night—all his men but one. Who is that stealing about among the smoking ruins? Is that some soldier of Jericho who has saved himself from the devouring sword? 1. Everybody who reads the best books will have long had by heart Thomas a Kempis's famous description of the successive steps of a successful temptation. There is first the bare thought of the sin. Then, upon that, there is a picture of the sin formed and hung up on the secret screen of the imagination. A strange sweetness from that picture is then let down drop by drop into the heart; and then that secret sweetness soon secures the consent of the whole soul, and the thing is done. That is true, and it is powerful enough. But Achan's confession to Joshua is much simpler, and still closer to the truth: "I saw the goodly Babylonish garment, I coveted it, I took it, and I hid it in my tent." Had Joshua happened to post the ensign of Judah opposite the poor part of the city this sad story would never have been told. But even as it was, had Achan only happened to stand a little to the one side, or a little to the other side of where he did stand, in that case he would not have seen that beautiful piece, and not seeing it he would not have coveted it, and would have gone home to his tent that night a good soldier and an honest man. But when once Achan's eyes lighted on that rich garment he never could get his eyes off it again. As a Kempis says, the seductive thing got into Achan's imagination, and the devil's work was done. Achan was in a fever now lest he should lose that goodly garment. He was terrified lest any of his companions should have seen that glittering piece. He was sure some of them had seen it, and was making off with it. He stood in between it and the searchers. He turned their attention to something else. And then when their backs were about he rolled it up in a hurry, and the gold and the silver inside of it, and thrust it down into a hiding-place. His eyes were Achan's fatal snare. It was his eyes that stoned Achan and burned him and his household to dust in the valley of Achor. Had God seen it to be good to make men and women in some way without eyes the Fall itself would have been escaped. In his despair to get the devil out of his heart Job swore a solemn oath and made a holy covenant with his eyes. But our Saviour, as He always does, goes far deeper than Job. He knows quite well that no oath that Job ever swore, and no covenant that Job ever sealed, will hold any man's eyes in; and therefore He demands of all His disciples that their eyes shall be plucked out. He pulls down His own best handiwork at its finest part so that He may get the devil's handiwork destroyed and rooted out of it; and then He will let us have all our eyes back again when and where we are fit to be trusted with eyes. Miss Rossetti is writing to young ladies, but what she says to them it will do us all good to hear. "True," says that fine writer, "all our lives long we shall be bound to refrain our soul, and to 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 companionships we shun, we shall be welcomed into angelic society and the communion of triumphant saints. For all the amusements we avoid, we shall keep the supreme jubilee." Yes, it is as certain as God's truth and righteousness are certain, that the crucified man who goes about with his eyes out; the man who steals along the street seeing neither smile nor frown; he who keeps his eyes down wherever men and women congregate, in the Church, in the market-place, at a station, on a ship's deck, at an inn table, where you will; that man escapes multitudes of temptations that more open and more full-eyed men and women continually fall before. You huff and toss your head at that. But these things are not spoken for you yet, but for those who have sold and cut off both eye and ear, and hand and foot, and life itself, if all that will only carry them one single step nearer their salvation. 2. Look at the camp of Israel that awful morning! It is the day of judgment, and the great white throne is set in the valley of Achor before its proper time. Look how the hearts of those fathers and mothers who have sons in the army beat till they cannot hear the last trump. Did you ever spend a night like that night in Achan's tent? A friend of mine once slept in a room in a hotel in Glasgow through the wall from a man who made him think sometimes that a madman had got into the house. Sometimes he thought it must be a suicide, and sometimes a damned soul come back for a visit to the city of its sins. But he understood the mysterious noises of the night next morning when the officers came in and beckoned to a gentleman who sat at the breakfast-table, and drove him off to a penal settlement, where he died. Groanings that cannot be imitated to you were heard by all Achan's neighbours all that night. Till one bold man rose and lifted a loop of Achan's tent in the darkness, and saw Achan still burying deeper and deeper his sin. O sons and daughters of discovered Achan! O guilty and dissembling sinners! It is all in vain. It is all utterly and absolutely in vain. Be sure as God is in heaven, and as He has His eyes upon you, that your sin will find you out. You think that the darkness will cover you. Wait till you see! 3. The eagle that stole a piece of sacred flesh from the altar brought home a smouldering coal with it that kindled up afterwards and burned up both her whole nest and all her young ones. And so did Achan. It was very sore upon Achan's sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had. But things are as they are. God gathers the solitary into families for good, and the good family tie still continues to hold even when all the members of the family have done evil. Once a father, always a father: the relationship stands. Once a son, always a son, even when a prodigal son. Every son has his father's grey hairs and his mother's anxious heart in his hands, and no possible power can alter that. Drop that stolen flesh! A coal is in it that shall never be quenched. 4. Make a clean breast of it, then. Go home to your tent to-night, go home to your lodgings, take up the accursed thing out of its hiding-place, and lay it out before Joshua, if not before all Israel. Lay it out and say, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done." And if you do not know what more to say, if you are speechless beside that accursed thing, try this; say this. Ask and say, "Is Thy name indeed Jesus? Dost Thou indeed save found-out men from their sins? Art Thou still set forth to be a propitiation? Art Thou truly able to save to the uttermost? For I am the chief of sinners," say. Lie down on the floor of your room—you need not think it too much for you to do that, or that it is an act unworthy of your manhood to do it: the Son of God did it for you on the floor of Gethsemane. Yes, lie down on the floor of your sinful room, and lay your tongue in the dust of it, and say this about yourself: say that you, naming yourself, are the offscouring of all men. For "thus and thus," naming it, "have I done." And then say this—

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That Fountain in his day"—

and see what the true Joshua will stand over you and say to you. 5. Therefore the name of that place is called the valley of Achor to this day. Achor; that is, as interpreted on the margin, "Trouble"—the valley of trouble. "Why hast thou troubled us?" demanded Joshua of Achan. "The Lord shall trouble thee this day." The Lord troubled Achan in judgment that day, but He is troubling you in mercy in your day. Yes; already your trouble is a door of hope. You will sing yet as you never sang in the days of your youth. You never sang songs like these in the days of your youth, or before your trouble came—songs like these: The Lord will be a

refuge for the overwhelmed: a refuge in the time of trouble. Thou art my hiding-place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. *A. Whyte, D.D.*)

Vers. 25, 26. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day.—*The troubles of sin*:—I. **THAT SIN IS A VERY TROUBLESOME THING.** 1. The load of guilt by which it oppresses us. 2. The shifts, subtrefuges, and tricks resorted to for the purpose of concealing our sins, or transferring the blame to others, are convincing proofs that sin troubles us. 3. Sin troubles us by its corrupt and restless influence on the tempers and dispositions. 4. But it is chiefly into futurity that we are to look for the troubles of sin (*Prov. xi. 21; Ezek. xviii. 4; Romans vi. 23*). II. **HOWEVER ARTFULLY CONCEALED, SIN MUST BE EXPOSED.** 1. The most secret sins are often revealed in this world. 2. Those sins that escape detection here, will be manifested in the last day (*Eccles. xii. 14*). III. **WHEN THE SINNER IS EXPOSED, HE IS LEFT WITHOUT ANY REASONABLE EXCUSE.** Joshua said, "Why hast thou troubled us?" What could he say? Could he plead ignorance of the law? No; it was published in the camp of Israel. The weakness of human nature? No; he had strength to do his duty. The prevalence of temptation? No; others had similar temptations, and yet conquered. And what shall we have to say when God shall summon us to His bar? IV. **THAT PUNISHMENT TREADS UPON THE HEELS OF SIN.** "The Lord shall trouble thee this day." 1. God has power to trouble sinners. The whole creation is a "capacious reservoir of means," which He can employ at His pleasure. 2. God will trouble sinners. He will either bring them to repentance, when they shall "look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn," or He will vex them in His wrath, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. Infer—1. What a powerful preventive this should be to deter us from committing sin. 2. See the madness of sinners, who, for the sake of a few sordid despicable pleasures, which always leave a sting behind, will desperately plunge themselves into an abyss of troubles which know no bound nor termination. 3. Since sin is so troublesome, let us all seek a deliverance from its dominion and influence. 4. Learn what ideas you should entertain of those who seek to entice you to sin. They are agents of the devil, and you should shun them as you would shun perdition. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons*.) **Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire.**—*Achan's punishment*:—The punishment of Achan himself offers no difficulty. He knew the decree, and chose to stake his life against a few valuable articles which excited his rapacity. The maintenance of discipline in an army is at all times of first importance. In the Peninsula War two men were shot for stealing apples, pilfering having been proclaimed a capital crime. The Duke of Wellington was a humane man, but he knew the need of obedience to law and the value of a striking example. The Israelites were a nation and army in one. Regard for the general welfare, above all private aggrandisement, had to be encouraged. The sense of a common interest would soon be undermined, if a pilfering spirit set in and a greedy selfishness received any countenance. Moreover, at all costs, reverence for their Deity had to be upheld. His majesty must be vindicated. Disastrous results could only follow upon a diminution of the religious sentiment among the people. But the association of Achan's family in his terrible penalty, as a calm judicial proceeding, sends a thrill of horror through our hearts. But then, we are "the heirs of all the ages, in the foremost files of time." We enjoy the inheritance of millenniums of Divine education. We could not expect Joshua to act in advance of the spirit of his time. The ancient world was deficient in its conception of what a man was. It was long before it came to regard him as an individual, a being complete in himself. So long as one man continued to be considered as part of another, or in any sense the property of another, so long fathers might pledge the lives of their children, and whole families expiate the crimes of a single member without shocking the public sense of justice. But is it not said that the destruction of Achan's family was by the express command of Jehovah? Is not this the explanation? The command, shaping itself within the mind of Joshua in the form of an overmastering conviction, would be that justice should be executed. Joshua could only understand justice in the sense in which his contemporaries understood it. His moral sense would give the character and colour to the justice to be dealt out. His inmost conviction, which was, in truth, the inspired message of his God, forced upon him the necessity for a signal vindication of the majesty of loyalty and uprightness, and he acted up to the light which he possessed. (*T. W. M. Lund, M.A.*) *The troubling of Achan*:—Two questions present themselves,

Why should all Israel have been put to shame and defeat for the sin of one man? And why should God have required the whole congregation in this dramatic way to take part in the execution of the offender? To our minds at first thought it would seem likely to brutalise the hearts of the people, that all should be required to take part in that bloody vengeance. For the sake of example, God might wish the whole congregation to be present at the taking of the lot. He could have pointed out the criminal to Joshua in some simple and direct way, but He chose to give all Israel a most salutary warning. That the unerring finger of Jehovah should thus single out the guilty man was a striking object-lesson concerning the truth that no sin is so secret as to be hidden from the all-searching God. But this does not explain why all the people should have been made to suffer shame and defeat because of Achan's sin, for the great investigation might have been made just as thoroughly before the defeat at Ai. We might say, perhaps, that Israel needed the lesson of this defeat to teach them their dependence upon God for the smallest as well as the greatest victory. We fancy we can detect a little vein of boastfulness in the words of the scouts (ver. 3). And if we ask concerning the thirty and six men who perished while Israel was receiving this lesson in humility, we may reply that such matters must be left, and can without disquietude be left in the hands of God. We cannot know about individual lives. God certainly in all cases deals wisely and mercifully. Yet we have not progressed very far in our solution of this difficulty, that God permitted all Israel to suffer for the sin of one man. And it is a difficulty worth trying to solve, because it is of the same sort as that which meets us every day of our lives, and makes heedless men question the justice and fairness of Almighty God. Who is there that has not suffered hurt, or trouble, or unhappiness, from the misdoings of his neighbours? The embezzler gets the money of hundreds of poor and unsuspecting people invested in his dazzling schemes, and then goes off with his booty, leaving desolation and misery behind. How many people suffer from the malignity or hatred of their fellows, because they have innocently offended them. Aye, how many suffer, often most cruelly, from the heedlessness and thoughtlessness of others, who never meant to do harm, but talked foolishly and excessively about things they did not understand. We think of the mischief we have endured at the hands of others, knowing that we deserved nothing of it; and we say, "Why does God allow the innocent thus to suffer for other men's sins?" Perhaps, indeed, it is to remind us that we are not so guiltless as we fancy. We dwell upon the harm done us by others, and we seldom think of the many ways in which we do others harm, it may be quite thoughtlessly, but still very mischievously. Our hasty and ill-considered words, our unlovely examples, how much mischief these may do our fellow-men, while we are quite oblivious of it. A young man is dishonest, and makes off with large sums of his employer's money; we condemn him heartily, and yet it may be in the sight of God that the very atmosphere in which he was brought up in our midst was so filled with the praise of wealth and the excellence of shrewdness and business ability, the power of capital, and the good things which money can bring into one's life, that our words and views have been the teachers which fostered in the transgressor's heart the very sin we now so unsparingly condemn. May it not be that the very wrongs we so often have to suffer undeservedly at the hands of others are the merciful agencies of God, to let us endure a little of the penalty our own careless words and evil examples deserve, which constantly, all unsuspected by ourselves, are doing mischief to our neighbours? We have no right, then, even to complain of injustice in the fact that we have to suffer for other men's sins, unless we can be sure that our sins do not cause as great injury to the souls, if not to the bodies, of many of our fellow-men. There is a deeper sense yet in which we may take this lesson of all Israel suffering for Achan's transgression. God thus taught His people the solidarity of their national life as His people. In other words, that men have responsibility for their neighbours. No one in Israel might say, "This is none of my affair," for God showed them that the sin of one man affected the whole community; therefore the whole community had a certain responsibility towards individual transgression. Civilised nations all admit this responsibility of humanity, at least to a certain degree. Men hear of flood or famine or pestilence in some far-off part of the world, devastating populous districts in India, or China, or some distant island of the Pacific. Immediately the sentiment of humanity opens their purses, and relief goes forth generously to the sufferers. Why should we concern ourselves to help those savages, who would as likely as not murder us if we went among them as travellers? Because they are men; they share in our common humanity, and we may not forget our brotherhood

of race. Why should European nations send war-ships to the Red Sea and the East African coast to stop the Arabian slave trade? What right have they to interfere? You reply that the slave-trade is brutal and inhuman, and the sentiment of humanity compels those who have the power to interfere, to save the poor blacks from their fiendish persecutors. Carry the same thought a little further, and you get the higher Christian conception of man's duty to all his fellow-men. What is the greatest evil in the world? You reply sin, because sin is the root of all other evils. Well, then, we Christians owe it to humanity to do all that lies in our power to take sin away from the world. That is the great principle of Christian missions. No matter if the missions do not seem to be very successful, we shall not have missed this lesson of the sufferings we have to endure for other men's sins if we have bravely done what was in our power to make known to our fellow-men the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ. Our other question was, Why did God require the whole congregation to take part in the stoning of Achan? There are evils of ignorance, there are also evils of wanton defiance of the known law of right. So long as men sin in ignorance and superstition we may be moved only by compassion to help them. The missionary spirit must always be that of Christlike pity for them that are ignorant and out of the way. England sends her heroic missionaries into the heart of Africa and of China while at the same time she patrols the Red Sea with warships to stop at the cannon's mouth the slave trade, and sends an army up the Irrawaddy to conquer the monster King Theebaw of Burmah, and so to put a stop to his terrible cruelties. Is there inconsistency in this? No. It was quite as much the duty of Israel to stone Achan as it was to teach their children with loving assiduity the enormity of disobeying Jehovah. We owe it to God to do what lies in our power to put down flagrant iniquity. We are much too careless about this in our Christian lives. We may not punish individuals, for God commits that authority to the State; but we are bound to confront and denounce all iniquitous principle, to stand up and fight against God-defying sin. No matter if we do not succeed in slaying Achan. No matter if men tell us to mind our own business, and not to interfere with them. It is a great thing to have thrown a stone for the Lord, even if it has seemed in no wise to hurt the enemy. (*Arthur Ritchie.*)

They raised over him a great heap of stones.—*Nemesis*.—Again we stand beside a heap of stones. Again it will be profitable to put and to answer the question, "What mean ye by these stones?" This is the third occasion on which such a question might arise. The first heap of stones was raised on the brink of Jordan; the second lay some miles distant; the third is still further in the land. The first heap was a token of Jehovah's might; for taken from the river-bed by twelve stalwart warriors, they told to all succeeding generations that by a strong hand and a stretched-out arm Israel was brought into Canaan. The second heap, stretched far and wide, the ruins of a famous city, was the token of Jehovah's judgment. This third heap in the valley of Achor, the cairn erected over the dead body of Achan, was the token of Jehovah's discipline. The twelve stones speak of Jehovah's relation to the sin of those who trust Him and accept His leadership. He buries all their iniquities, He brings them into His promised inheritance, and gives them a permanent place therein. The ruined city speaks of Jehovah's relation to the sin of these who stubbornly resist Him. He smites them with a rod of iron. This rugged pile speaks of Jehovah's relation to the sin of those who profess to obey Him, but who in their deeds deny Him. If He judges the world, much more must He judge His own house. The twelve stones on Jordan's bank were a monument of Israel's hope. He who had led them over, and brought them in, would assuredly bless them with all earthly blessings in His fair heritage. The ruins of Jericho were a monument of Israel's faith. For nothing but faith could have been so patient, so docile, so mighty, so victorious—"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." The heap in the valley of Achor was a monument of Israel's love. They heaped up this cairn of condemnation to show their detestation of the crime of which Achan was guilty. Thus this act revealed their love to God in the strongest light. By this third heap we stand, and as we do so, let us ponder the discovery of Achan's crime, its confession, and its punishment. Joshua gave himself no rest till he got to the root of this matter. Though appalled by such severe tokens of the Divine displeasure, he did not murmur against God, but persistently made inquiry of God. He did not complain of God, he complained to God; and his faithful persistency was rewarded (vers. 10-12). "Get thee up. My mind has not changed. My arm is not shortened. My word is not broken. Get thee up, for the discovery and punish-

ment of this sin." The discovery of Achan's sin was, therefore, the result of Divine directions. It was God who set everything in motion for the detection of the hidden criminal. The discovery was undertaken most solemnly, as a deeply spiritual and religious act (ver. 13). Three times in the course of their history had the children of Israel been thus called solemnly to sanctify themselves. On the first occasion, it was at the foot of Sinai, in prospect of the giving of the law. On the second occasion it was at Jordan, in prospect of entering into the land. On the third occasion, it was here, in prospect of the discovery and punishment of the transgressor. To receive God's will, to enter into God's inheritance, to purge away transgression, such things demand the most thorough consecration. It is plain from the Divine record that Israel went about this solemn work in the right way. There was no burst of ungovernable excitement and blind popular fury. With judicial calmness and religious reverence, the terrible drama was begun, continued, and ended. It was also prosecuted deliberately. There was no unseemly haste or confusion. A proclamation was made in the evening previous as to the manner of procedure on the following day; and then the carrying out of the process of casting lots must have been slow and deliberate. What a night must that have been for Joshua! How thankfully must he have laid himself to rest in the blessed consciousness that as surely as the darkness of night would fly before the dawning day, so all his difficulties would vanish, and all the disgrace of Israel would be blotted out. And what a night must that have been for Achan! He would feel as did another whose mental torture a great poet has described—

"Macbeth hath murdered sleep, the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
Balm of hurt minds."

Oh! what a long, black, miserable night was that. The voice cried, "Sleep no more," and on the morrow, as with bloodshot eyes he took his place in the ranks of his tribe, what must have been his terror! And then to mark the circle of condemnation closing upon him, growing less and less at each casting of the lot, he rooted meanwhile to the dark spot, its centre, till at last, pointed out by the finger of God, he stood alone, the incarnation of disaster and disgrace, the hateful object for every eye in Israel, the awful focus of their fiery indignation, burning into his soul one thought, one agony, "We have found thee, O our enemy." The method of discovery was most impressive for the people, revealing so marvellously the finger of God. Whatever the precise process of the lot may have been, and that is hard to discover, there was no difficulty, hesitation, timidity, uncertainty, or partiality in its carrying out. The method of discovering the crime was also the most merciful that could have been adopted for the offender. It gave him time to think; a blessed space for repentance; an opportunity, if there was any spark of spiritual life within, to cast off the incubus of iniquity. Every step would serve to convince him how utterly foolish it was to promise himself secrecy in sin, and how certainly at the last God would discriminate between the innocent and the guilty, however for a little while they were involved in the same condemnation. Thus Achan stands exposed in the sight of all Israel. Joshua, filled with unutterable compassion for the trembling sinner, though absolutely certain of his guilt, has no harsh word to utter, but only seeks to win him to a right frame of mind. Nothing could be more touching than this venerable leader's words. He deals with him as a grey-haired father with a wayward son, urging him to the only course that in the circumstances could yield one spark of consolation (ver. 19). Achan breaks down under this unexpected kindness. He had looked for nothing but harsh reproof and unmitigated severity; therefore in broken accents he replies, "Indeed I have sinned," &c. This confession is worthy of notice, and has some features which relieve the darkness of the scene. To begin with, it was voluntary. There was here no extortion of a confession from unwilling lips. Joshua spoke in love, calling him "my son." It is evident that he has no personal ill-will, no hard spirit of revenge. He appealed to the glory of God. Thus Joshua brought forth this free confession of Achan's guilt. His confession was as full as it was free. The miserable man kept nothing back. He made a clean breast of it. His full confession shows that penitents cannot be too particular. His confession was also personal. He felt that it was first of all, and above all, a matter between himself and God, and therefore, though others, in all likelihood, were sharers in his guilt (for he could not well have hid these things in

his tent without the cognisance of his family), still he made no mention of them, he condemned none but himself, for he felt himself the greatest sinner. Also Achan's confession was sincere. He did not attempt in the faintest degree to excuse himself. He pleaded no palliation of his offence. Surely, therefore, in this confession we have a gleam of light thrown across the gloom of this narrative. Just as in a picture of this dark valley and its black pile of stones, we have seen one white bird hovering amid the gloom, so this confession is the white bird of hope hovering over Achan's grave, and relieving somewhat the blackness of its darkness. His punishment trod swiftly on the heels of his confession. This punishment was at once a solemn expression of the evil of sin, a vindication of God's truth and justice, a prelude to future victory, and a monument to all succeeding ages, declaring, "be sure your sin will find you out." We are also told that all Achan's substance was destroyed, that which he possessed, as well as that which he stole. What a poor prize had Achan then in the things he so much admired. No good ever comes of ill-gotten gains. In regard to this punishment of Achan, the fate of his family deserves to be noticed. What happened to them? Two explanations have been offered. The first is that they shared Achan's sin and therefore shared his punishment. Another explanation is that Achan's family were spared. This rests on the fact that there is a change from the plural in ver. 24 to the singular in ver. 25. Joshua took Achan and all his possessions and all his family to the scene of execution, but the punishment fell only on Achan, for Joshua said (ver. 25): "Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord will trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them (his cattle and goods) with fire after they had stoned them with stones." Whichever is the true explanation we may rest assured that the demands of justice were not ignored. Thus we leave Achan, and surely as we stand by this heap of stones and consider his sad end, these words come to mind—"the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Looking again at this event, we are struck with the parallelism between the early history of Israel as recorded in the Book of Joshua and the early history of the Church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The taking of Jericho corresponds in its mighty triumph to the Day of Pentecost and the casting down of the walls of rebellion and prejudice through the proclamation of the gospel. Then the sin of Achan is strikingly paralleled by that of Ananias and Sapphira. The cause of transgression was the same in both, and the punishments present a striking resemblance. It was a salutary lesson taught both to Israel and to the Church. It showed that the God who dwelt among men was a consuming fire, that His judgment must follow shortly and surely on the heels of sin, and that holiness is the only source and secret of success in the work of the Lord.

(A. B. Mackay.) **The valley of Achor.**—*The valley of Achor*:—I. WE SHOULD GRIEVE MORE FOR SIN THAN FOR ITS RESULTS. As soon as we have committed sin, we look furtively round to see whether we have been watched, and then we take measures to tie up the consequences which would naturally accrue. Failing this, we are deeply humiliated. We dread the consequences of sin more than sin; discovery more than misdoing; what others may say and do more than the look of pain and sorrow on the face that looks out on us from the encircling throng of glorified spirits. But with God it is not so. It is our sin, one of the most grievous features in which is our failure to recognise its intrinsic evil, that presses Him down, as a cart groans beneath its load. The true way to a proper realisation of sin is to cultivate the friendship of the holy God. The more we know Him, the more utterly we shall enter into His thought about the subtle evil of our heart. We shall find sin lurking where we least anticipated, in our motives, in our religious acts, in our hasty judgment of others, in our want of tender, sensitive, pitying love, in our censorious condemnation of those who may be restrained by the action of a more sensitive conscience than our own from claiming all that we claim to possess. We shall learn that every look, tone, gesture, word, thought, which is not consistent with perfect love indicates that the virus of sin has not yet been expelled from our nature, and we shall come to mourn not so much for the result of sin as for the sin itself. II. WE SHOULD SUBMIT OURSELVES TO THE JUDGMENT OF GOD. "And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" It was as if He said, "Thou grieveest for the effect, grieve rather for the cause. I am well able to preserve My people from the assaults of their foes,

though all Canaan beset them, and I am equally able to maintain the honour of My name. These are not the main matters for concern, but that a worm is already gnawing at the root of the gourd, and a plague is already eating out the vitals of the people whom I have redeemed. With My right arm I will screen you from attack, whilst you give yourselves to the investigation and destruction of the accursed thing." Whenever there is perpetual failure in our life, we may be sure that there is some secret evil lurking in heart and life, just as diphtheria breaking out repeatedly in a household is an almost certain indication that there is an escape of sewer gas from the drains. 1. In searching out the causes of failure we must be willing to know the worst, and this is almost the hardest condition. Ostrich-like, we all hide our heads in the sand from unwelcome tidings. It is the voice of an iron resolution, or of mature Christian experience, that can say without faltering, "Let me know the worst." But as we bare ourselves to the good Physician let us remember that He is our husband, that His eyes film with love and pity, that He desires to indicate the source of our sorrow only to remove it, so that for Him and for us there may be the vigour of perfect soul-health and consequent bliss. 2. When God deals with sin He traces back its genealogy. Notice the particularity with which twice over the sacred historian gives the list of Achan's progenitors. It is always, "Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah" (vers. 1, 16-18). Sin is sporadic. To deal with it thoroughly we need to go back to its parentage. A long period will often intervene between the first germ of sin, in a permitted thought or glance of evil, and its flower or fruit in act. We generally deal with the wrong that flames out before the sight of our fellows; we should go behind to the spark as it lay smouldering for hours before, and to the carelessness which left it there. We only awake when the rock disintegrates and begins to fall on our cottage roof; God would lead us back to the moment when a tiny seed, borne on the breeze, floating through the air, found a lodgment in some crevice of our heart, and, although the soil was scanty, succeeded in keeping its foothold, till it had struck down its tiny anchor into a crack, and gathered strength enough to split the rock which had given it welcome. And by this insight into small beginnings our God would forearm us against great catastrophes. 3. It is a good thing at times to muster the clans of heart and life. We must make the principal tribes of our being pass before God. The public, and private, our behaviour in the business, the family, the church, until one of them is taken. Then to take that department and go through its various aspects and engagements, analysing it in days, or duties; resolving it into its various elements, and scrutinising each. This duty of self-examination should be pursued by those who have least relish for it, as probably they really need it; whilst they who are naturally of an introspective or morbid disposition should not engage themselves in it to any large extent. And whoever undertakes it should do so in reliance on the Holy Spirit, and give ten glances to the blessed Lord for every one that is taken at the corruptions of the natural heart. It is looking off unto Jesus which is the real secret of soul-growth. III. WE SHOULD HOLD NO PARLEY WITH DISCOVERED SIN. God never reveals an evil which He does not require us to remove. And if heart and flesh fail, if our hand refuses to obey our faltering will, if the paralysis of evil has so far enfeebled us that we cannot lift the stone, or wield the knife, or strike the flint stones for the fire, then He will do for us what must be done, but which we cannot do. Some are cast in a mould so strong that they can dare to raise the hatchet, and cut off the arm just madly bitten, and before poison has passed from it into the system; others must await the surgeon's knife. But the one lesson for all the inner life is to be willing for God to do His work in us, through us, or for us. So the valley of Achor becomes the door of hope. From that sterile, mountain-guarded valley, Israel marched to victory; or, to use the highly-coloured imagery of Hosea, it was as though the massive slabs opened in the cliffs, and the people passed into cornfields, vineyards, and oliveyards, singing amid their rich luxuriance as they sang in their youth in the day when they came up out of Egypt. "Ah! metaphor as true as fair! For all our inner life there is no valley of Achor where the work of execution is faithfully performed in which there is not a door of hope, entrance into the garden of the Lord, and a song so sweet, so joyous, so triumphant, as though the buoyancy of youth were wed with the experience and mellowness of age. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.)

CHAPTER VIII.

VERS. 1, 2. Fear not . . . I have given into thy hand the king of Ai.—*The use of failure* :—"Fear not." How much of our misery arises from fear! How many a beating heart, how many a shaking nerve, how many a sleepless night have come, not from evil experienced, but from evil apprehended! To save one from the apprehension of evil is sometimes more important, as it is usually far more difficult, than to save one from evil itself. An affectionate father finds that one of his most needed services to his children is to allay their fears. Never is he doing them a greater kindness than when he uses his larger experience of life to assure them, in some anxiety, that there is no cause for fear. Our heavenly Father finds much occasion for a similar course. Virtually the command to Joshua is to "try again." Success, though denied to the first effort, often comes to the next, or at least to a subsequent one. Even apart from spiritual considerations, it is those who try oftenest who succeed best. There is little good in a man who abandons an undertaking simply because he has tried once and failed. Who does not recall in this connection the story of Alfred the Great? Or of Robert the Bruce watching the spider in the barn that at last reached the roof after sixteen failures? Or, looking to what has a more immediate bearing on the kingdom of God, who has not admired the perseverance of Livingstone, undaunted by fever and famine and the ferocity of savage chiefs; unmoved by his longings for home and dreams of plenty and comfort that mocked him when he awoke to physical wretchedness and want? Such perseverance gives a man the stamp of true nobility. To Christian men especially failure brings very valuable lessons. There is always something to be learned from it. In our first attempt we were too self-confident. We went too carelessly about the matter, and did not sufficiently realise the need of Divine support. In the case of Joshua and his people, one of the chief lessons derived from their failure before Ai was the evil of covering sin. Alas, this policy is the cause of failures innumerable in the spiritual life! In numberless ways it interrupts Divine fellowship, withdraws the Divine blessing, and grieves the Holy Spirit. Joshua is instructed to go up again against Ai, but in order to interest and encourage the people he resorts to a new plan of attack. A stratagem is to be put in operation. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *The right policy* :—

I. These words were spoken to **GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT**. God began His address with the exhortation, "Fear not." This indeed constitutes the burden of comfort which it contains. God would renew Joshua's confidence; for this is always essential to success in the work of the Lord. Without holy confidence there can be no good hopes, no wise plans, no buoyant energy, no patient endurance, no successful campaign. The fact that this was an old exhortation made it doubly dear. Israel's sins had been confessed, acknowledged, judged, therefore God is faithful and just to forgive it, thoroughly, absolutely. These words of God also contain a promise. "Ai is thine"; this is the pledge given. 'It was sure, for God's Word is never broken. And it was as sweet as it was sure. It was the encouragement of a perfect love that had long been experienced and enjoyed; a new outpouring of its glory most grateful and precious. **II.** But God thus addressed Joshua in order to **REPROVE AN ERROR**. The spies had said, "Let not all the people go up," &c. Here God says, "Take all the people with thee, and arise, go up to Ai." Here God points out the error of division in His work, the error of thinking that part can do the work designed for the whole. The policy of the spies was a policy of pride. They were elated with their marvellous success at Jericho, with that brilliant victory so easily won; and therefore when they came to look at Ai their hearts were filled with contempt. And the feelings which influenced them still possess the human heart. How dangerous is success to the individual, to the congregation, to the Church! The policy of the spies was also one of ignorance and disobedience. It was opposed to the Divine design and command. So is it now. God has never said to any of His children, "Son, go to church, enjoy the services, criticise the sermons, bury yourself in business and pleasure from Monday till Saturday." No, but He does say, "Son, go work." And He says that to every son whom He acknowledges. No Christian can shake off his responsibility for personal service. And no one can buy himself off, for the conscription is universal. We must each put our hand to this work as we have opportunity, and if we do not, we show ourselves ignorant or prove ourselves disobedient. Moreover, this policy of the spies was a policy of inconsistency. In adopting it Joshua fell from his own

model. He had begun in the spirit and was continuing in the flesh. The taking of Jericho was the pattern for faith to follow. What is the model set by God before His Church in the prosecution of the campaign of salvation? Without dispute, the Day of Pentecost. And what were the characteristics of that day? Unity of spirit, unity of labour. Likewise, this policy sprang from presumption. Joshua in listening to the advice of the spies acted according to the dictates of carnal wisdom. If all the people go against Ai they will tread on each other and be a hindrance rather than a help. If all the people quit the camp there will be a useless expenditure of energy. It is absurd to use 50,000 men when 5,000 are quite capable of doing the work. So they argued; and so the modern descendants of these wise spies say, "Not all the people." If all are engaged in this work, many mistakes will be made, much energy will be wasted, much folly will be wrought, much injury to the good cause will be done. What! Has not God ordained that all are to take part in this campaign? Let us take heed, then, lest in our wisdom we perchance become guilty of presumptuously opposing God, who has ordained by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Certainly it is delightful to see zeal well directed, but any zeal for the good of souls is better than lethargy, indifference, death. Still further, this policy of the spies was a policy of infatuation. That Joshua entertained this proposal and acted on it was a sign that for the while he was left to himself on account of that sin which had defiled all Israel. Its unanimous adoption by the people (for both those who went to Ai and those who stayed in the camp signified their approval of it) was a clear token of the Divine displeasure, and brought its own punishment in the universal disgrace which followed. Thus does God often deal with men when they will not hearken to His voice. He makes them eat of the fruit of their own ways. May we ever be saved from such infatuation. Let us fall every one into the ranks of this great army of salvation. Let us buckle on the sword of the Spirit. Let us march to the attack on Satan's citadels with united front; and we also, like Israel, will divide the spoil and share the glory of the victory. III. God gave this command to Joshua in order to TEACH A LESSON. Jericho was taken in one way, Ai in another: therefore methods may vary; they are not stereotyped, cast-iron rules, which cannot be altered. There are essential and there are non-essential elements in the mode of conducting the Divine work. It is essential that all God's people should take part in the work. All were employed at Jericho; all were to be employed at Ai. It is essential that there be organisation and arrangement. It was an army, not a rabble, which did the work at Jericho; so was it at Ai. But there are non-essentials also. There are great diversities of operation in this army of the Cross. God does not always act exactly in the same way. He has different modes of reaching the human heart and conscience in different ages, in different countries, and among different classes. What is suitable in one set of circumstances may be very unsuitable in another. (*A. B. Mackay.*) *The taking of Ai spiritualised*:—1. It appears, in the first place, that in going out to battle with anything that is doomed we must have a right character and a right cause. The Lord would not allow a blow to be struck at the city by a wicked hand; He will have judgment executed by righteousness; He will have the law proclaimed by lips that have been circumcised and anointed. The first great inquiry of man is a moral inquiry, not an inquest about numbers, places, and possible issues—but, "Is this thing right? and am I right who attempt to do the work?" That being the case, go forward. 2. The next great lesson of this incident is that we must all advance upon the doomed institution. When the idea of taking Ai was first broached, there were clever men in Israel who said, "Let two or three thousand of us go up and take the city." "I, and all the people that are with me, will approach unto the city" (ver. 5). That must be the rule of the Church in all its great moral wars. The battle is not to be handed over to a few persons, however skilful and zealous. The work of teaching the world and saving the world is a work committed to the whole Christian body. The living Church of the living God is one. When the Church realises its totality, when every man is part of an army and not an isolated warrior, then every Ai doomed of Heaven shall reel under the battering-ram which the Church will employ. There are to be no mere critics; there are to be thousands of active soldiers. 3. This being so, the incident brings before us in a very suggestive and picturesque manner the fact that we must excel the enemy in shrewdness. The Church is to be shrewder than the world, believers are to be keener of mind and more active in every energy than unbelievers. It is evident, moreover, that if we are to do any real work in the world in the name of God and

in the cause of Christ we must be about our business night and day. In ver. 10 we read, "And Joshua rose up early in the morning"; in ver. 13 we read, "Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley." How useful some men might be if they had the spirit of consecration: what time they have on hand! 4. We should miss one great lesson of this story if we did not note that we are bound to set fire to every devoted abomination. Ai was burned. We are not called to compromise, to paltering, to arranging, to expediency where ignorance is concerned, or slavery, or vice, or wrong. Things must be so burned down that they can never grow again. And after destruction, what then? Positive religion comes next: "Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal" (ver. 30). It is no use building your altar until you have burned the abomination. A great destructive work is to be done first, and in the doing of it, there will be great outcry about change, and novelty, and reprisal, and revolution. If you have not been faithful in the work of destruction, you cannot be faithful in the work of construction. It is lying unto the Holy Ghost to build an altar upon the basis of a rotten life. So we are called to thoroughness of work. There is to be no superficial action here. And after the altar, what? The law—the law of righteousness, the law of God. Ver. 32 reads, "And Joshua wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel." This is complete work—destruction, the erected altar, the inscribed law. This is healthy work. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 3–29. **So Joshua arose, and all the people of war.**—*All the people at work for Jesus*:—I. Consider THE ADVICE OF THE SPIES which led to such a shameful defeat (chap. vii. 3). 1. Here we shall have to deal with the error of supposing that a part only of the Church will be sufficient to perform the work of the whole. 2. In Joshua's day this error sprang up among the Israelites because, on account of their sins, God was displeased with them. When God is in the midst of a Church He guides its counsels and directs the hearts of men to go about His work in the wisest manner. Even upon the Lord's own people a measure of judicial blindness may come. You may depend upon it that when it becomes a doctrine that only special classes of men are to be expected to work in the Church there is some great wrong in the background. 3. Furthermore, this evil policy arose out of presumption engendered by success. The full sail needs much ballast, lest the boat be overset. We must be more sensible of weakness, more mindful that the conversion of souls is the work of Omnipotence, or we shall see but little done. We must ourselves believe more fully in the need of earnest work for God, and put forth all our strength, and strain every sinew for Him, knowing that it is His power that worketh in us mightily when we strive with all our hearts. 4. Let us not forget that these children of Israel were forgetting their commission and violating the command of God. As they all expected to have a dwelling-place in Canaan, so they were all expected to conquer the territory by their own exertions. They were all an enlisted host for God, and He never ordained that a part only should go forth in His great controversy with the condemned Canaanites. If we ever neglect to render universal service as a Church in the cause of Christ we shall depart from our trust and call, for the Lord has sent all His disciples to testify of Him and contend against sin. 5. These Israelites, in the new fashion which they were trying to set up, were departing from their own model. That model was, doubtless, the siege of Jericho. In that siege there was much dependence upon God, but there was no neglect of instrumentality; and, though all they did was to go round the city and shout, yet in so doing they were literally fulfilling orders, and doing all that was commanded. What, then, is our model as a Church? Is it not Pentecost? In that day did they not break bread from house to house, all of them? Did they not sell their lands and lay the price of them at the apostles' feet? Was there not a burning enthusiasm throughout the entire company of disciples? I suppose there is not one person present who heard that famous sermon by Matthew Wilks upon the universal service rendered by idolaters to their false gods, from the text, "The children gathered wood, and the fathers kindled the fire, and the women kneaded their dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven." The preacher's argument on that occasion was that which I would now press upon you, that all should take part in the work of the Lord. Distinct offices but united aims; diverse operations but the same spirit; many and yet one—so let it be. 6. Again, this error which we are carefully to avoid was no doubt the dictate of carnal wisdom. Spies were never of much use to Israel—two only of the first twelve were faithful—what

did Israel want with spies? Better far had it been to walk by faith. To Al^f they must needs send spies instead of going up at once in the confidence of faith: evil came of it, for these spies counselled that only part of the people need labour up the hill. And the best ministers of Christ, worthy of all honour, would be the cause of great mischief if once their carnal wisdom should make them think that they can supersede primitive plans with wiser inventions. 7. These children of Israel, in sending to the war only part of the men were breaking in upon the Divine design. The Lord never intended to have two peoples, but one; and so we read that the Reubenites and the Gadites came over Jordan to the war, although their portion was already conquered. It was the Divine intent that they should be one army of the living God, each separate son of the seed of Abraham belonging to that army and fighting in it; He meant that not some only, but all should see the mighty works of His hand, working with them to overthrow their adversaries. I am sure it is so with the Church of God to-day. Our Lord means to keep all His chosen ones as one army, and to instruct them all as one band. And when are we most manifestly one? When we get to work. II. THE COMMAND THAT ALL ISRAEL SHOULD GO FORTH TO THE FIGHT: "Take all the men of war with thee." We must have all our Church members go to the war. We want to turn out the drones, and we need an increase of true working bees. How is it to be done? 1. We must be ourselves deeply impressed with the evil brought upon idle Christians by their idleness, and the evil which they bring upon the rest of the Church. Indolence is temptation. Certain of our Churches are suffering from unsound teaching, but they are suffering as much from want of work. The moss is growing upon them, the rust is eating them up; the gold becomes dim, the silver is losing its brightness, and all for want of use. 2. We need to be impressed with the mischief which idlers cause to others. One sickly sheep infects the flock; one member who does nothing lowers the tone of the whole body. The indolence of prominent professors is not merely the waste of their own labour, but of that of scores of others. Every man in an army who is not efficient and really serviceable is on the enemy's side. 3. Moreover, we must hunt out the sin which leads to the evil against which we contend, and I believe it is want of vital godliness in many cases. It is often the sin which grows out of too much ease, self-indulgence, and luxurious living. It seems as if the more God gives a man the less return he is inclined to offer. Whatever the secret sin of the Church may be, let us try to discover it, and then by the aid of the Holy Spirit endeavour to educate all our members to work for the Lord. 4. There must be a continual insisting upon the personal obligations of Christians. "What art thou doing for Christ?" is a question to be asked of all. No one must appear before the Lord empty, but either by active or passive service must prove his gratitude to God. And then, while each is responsible, neglect by one is injurious to the common service of the whole. I saw a cart standing this morning on the roadside with one wheel chained; there was no fear of its moving with that one wheel fast. Sometimes one chained wheel in a Church will hinder all. 5. Dwell upon the importance of the enterprise in which we are engaged; and so act as to make others feel its importance. We must make men feel that to save a soul is better than to possess all knowledge, or even to gain the whole world! While others are making a new gospel let us labour to save souls by the old one. 6. Above all, let us pray for more grace. Napoleon used to say, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me"; and it is so with Christians. You must advance; you must outdo the exploits of the past, and eclipse the deeds of your sires, or you will show yourselves unworthy of them. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *United effort needed.*—In the days of chivalry a certain band of knights had never known defeat. In all battles their name was terrible to the foe. On their banners was emblazoned a long list of victories; but in an evil hour the leaders of the knights summoned them in chapter, and he said: "My brethren, we cause ourselves too much toil. Let the champions go alone. Yonder knight with his sword can cleave a man in twain at a single stroke, and his comrade can break a bar of iron with his axe; others among us are equally powerful, each one being a host in himself. With the terror of our name behind them, the chosen champions can carry on the war while the rest divide the spoil." The saying pleased the warriors well, but from that hour the knell of their fame was rung, and defeat defiled their standard. When they came together they complained of the champions because they had not sustained the honour of the order, and they bade them exert themselves more heroically. They did so, but with small success. Louder and louder were the notes of discontent and

the demands for new champions. Then one of the oldest of the knights said: "Brethren, why do you blame us? The mistake lies here. In the old time, when the enemy assailed us, a thousand men were up in arms, and we who led the van knew that a gallant army followed at our heels. But now you have made us solitary champions, and the adversary takes heart to defy us, finding us unsustained. Come you all with us to the fray as aforetime, and none shall stand against us." (*Ibid.*) *Work for God among the heathen*:—Let us each question his own heart as to the claims of the heathen: for my own part, I dare not sleep till I have honestly considered whether I ought to go or not. We tell our young men in the college that they must prove that they have not to go, or else their duty is clear. If some of the men of Israel had said to Joshua, "We cannot go to Ai," Joshua would have replied, "You must prove that you cannot go or you may not be excused." All other things being equal, ministers should take it for granted that it is their duty to invade new territory unless they can prove to the contrary. France is wanting the gospel. See what one beloved brother in Paris has been able to do—are there none who can do the like for other cities in that neighbour-country? Here and there a good man can say, "I have made a competency"—why not live and employ it where you can lay it out personally for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom? Such a thing is being done by a few, it is not therefore impossible, and you who follow the grand example shall have your reward. See what Pastor Harms did in the village of Hermansburg, how he stirred up all the people until they gave themselves and their property to the Lord, and built a ship for the mission and went forth in it to Africa, company after company, to evangelise. Should it not be the ambition of a minister to feel that if he stays at home he will at least, by the Holy Spirit's help, produce missionaries by scores in the village where he labours? (*Ibid.*) **Ye shall lie in wait against the city.**—*Joshua's address to the soldiers of the expedition*:—I. JOSHUA'S OBEDIENCE. II. JOSHUA'S PRUDENCE. III. JOSHUA'S COURAGE. IV. JOSHUA'S FAITH. V. JOSHUA'S AUTHORITY. 1. The authority of all God-given words. 2. The authority of obedience. (*F. G. Marchant.*) *The victorious retreat*:—I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS VICTORIOUS RETREAT. There are times in your life when the best thing you can do is to run. You were once the victim of strong drink. The glass and the decanter were your fierce foes. Your only safety is to get away from them. Your dissipating companions will come around you for your overthrow. Run for your life! Your retreat is your victory. Here is a converted infidel. He is so strong now in his faith in the gospel, he says he can read anything. What are you reading? Bolingbroke? Theodore Parker? Drop them and run. You will be an infidel before you die unless you quit that. Fly before they cut you with their swords and transfix you with their javelins. There are people who have been well-nigh ruined because they risked a foolhardy expedition in the presence of mighty and overwhelming temptations, and the men of Ai made a morning meal of them. So also there is such a thing as victorious defeat for the Church. Thousands of times the kingdom of Christ has seemed to fall back. When the Vaudois of France chose extermination rather than make an unchristian surrender, when on St. Bartholomew's day mounted assassins rode through the streets of Paris, crying, "Kill! Blood-letting is good in August! Kill! Death to the Huguenots! Kill!" When John Bunyan lay rotting in Bedford Jail, saying, "If God will help me, and my physical life continues, I will stay here until the moss grows on my eyebrows rather than give up my faith," the days of retreat for the Church were days of victory. But there is a more marked illustration of victorious retreat in the life of our Joshua, the Jesus of the ages. First falling back from an appalling height to an appalling depth, falling from celestial hills to terrestrial valleys, from throne to manger; yet that did not seem to suffice Him as a retreat. Falling back still further from Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Nazareth to Jerusalem, back from Jerusalem to Golgotha, back from Golgotha to the mausoleum in the rock, back down over the precipices of perdition, until He walked amid the caverns of the eternal captives and drank of the wine of the wrath of almighty God amid the Ahabs and the Jezebels and the Belshazzars. Oh, men of the pulpit and men of the pew, Christ's descent from heaven to earth does not measure half the distance! It was from glory to perdition. He descended into hell. All the records of earthly retreat are as nothing compared with this falling back. Santa Anna with the fragments of his army flying over the plateau of Mexico, and Napoleon and his army retreating from Moscow into the awful snows of Russia, are not worthy to be mentioned with this retreat when all the powers of

darkness seem to be pursuing Christ as He fell back, until the body of Him who came to do such wonderful things lay pulseless and stripped. But let not the powers of darkness rejoice quite so soon. Do you hear that disturbance in the tomb of Arimathea? I hear the sheet rending! What means that stone hurled down the side of the hill? Who is this coming out? Push Him back! The dead must not stalk in this open daylight. Oh, it is our Joshua! Let Him come out. He comes forth and starts for the city. He takes the spear of the Roman guard and points that way. Church militant marches up on one side and the Church triumphant marches down on the other side. And the powers of darkness being caught between these ranks of celestial and terrestrial valour, nothing is left of them save just enough to illustrate the direful overthrow of hell and our Joshua's eternal victory. II. THE TRIUMPH OF THE WICKED IS SHORT. Did you ever see an army in a panic? There is nothing so uncontrollable. If you had stood at Long Bridge, Washington, during the opening of our unfortunate war, you would know what it is to see an army run. And when those men of Ai looked out and saw those men of Joshua in a stampede, they expected easy work. They would scatter them as the equinox the leaves. Oh, the gleeful and jubilant descent of the men of Ai upon the men of Joshua! But their exhilaration was brief, for the tide of battle turned, and these quondam conquerors left their miserable bodies in the wilderness of Bethaven. So it always is. The triumph of the wicked is short. Call over the roll of bad men who prospered, and see how short was their prosperity. III. HOW MUCH MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED BY LYING IN AMBUSH FOR OPPORTUNITIES. Are you hypercritical of Joshua's manoeuvre? Do you say that it was cheating for him to take that city by ambush? Was it wrong for Washington to kindle camp-fires on New Jersey Heights, giving the impression to the opposing force that a great army was encamped there when there was none at all? I answer, if the war was right then Joshua was right in his stratagem. He violated no flag of truce. He broke no treaty, but by a lawful ambush captured the city of Ai. Oh, that we all knew how to lie in ambush for opportunities to serve God! The best opportunities do not lie on the surface, but are secreted; by fact, by stratagem, by Christian ambush, you may take almost any castle of sin for Christ. Come up towards men with a regular besiegement of argument, and you will be defeated; but just wait until the door of their hearts is set ajar, or they are off their guard, or their severe caution is away from home, and then drop in on them from a Christian ambush. There has been many a man up to his chin in scientific portfolios which proved there was no Christ and no Divine revelation, his pen a scimeter flung into the heart of the theological opponents, who, nevertheless, has been discomfited and captured for God by some little three-year-old child who has got up and put her snowy arms around his sinewy neck and said, "Papa, why don't you love Jesus?" Oh, make a flank movement; steal a march on the devil; cheat that man into heaven! Do not rub a man's disposition the wrong way. Do not take the imperative mood when the subjunctive mood will do just as well. You can take any man for Christ if you know how to get at him. Do not send word to him that to-morrow at ten o'clock you propose to open your batteries upon him, but come on him by a skilful, persevering, God-directed ambush. IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING GOOD AIM. There must be some signal—a signal to stop the one division and to start the other. Joshua, with a spear on which were ordinarily hung the colours of battle, points towards the city. He stands in such a conspicuous position, and there is so much of the morning light dripping from that spear-tip, that all around the horizon they see it. It was as much as to say: "There is the city. Take it. Take it now. Roll down from the west side. Surge up from the north side. It is ours, the city of Ai." God knows and we know that a great deal of Christian attack amounts to nothing simply because we do not take good aim. Nobody knows, and we do not know ourselves, which point we want to take, when we ought to make up our minds what God will have us to do, and point our spear in that direction, and then hurl our body, mind, soul, time, eternity, at that one target. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Variety of Divine means*:—Jericho was taken by the power of God; this was to be by the stratagem of His people. "Lay thee an ambush for the city behind it." The designs of Jehovah engage a diversity of means and operation as may best promote the ends of His infinite wisdom. It had been equally as easy to have taken this city without hands, and to have caused its fenced walls to have yielded to invisible operation, as those of Jericho; but then the courage of faith had not been exercised in His people, nor had the conquest of their enemies, now exulting, been so striking and instructive. The achievements

of the Lord's people are all of Him, whether effected by the measures of force or of artifice. (*W. Seaton.*) **JOSHUA DREW NOT HIS HAND BACK, WHEREWITH HE STRETCHED OUT THE SPEAR, UNTIL HE HAD UTTERLY DESTROYED ALL THE INHABITANTS OF AI.**—*The outstretched spear:*—A spear outstretched, outstretched by Divine command, outstretched till the doom of Ai was sealed—what means it? I. IT WAS THE SIGNAL OF PRUDENCE. Plans had been carefully prepared for the capture of Ai, and that spear, probably with a pennon hanging from its head like the weapon of the Lancers, was a pre-arranged signal for the carrying out of these plans. The outstretched spear would have been useless, meaningless, apart from the plans to which it referred. But it was most important when these are taken into consideration. In the great war we wage against evil within and without, God desires us to use all the appliances of wisdom and prudence. How wary is the fisher as he angles on the stream, taking advantage of every bush and tuft of grass, of every passing cloud and gentle ripple; and the more the waters are fished the more wary and ingenious is he. Oh, for a holy ingenuity, a sanctified sagacity in winning souls! Oh, that the dictates of prudence were more faithfully carried out in the sanctification of the soul! II. IT WAS THE SIGN OF OBEDIENCE. While much was left to human prudence, certain Divine principles clearly laid down must not be traversed. Joshua must not in every respect do as he pleased. There was a circle within which wisdom might have free and full play, but beyond that circle he dared not go at his peril. But not only was there a general obedience to this Divine command, there was also a very special and definite act of obedience in connection with the outstretched spear. Joshua did not do this when he pleased, but waited patiently till he got a clear intimation of the Divine will that the time had come for striking the decisive blow. Thus Joshua's act in stretching out the spear was well-timed. We need the same patient and punctual obedience which Joshua manifested. We must not be like the horse, going before, or the mule lagging behind, and therefore requiring the bit and the bridle of God's providences. We must not be like Moses, who when he was forty was too fast, and when he was eighty was too slow, to obey the Divine command. Let us be like Joshua here, led by the eye of God to a well-timed obedience. III. IT WAS ALSO A SIGNAL OF ATTACK. Its waving pennon cried to those in ambush, "Up and at them!" It called to those who were retreating, "Turn and smite!" And it shouted to all of them, "Retrieve your lost honour, win back your laurels." How many deeds of daring were the answer to that signal. Every common soldier in Israel was a hero that day, a noble brother of the man who waved that spear aloft. Oh, for like courage and energy in the wars of the Lord, for noble deeds done against deadly sins! IV. IT WAS ALSO THE MARK OF CONFIDENCE. He did not think because he had once failed that he would fail again. He had no foreboding of defeat. Not with nervous, trembling, fearful hand did he hold it aloft, but with the firm, sure grasp of perfect confidence. From the vantage-ground on which he stood, he ordered the fight, as again an assured victor. Thus should we engage in the war to which we are called—with sublime confidence, sure of victory, aye, even after we have experienced defeat. So should it be in the inner fight, for He who has begun the good work will perfect that which concerns us to the praise of His glorious grace. And so should it be in the outer. Never let us dishearten ourselves or our neighbours with the thought that we are fighting a losing battle. The very idea is blasphemous; as if man or the devil, or both, were stronger than the Almighty. V. IT MAY BE ALSO LOOKED UPON AS A MEMORIAL OF MERCY. As certainly as Amalek fled before the Lord's hosts, so certainly will the men of Ai. Victory is sure. In the spiritual warfare how stimulating is it to bring to mind past victories; to remember how David and Paul, Luther, Calvin, and Knox, Wesley, Whitefield, and McCheyne, wrestled with evil and prevailed. But above all, the remembrance of hard-won victories in our own experience is pre-eminently fitted to encourage. VI. IT WAS THE SYMBOL OF PERSEVERANCE. No doubt Joshua remembered how the battle with Amalek swayed forward and backward as the rod of Moses was elevated or depressed; and this perhaps explains the fact that he never drew back the spear till the work was finished. As if his hand had been glued to that spear he held it aloft, and thus he urged his soldiers to look like himself to the God of Sabaoth, who alone giveth victory. We have seen the battle well begun, with prudence and obedience, courage and confidence. See it nobly continued and ended with stubborn perseverance. Oh, for such a spirit in the fight of faith! Alas! how few endure to the end. VII. IT WAS ALSO THE OMEN OF DOOM. It hung over Ai like the great sword of the angel over Jerusalem. And it is worthy of notice that these men were

not without resources. They showed great zeal and enthusiasm in defending their city, rising early to go out to fight. They also displayed far greater courage than the men of Jericho, for they marched against overwhelming odds. They also showed considerable wisdom in acting on the offensive, and not waiting to be attacked like their neighbours. It was also plain that they believed that union was strength, for they got the men of Bethel to unite their forces with theirs in the attack on Joshua. They also had great confidence in their success, emboldened as they were by their previous victory. They had all these qualities, good in themselves, but all useless because on the wrong side. The all-important question is, On which side are you? Are you on the wrong side? Then cast down your weapons of rebellion. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." Are you on the right side? Then "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." (*A. B. Mackay.*)

Vers. 30, 31. **Then Joshua built . . . an altar of whole stones.**—*The plastered altar*:—Let us behold in the story of Joshua's altar in Mount Ebal the mirror of an honest Christian life. 1. It is well to recognise the fact that this world is under the curse, a true Mount Ebal. Is human existence hard? There is sunshine in life, it is true, but think of the shadows. Go into the houses of the rich, where luxury meets you on every hand. In this mansion the servants go about with noiseless tread; the street in front is thickly strewn with tan bark; often at the door is seen the physician's carriage. Is it a happy household? Enter the next mansion. Here, too, wealth is supreme, everything of the costliest, but the face of the father of the family is clouded with anger, and the mother's eyes are red with weeping. What is the trouble? Shame, dishonour; a child has fouled a parent's noble name, disgraceful deeds have made the son and heir of a great house a byword and a hissing. But thank God there is Mount Gerizim as well as Ebal; the blessings are as rich as the curses are deplorable, and the curses come first, only to give place to the blessings. We may not forget, however, that the great heart altar for God is to be set up in Ebal, in the consciousness of the power of the curse. The first thought we ought to have in our Christian life is that Christ hath redeemed us from the curse. 2. Well, then, Christian, saved by Christ's blood from wrath to come, rear up to thy Lord and Master thine altar. Of what sort shall we make it? The altar in the heart must be of whole stones upon which no man hath lift up any iron. I suppose that no metal enters into our life to the extent that iron does in its myriad forms of using. Is its cold hardness not an appropriate symbol of human selfishness, the occasion of all strife and quarrelling, hatred, and crime? Is there any one who lives his life on earth selfishly, who is not concerned more with his own interests than with those of his neighbours? If the secret of the worthy heart altar as towards God be humble acquiescence in the Divine ordering of things, the secret of it as towards men is genuine unselfishness. Towards God the "whole" stones, unfashioned by our wilfulness, towards man stones piled up with no help of iron, but erected in brotherly love, self-forgetting generosity. 3. When Joshua had set up the great cairn, he plastered it all over with plaster, that he might engrave thereon the words of the law. In this way the separate stones, without having been fashioned or fitted together by human hand and tool, were in a certain sort made one through human agency. There is a strange factor in our life which is indeed given more than its rightful share of importance in most earthly things, while in the Divine service it seems to be hardly enlisted at all. I mean the purpose or the will. As the plaster covered all those rough stones and gave them a smooth, well-compacted surface, so does a firm and well-set will, a steadfast heart-purpose, make the unhewn circumstances of our lives homogeneous, a shapely altar for the Lord's use. God's law has been revealed in order that we may obey it, and we have no other guide to duty. The end of the Christian life, in the world at least, is obedience. To believe not what we think reasonable, but what God has said; to do not what seems edifying, but what He has enjoined. 4. Thus are we, every one of us, if we be in earnest, raising up altars in our hearts, as we go on through this world; gathering up one by one the circumstances and opportunities of our lives. Great, rough, ill-shaped stones they seem, yet we may not think to trim and fashion them to our own notion, nor to hew them out with iron tools of selfishness and pride. Lay them up, O soul, in a cairn, as they come, plaster them all over with devout purpose and zealous will, then write on them the law of God, that it may be the guiding principle of all thy thoughts and words and deeds, His will not thine own. (*Arthur Ritchie.*)

Vers. 32-35. **Gerizim . . . Ebal.**—*Ebal and Gerizim*:—The valley between these two is one of the most beautiful in Palestine. Jacob's well lies at its mouth, and all its luxuriant extent is covered with its verdant beauty of gardens, and orchards, and olive groves, rolling in waves of billowy beauty up to the walls of Shechem, whilst the murmur of brooks flowing in all directions fills the air. The width of the valley is about a third of a mile, though the summits of the two mountains, in the lap of which it lies, are two miles apart. It is remarkable that where the two mountains face each other and touch most closely, with a green valley of five hundred yards between, each is hollowed out, and the limestone stratum of each is broken into a succession of ledges, "so as to present the appearance of a series of regular benches." Thus a natural amphitheatre is formed, capable of containing a vast audience of people; and the acoustic properties are so perfect in that dry and rainless air that Canon Tristram speaks of two of his party taking up positions on the opposite mountains, reciting the ten commandments antiphonally, and hearing each other perfectly. **I. THE ALTAR ON EBAL.** Ebal was stern and barren in its aspect. There was a congruity, therefore, between its appearance and the part it played in the solemn proceedings of the day. For far up its slopes gathered the dense masses of the six tribes, who, with thunderous amens, twelve times repeated, answered the voices of the band of white-robed Levites, as standing with Joshua, and the elders, and officers, and judges, in the green valley, they solemnly repeated the curses of the law. But that was not the first proceeding in that holy ceremonial. Before the people took up their assigned places on the mountain sides an altar was reared on the lower slopes of Ebal. As we pass into the land of promise we must be watchful that we do not leave behind the devout and loving consideration of that precious blood by which we have been redeemed and which is our life. Our highest and most rapturous experiences can never take the place of this. Constantly we must remind ourselves and others that we are redeemed sinners, and that all our hopes of salvation, our fellowship with God, our motives for service, are derived from what our Saviour did when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. But because He died there, we need never stand there. Because He counted not His life dear to Himself, those gaunt and forbidding slopes have become the scene of blessed communion with God. We sit and feast with Him, and from peak to peak the joy chases the terrors of the curse, and smiles look out on us from the old rocks, whilst the torrents tinged with the light of the sun flash and sing. **II. THE LAW IN CANAAN.** Around the altar strong men reared great stones, and plastered them with a facing of cement, composed of lime and gypsum, on which it was easy to write all the words of the law very plainly (Deut. xxvii. 8). In that dry air, where there is no frost to split and disintegrate, such inscriptions, written on the soft cement with a stencil, or on its polished surface, when dry, with ink or paint, as in the case of the monumental stones of Egypt, would remain for centuries. As the time could not have admitted of the inscription of the whole law, it is probable that the more salient points were alone committed to the custody of those great cromlechs to perpetuate to after generations the conditions of the tenure on which Israel held the lease of Palestine. They were a standing protest against the sins which had blighted those fertile valleys, and an incentive to the obedience on which so much of the future hinged. The case is this: when we yield ourselves entirely to the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus, and which passes freely through us, as the blood through artery and vein, He makes us very sensitive to the least commandment or desire of Him whom He has taught us to love; we dread to see the shadow of suffering pass over His face more than to feel the pang of remorse rend our hearts; we find our heaven in His smile of approval, and the "Well done!" that glistens in His eyes when we have done aught to the least of His; we are conscious of the pulse of a love which He has instilled, and which supplies us with the highest code for life—and so insensibly, whilst we yield ourselves to Him, we find ourselves keeping the law after a fashion which was foreign to us when it was a mere outward observance, and we cry with David, "Oh, how I love Thy law, it is my meditation all the day." **III. THE CONVOCATION.** It is well worth our while to ponder the list of blessings appended to obedience in that memorable twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, that we may discover their spiritual counterparts, and, having found them, to claim them. Let us, first, be quite sure that we are right with God; next, that we are on His plan and doing His will; also, thirdly, that we are set upon His glory, altogether irrespective of our own interests; and we shall find ourselves able to claim blessings of which we little dreamt. The Lord will open His good treasury in

heaven and make us plenteous for good, and establish us for an holy people unto Himself. (*F. B. Meyer, M.A.*) *Ebal and Gerizim*.—I. WHERE WE GO. We go to a distant place; about a week's journey from Gilgal. Why do we go there? To take some strong fortress? To fight some great battle? No, but to worship Jehovah, and to take formal possession of the land in His name. But it is a formidable thing to move all the host of Israel so far as that. It is; but no trouble is too great that serves to show our loyalty to Jehovah. What a reproof is this to those whose religion costs them nothing! who seek to serve God with the miserable fag-ends of time—the odd intervals of a busy life, or the poor dregs of the evil days of nature's decay. There is no fear of any man's temporal interests suffering by due attention to the spiritual. Turning again to Israel, we notice that they went to a dangerous place. Why march a company of religious worshippers to that distant valley, instead of a mighty army to destroy every foe? Surely prompt action, preventing their enemies from amalgamating their forces, is their only policy. Nay, to wait on God is better. Man is only weak when he disobeys. And they go to an appointed place. This makes the march wise and profitable. This journey had a special bearing on the formal possession of the land in Jehovah's name. From being defiled Canaan, resting under God's curse, it is to become the inheritance of Jehovah, the holy land which He delights to bless. As Noah's first act was to take possession of the new world in the name of God, so at the first opportunity Joshua took possession of Canaan in Jehovah's name. Still further, this was an appropriate place to which Israel marched. It was appropriate, whether we consider its past associations or look at its position in the land. It was here that Abraham, the father of Israel, built his first altar in the land that God had promised. What more appropriate, then, than that his children should first come here, and as inheritors of his faith and piety, as well as of his promise, rear their altar and worship the unchanging Jehovah? It was here that Jacob bought ground and dug a well which remains to this day, leaving it in faith a heritage to his children's children. And here they come, the possessors of all that was promised; their feet shall stand on this earnest of the inheritance; they and their little ones and their flocks shall drink of their father's well. This rendezvous was also appropriate because it was so central and so beautiful. Mahomed called it the fairest spot on earth; and many have named it the paradise of the Holy Land. No greater contrast could be conceived than that presented by the scenery of Mount Sinai, where the law was first given, and that of Ebal and Gerizim, where it was repeated. The former is stern, still, and forbidding, without speck of green or sign of life. This is smiling and verdant, vocal with the songs of innumerable birds, laden with the fatness of the olive, the sweetness of the fig, the luscious richness of the vine—the most inviting spot the heart of man can conceive. Here the traveller, enchanted by the indescribable air of tranquillity and repose which hang over the scene, pitches his tent beside the purling and pellucid rills, and however anxious to renew his journey, feels he would gladly linger days and weeks in such a paradise. Such is it even now, as described by those whose eyes have rested on it—what must it have been in those days of Joshua? II. WHAT WE SEE. First of all we behold the ark, as conspicuously prominent as on the day that Israel crossed the Jordan. The Holy Presence of which the ark speaks has never failed them, has never forsaken them. We also behold an altar here. The altar is for the ark. The blood of the one sprinkles the mercy-seat of the other, and thus sin is purged; God can dwell among the people, and say to the sinful, "There will I meet with thee." This altar was constructed of rough stones, untouched by any instrument of iron, and therefore spoke of the work of Christ as divinely finished, requiring not any addition or improvement that man's wisdom could suggest or man's skill accomplish. This altar was pitched on Ebal, the loftier height, from which the curses came. There it was set to remove the curse; for apart from the sacrifice of the altar which God has provided all flesh are under the curse of the law. On this altar were offered up burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. The burnt-offerings spoke of Christ offered to God, a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour; yielding a perfect and glorious obedience to all that law which He thus magnified and made honourable. The peace-offering spoke of Christ as the centre and substance of rest, delight, and refreshment to God and man; the glorious means whereby communion is restored and maintained. God and man delight in the same sacrifice, are sharers in the same feast. Thus the ark and the altar, the Holy Presence and the Perfect Sacrifice, guarantee to Israel all the glory of God's inheritance. Behold the imposing scene. The elders of the tribes stand with Joshua and Eleazar and the

priests in the centre of the valley beside the ark. The tribes stretch outward, like two dark wings, on either side in compact masses. Then, when all were in their places and solemn silence reigned, the Levites read aloud the curses of the law, and the men on Ebal responded with a deep amen, like the sound of many waters. Again the clear notes of the Levites rise as they recite the blessings, and like the sound of harpers harping with their harps comes the joyous amen from the slopes of Gerizim. But there is still another object for our eyes to rest upon. As a lasting monument of that great event, Joshua put up great stones on Mount Ebal, plastered with plaster, and having written upon them "a copy of the law of Moses." The altar spoke of what the Holy Presence in Israel bestowed. These stones spoke of what this Holy Presence demanded. The stones on Jordan's bank spoke of Jehovah's gracious power. The stones of Jericho declare His judgment. The stones of Achor speak of His discipline. The stones of Ai tell His faithfulness. The stones of Ebal are witnesses of His holiness. They tell what is becoming in the people whose God is the Lord. They hold up the standard whereby His people are to walk. Has this standard changed? Are its precepts binding still, or have they become antiquated? Are these ten words the Christian's standard and rule of life? It is a vain morality, it is a false spirituality, which dreams that it can rise above obedience to the law. (*A. B. Mackay.*) **He read all the words of the law.**—*The reading of the law*:—I. THE FITNESS OF MARKING LIFE'S CHANGES BY A SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF DEPENDENCE UPON GOD AND OBLIGATION TO HIM. With Israel it was a time of transition, involving triumph, gain, a new and long-desired possession. At such times, men of the world are apt to think only of themselves and their good fortune. It was not so with Israel. This is their first pause on entering the promised land. And they trust God to protect them, while they use it to own Him as having brought them thither. With solemn ceremony they put themselves afresh into covenant relations with Him. Supposing ourselves to be changing our residence or occupation, to be entering a new place or state of responsibility, to be keeping a birthday or other anniversary—how becoming it would be to make it a time of re-dedication to God! So of a youth passing from school to business, entering the marriage state, going out from the old home, and taking up for himself a life's work. Our religious faith should make it natural to do this. II. THE VALUE OF SPECIAL MEANS TO DEEPEN THE SENSE OF OBLIGATION TO GOD. There are such ordinary means as the daily reading of the Bible, attendance on the public ordinances of God's house, Christian conversation, giving heed to the voices of conscience and the Divine Spirit. Many things remind us of duty and dependence. And yet it is easy to forget. Ordinary means lose a measure of their power, save as they are reinforced now and then by those that are special and extraordinary. It was once more common than we fear it now is for persons entering the Christian life to do it with a solemnly-written covenant, to be recalled and renewed in after months and years. Other occasions were signalised in a similar way. On the day of the birth of the late Dr. Bethune, his father solemnly dedicated him to God in writing—an act more than once repeated. Churches have had their times of renewing covenant vows by rising in a mutual pledge to each other, and a common re-dedication to God. I have seen the record of "an holy covenant entered into, and renewed with God, by ye Church of Christ in concord, upon a day of fasting and prayer, set apart for that purpose, July 11, 1776," bearing the signature of Rev. William Emerson (then pastor) and sixty-one others. Religious revivals have been begun and prolonged by such means. Piety that is from the heart readily approves them. It makes glad use, not only of common, but of special, helps to fidelity and growth in godly living. III. THE WISDOM OF HEEDING ALL GOD HAS TOLD US OF OUR OBLIGATION TO HIM, AND OF THE PERIL OF CASTING IT OFF. Joshua "read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings." Just what things were included in the inscription on the stones and in the reading we are not told. Doubtless, at least, the substance and sanctions of the law. It is clear that there was no self-pleasing discrimination in favour of the easy and agreeable commands, nor yet in the singling-out of the blessings and the rejection of the cursings. IV. THE MISTAKE OF WITHHOLDING ANY PART OF GOD'S LAW FROM ANY AGE OR CLASS. "All Israel, and their elders and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark, and on that side." None were so great and wise that they had no need to be present. And "there was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not," &c. It is sometimes thought that the great and sober things of God's law are not to be taught to children. "Set before them only the bright things," it is said. How strange that it is so much easier to be wise in earthly things than in the

heavenly! In this world's affairs, we teach the child to foresee that which is evil, that he may hide himself. We remember, too, that great souls are never nurtured on the ostrich plan. The ostrich thrusts his head into the sand, shuts his eyes, and, seeing no peril, says, "Now I am safe!" This is not God's way. The "little ones" were to hear "all that Moses commanded." They might comprehend little. They would feel much. Through the imagination, their souls would be filled with abiding, restraining, and uplifting awe. V. THE POSSIBILITY OF A SERENE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD'S LAW AND REMEMBRANCE OF OUR PAST UNFAITHFULNESS TO IT. First of all, before he ventured to read the law, "Joshua built an altar," &c. On this altar, burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were to be presented. The burnt-offering signified self-surrender, entire devotement to God; the peace-offering, joyful communion with Him. Thus the people came face to face with law and penalty, not as aliens, but as friends; their sins expiated and pardoned; their persons, powers, and possessions made over to Him to be wholly His; their hearts at rest in the gladdening sense of His favour. To such the law could be nothing other than a blessed, Divine rule. So it may be with us. (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*)

CHAPTER IX.

VERS. 1, 2. **The kings . . . on this side Jordan . . . gathered themselves together.**—*A Canaanitish league*.—I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS LEAGUE. 1. It was very wide, embracing every tribe in Canaan, those of the hills as well as those of the plain, and those of the sea coast as well as those inland. Even so has it been in all ages. Men of all ranks and occupations can be found to sneer at, condemn, and crush if they could, the pure gospel. 2. It was very singular. Strange elements were brought together on this occasion. A common danger, a common enemy, a common hate, makes them forget old feuds, bury the war-hatchet, and unite on common ground for a common object. Who ever hated each other more cordially than Pharisee and Sadducee? yet they united in crying, "Crucify Him," and in compassing His death. Pilate and Herod cemented their broken friendship with His blood. 3. It was spontaneous. No pressure was employed to gather the clans together; none was needed. On every side there sprang up a desire to take united action. It is a sad and a terrible fact that the deepest thing in the natural heart is enmity against God. Every sinner is potentially a Deicide. 4. It was crafty. The wisest heads in Canaan were here drawn together, and engaged in strengthening this league. Their most skilful diplomatists, their most wily warriors, would give their advice, and seek to help the league in every way. The rich would give of their substance, the poor would give their strength, the wise would use their wits in discussing and arranging plans; and thus by their united energy all might yet be well. Thus again and again has all man's wisdom been brought to bear against the purposes of God. 5. And who could deny that such a league was powerful? It was powerful because of all the accumulated experience and wisdom that could be brought to bear upon the work; because of the minute knowledge of the country which the common people as well as the leaders possessed; and because of the immense resources they could fall back upon. 6. And it is also very plain that this league was heartily, yea, even enthusiastically, entered into. Like the great sea billows they rage against this bark, and with implacable wrath would smite and overwhelm it. Alas, frail bark! Alas, poor Israel! what canst thou do against such a league, so wild, so strange, so spontaneous, so crafty, so powerful, so zealous? II. THE OCCASION OF THIS LEAGUE. No doubt many things contributed to bring it about, but one thing is specially singled out and mentioned by the Holy Ghost in this connection. When they heard of that strange march and the solemn ceremony in the vale of Shechem, then they gathered themselves together to fight with Joshua and with Israel with one accord. This shows that these Canaanites understood something of the significance of this action. They interpreted it rightly as an act of dispossession, so far as they were concerned. How often does the pious devotion of God's people provoke and exasperate the unrighteous above everything else! The sinner hates above all things the holiness of the saint, because it is his most emphatic condemnation. Perfect surrender to God's will always brings the enmity of the world to a head. Would you learn the

true spirit of the world? March to Ebal and Gerizim, and pitch your tent in that sacred and fruitful vale of utter consecration. But if such a life as this stirs up of necessity the evil which reigns in the heart of man, it is also to be remembered that such a life alone is powerful to do good to man or bring glory to God. Who can measure the strength of such consecrated souls? John Wesley knew something of this when he said, "Give me ten men who hate sin only and love God only, and I will shake the gates of hell." Its enmity will be roused, even as that of the Canaanites by the consecration of Israel; but it will be roused, only like theirs, to be utterly broken. III. THE PURPOSE OF THIS LEAGUE. They banded themselves together "to fight against Joshua and against Israel." Though great wonders have been wrought before their very eyes, they will oppose this people. Therefore their action cannot for a moment be classed with the resistance which, *e.g.*, the Britons offered to the invading Romans under Cæsar. The position of these Canaanites was altogether different. In fighting against Israel they deliberately set themselves against Israel's God, Jehovah. They knowingly pit the strength of their idols against that of the Lord of hosts. At Him they aim their shafts through His people. Earth loves not its rightful Monarch. It rebels against His edicts, it cleaves to the great usurper's sway. What daring rebellion have we here! men plotting under God's very eyes. Conspirators usually meet in secret, in the darkness of night, screened from the eye and sheltered from the hand of the power outraged; but here these sinners gather together openly, to take counsel against Him who is marching through their land in awful majesty. Oh, hardened soul, remember the only alternatives. Bend or break; turn or burn. What utter futility have we here? Could we conceive anything more useless, more inefficient, more foolish, more powerless, than this league? The only consequence to these leaguers will be their own ruin. For this they plot, and not in vain. It comes upon them as a whirlwind, certain, irresistible, terrible, complete, ir retrievable. IV. THE LESSONS OF THIS LEAGUE. Surely, to begin with, we are very plainly taught that the people of God in carrying out the purposes of God may count upon opposition. It always has been so; and it will be so to the very end, for we read that even the glorious millennium is ushered in with a terrible struggle. We are apt to get downhearted when we see the hosts of evil mustering on every side. We exclaim, "What can the poor Church of God do?" If she can do nothing more, she can look up. She can see a sight which can calm all her fears, and make her laugh to scorn her loudest foes. Look up, then! look up! See Him who sitteth on the circle of the heavens, and before whom the nations are as grasshoppers. God is keeping silence. God is having them in derision. The attacks which to us may seem formidable are to Him despicable. Let us therefore have good hope. The systems of corruption and error and oppression, however well compacted and widely organised, must in the long run be destroyed, and he who expects and prays and works for their downfall will not be disappointed. Let us look back when we are despondent and faint-hearted, and remember how often God has restrained the wrath of the enemy; how often, when iniquity was coming in as a flood, He has raised up a standard against it. Yea, look around, and see what God has wrought. Think of the diffusion of Christianity, and of its mighty influence, whether direct or indirect. But we may learn another lesson from this league. We may learn as the host of God to unite our forces more and more in prosecuting the work set before us. (*A. B. Mackay.*)

Vers. 3-27. *The inhabitants of Gibeon . . . did work willyly.*—*A Canaanitish stratagem*.—I. HOW THIS DEVICE ORIGINATED. 1. Their wisdom suggested it. The selfsame facts suggest different courses of action to the Canaanites and to the Gibeonites. These events led the great majority to unite their forces against Joshua; they led this Gibeonitish minority to see if they could not come to terms with this irresistible foe. There was no sense whatever in the counsels of the kings. They ought to have assembled in a lunatic asylum, for their wisest counsels were but the ravings of a maniac. There is a spark of wisdom in the craft of the republican Gibeonites. They do come to a wise decision when they resolve to bear anything rather than provoke God against them by vain resistance. Let us, like them, humble ourselves before God's irresistible might. It is our only wisdom. There is no use waiting till judgment is at the door; no use staying till our souls are besieged by sickness and death: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." 2. The fears of these Gibeonites also stimulated them, were a spur to their wisdom. Was the conduct of the Gibeonites ignoble? Our hearts always

side with the man who against overwhelming odds fights with grim consistency a losing battle, who resolves to "Perish if it must be so; at bay, destroying many a foe." But here again we must not lose sight of the religious element which was uppermost in the mind of all. It can never be right for the subject to rise against lawful authority. It can never be ignoble to throw down our weapons of rebellion and fall at the feet of the All-wise, the All-gracious, and the Almighty. 3. Also, there was faith at the bottom of this movement. It may readily be allowed that it was very small; microscopical, infinitesimal, if you choose. It may also be granted that it was also overlaid with error, guile, and selfishness. Yet notwithstanding all these things faith was there. These Gibeonites did believe that the purpose of God would come to pass. They did believe that God desired to give Israel the land, and that He was able to do so. With what mixed motives do we give up our rebellion and fall at the feet of Jesus! Can they bear full scrutiny? Are we pleased with them? I trow not. When we look back and analyse our thoughts and feelings, can we not discover a large leaven of mixed motives? Accordingly, there is here much encouragement to all. You ask, "Is my faith of the right kind?" See. If faith of this miserable description finds grace, who need despair? Perhaps our motives will not bear close examination; perhaps it is true that it is a selfish thing to fear hell; that it is nothing more than a hangman's whip. But if that whip lashes us to the feet of Jesus, and works for us salvation, we shall bless God for it for ever. II. HOW THIS PLAN WAS PROSECUTED. Anything is fair in war, so men say; and anything is fair in diplomacy, so men have believed in past ages. It need not surprise us, then, that these Gibeonites followed the universal rule. They show their craft both by what they did and by what they hid. They were no novices in the art of deceit. They also prosecuted their commission very courageously. The coolness and audacity of these men are marvellous. They must have had strong nerves, a great command over themselves, and a deep knowledge of human nature. These men were neither fools nor cowards after all. III. HOW THEIR STRATAGEM SUCCEEDED. It succeeded to perfection. Their audacity, cunning, and knowledge of human nature were all conspicuous in this transaction, and served them well. The weakness of the Israelites helped to bring about the same result. It is one thing to be rudely suspicious, it is another thing to be over-credulous. But practically how often are men at a loss how to decide when placed in similar circumstances! Therefore we should not blame Israel too severely, but rather remember that the best cure either for over-credulity or over-caution is communion with God and distrust in self. The men of Israel are also very self-conscious. Pride had something to do with their decision to take these strangers under their protection. They felt honoured and flattered by the supposed circumstances which made them a centre of universal attraction. Would you be an instrument in the hands of another, a pipe producing just such notes as the player pleases, think much of yourself; give yourself out to be some great one; open your ears and give up your heart to the sweet blandishments of flattering lips. Contrariwise remember that the humblest soul is the most independent. The Israelites were also very self-confident, and this exposed them to the wiles of these schemers. No step that we take in life is too trivial to be made a matter of prayer. Only as we do so, consulting with God about everything, are we guided by His eye. Here the Israelites put right questions—"Who are you?" "Whence come you?" But sufficient care was not taken to sift the answer and see if it was true. "All is not gold that glitters." Much ancient armour is manufactured all the year round at Birmingham. Not a few ancient statues are made to order in Italy in these days, and sold to innocent connoisseurs. Even so is it in things spiritual. The wolves are very clever at fitting themselves with sheep's clothing; the make-up is often particularly ingenious. Let the Israel of God take heed "to the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in them." And we should apply this also to the affairs of every-day life. How often do we involve ourselves in difficulties, hedge up our way with troubles, lead ourselves into danger, because we "ask not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." We give a listening ear to plausible representations; we hurry headlong into inviting schemes; we enter heedlessly into doubtful connections without weighing the consequences or looking for Divine direction. But sooner or later we discover that no business, or engagement, or union can prosper without the counsel and approbation of the Lord; and often with shame and sorrow we have to seek His face to undo the evils which our own rashness and unfaithfulness have brought upon us. But in considering this matter our view would be very superficial did we not look higher than man and

his motives. The purpose of Jehovah had also to do with the result. Why did He allow Joshua to be thus deceived? To teach him and Israel a valuable lesson? No doubt; but it was also for the purpose of manifesting to all that He was not unwilling to show mercy to the very chief of sinners. If with all their guile and crooked policy He spared these Gibeonites, much more would He have spared them if they had honestly cast themselves on His mercy. Yea, He spared them because they came; He reproved them because they came thus. In this manner God separated the precious from the vile; He commended their faith in coming, and condemned their mode of approach. Accordingly, while it was well for them that they came at all, nothing was gained, but much was lost, by their crooked policy. Thus is it always, and therefore what encouragement is there here to the open and ingenuous. IV. THE RESULT OF THIS STRATAGEM. They received a place in Israel. This was no small matter; far more than they had expected. This was no small favour where all would have perished. This place in Israel was obtained with difficulty. When it was discovered who these strangers were, the people were roused against the princes who had conducted the treaty with them, and murmured loudly at the result. How true to human nature is this murmuring. It is always easy to criticise those who are in authority, and find fault with the conclusions to which they come. Every toper in a village inn, were you to credit him, could conduct the affairs of the British Empire with greater success than the wisest prime minister that ever lived. The most ignorant and irresponsible individual in a congregation is confident he would never have fallen into the mistakes of his betters. These Israelites perhaps thought that they were very zealous for God in thus murmuring, but I am afraid that self-interest had a little to do with it. Was it not somewhat of a disappointment that they would not be able to finger the spoil of these Gibeonitish cities? How often does selfishness sharpen zeal! The proper time for murmuring or objecting would have been when the treaty was so hastily concluded. But these critics forgot that then also their heads were turned, and that in all likelihood they would have murmured if the princes had proposed any other course than the one they are now condemning. But though equally deceived with their leaders, they were not like them bound by a solemn oath, and therefore they felt free to murmur. Yet it was a good sign that they went no further. Though they grumbled they submitted, and the Gibeonites were allowed to live. They owed their safety to the ability of Joshua and the princes of Israel. In this emergency the leaders displayed great firmness. They felt that it would be better far to fulfil their agreement at any cost rather than by any shift or quibble to retire from it. Surely in this steadfast adherence of Joshua to this covenant the seeker may find great encouragement. There have been murmurers in the house of God who have called in question the grace of that Saviour who forgives sinners. Remember the taunt of the Pharisees, "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." The race of the self-righteous is not yet extinct; but Jesus is not less firm than Joshua, and justifies the ways of God to men in that glorious constellation of grace which the fifteenth chapter of Luke contains. Again, these Gibeonites received a definite place among the people of God. They became an integral part of the nation, with duties as clearly defined as those of the tribe of Levi. Henceforth they were an essential part of the people; Israel's God was theirs; Israel's friends were their friends, Israel's foes their foes; and they were sharers in all Israel's fortunes. The place which these Gibeonites received in Israel was, however, very humble. The lowest kind of drudgery was expected of them. But if their place and occupation are very lowly, their Master is very high and honourable, and He so arranged that they should not be private slaves, scattered through the nation, but that they should be attached to the tabernacle as servants to the priests and Levites. Now the humblest office under a great and good man may be better than the highest place a mean and bad master could offer. It would be better to black the boots of some men than to roll in the carriage of others. And if the place of these Gibeonites was humble, it was at the same time useful. This would be a great consolation to them, and would reconcile them to their lot. The place of these Gibeonites was also a hallowed one; their service was sacred. God brought them near Himself, attached them to His tabernacle, sheltered them under His wing. The altar of Jehovah was the centre of their service. They were nearer God than many in Israel. To be near God is the highest privilege and the chief joy of the renewed heart. And we come near to God just as we make the Cross of Christ the centre of all our service. The doorstep of God's house is a happier resting-place than the downy couch in the gilded pavilion of royal sinners. Still further, these

Gibeonites had a hopeful place in Israel, and that was a great advantage. In the service of such a Master they might well expect to rise, and they did. Ismaiah, one of David's mighty men, was a Gibeonite. Melatiah, a builder of the wall of Jerusalem under Nehemiah, was another. These are instances recorded to show how they prospered and rose in Jehovah's service. In England it is thought a great matter to be recognised in any way as connected with the royal house. The official appointment to such a position may frequently be seen framed and glazed and placed conspicuously in the window. The fact is noted in the gold letters on the sign, on every bill, and notice, and advertisement that is sent from the establishment. They strive to let no one forget or be oblivious of the fact. They find that it is profitable to do so. Much more laboriously should we in all things make it plain whose we are and whom we serve. (*Ibid.*) *League made with the Gibeonites*.—The customs and manners of modern times, in which is less of simplicity and more of parade, and when facilities for intercourse with far distant dwellers would render such a deception quite impossible, cannot be a criterion by which to judge of the policy of this expedient. Strange as it would be viewed by us, neither their appearance nor speech excited suspicion. Their falsehood stands no example for Christians, yet no one but must admire their ingenuity. Necessity is the mother of invention. The resources which have opened in invention have been such as were never thought of in ease and safety. They believed the report, and, being sore afraid, had no expectation of life but from alliance with the Lord's people; therefore were saved in yielding, when others were destroyed in resisting. There is no hope for any but those who, in faith and love, are in league with the true Israel of God—those who seek by prayer, and obtain through grace, a share in their spiritual and eternal interests. And oh! when those tremendous evils which, in the Divine threatenings, impend over the guilty, are so apprehended as to fill transgressors with fears of dying, when the great concerns of another world lie in their full weight on the heart, and they see that all to be hoped for in the best state of future being is endangered and lies at awful stake, what expedients are ready to be adopted! though none ever succeed but the one which the gospel points out as the never-failing provision of mercy. No decree is gone forth against such as cease hostilities, and who voluntarily yield themselves up to the reign of grace, but against those only who persist till they perish in their rebellion. The more determined and inveterate any have been in their opposition to the kingdom of God, the more heartily welcome they become when, in the fervent entreaties of deep-felt need, they apply for life and pardon through the merit of Christ. No sight on earth more interesting than to witness a spiritual subjection to our Divine and glorious Redeemer; to see a forsaking of the world for the Church, and, instead of fighting against God to destruction, sinners obtaining the assurance of life and pardon through faith. These suppliant strangers, with worn-out apparel and musty provision, and bearing every mark of having come a long journey, remind one of the true condition of those who apply to Christ, and who desire to obtain a portion in the inheritance of His people. They are really what these only feigned to be; and should they appear in the best robes of nature, whatever their own opinion, they would be esteemed but as filthy rags by the infinitely holy God, which, in self-loathing, must be thrown aside for change of raiment, for garments of salvation and robes of righteousness. Their address is not less striking than their appearance, and may remind us of a suppliant for mercy, "We are thy servants: make ye a league with us." The security of life they were willing should be held upon servitude of life. What is so dear as life? As Satan said of Job, "Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." And nothing is so much the concern of an awakened mind, as to live in a state of favour with God, and union with His people. It is accounted no slavery, but perfect freedom, as well as secure protection, and to be desired beyond all earthly advantages, to retain life in the service of God. The expedient adopted in their necessity availed. It was a precipitate act, and though highly reprehensible, in not asking counsel of the Lord, to whom all the affairs of His Church and people should be referred in humble and obedient faith, yet it was not to be rescinded. In the all-wise dominion of God it was overruled for mercy to many. Though the command was peremptory, and so utterly to destroy the inhabitants of the land as "to make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them," yet the 20th chapter of Deuteronomy, v. 10 and 11, would induce a hope that they who, whether near or afar off, yielded to the triumphant Church and renounced idolatry would have obtained mercy and been incorporated with the Lord's people. Is not this the very constitution and proce-

dure of the gospel, a most affecting and honourable covenant of peace, requiring only to be closed with and signed by the sinner in submission and faith? As the men of Gibeon came to Israel, have you applied to Jesus for peace? If so, the testimony of conscience will accord with the witness of the Spirit, in that happy hope and assurance which will attend the sealing of the covenant on the heart. Unspeakingly blessed their state with whom the promise of life is confirmed: they cannot perish, neither shall any pluck them out of the hands of their covenant God. The sword that spares in mercy will protect in justice. Not long before discovery was made of their artifice. The surprise which this excited was not little, nor the apprehension of consequences to be feared from the precipitate and incautious engagements entered into; for the people all murmured against the princes. But the providence of God was in it, and His honour so involved in His people's regard to their oath that the treaty made could not be broken. If in a case of fraud, and in a certain view the stealing of His mercy, God will not suffer an impeachment of His character by a forfeiture of truth in His people, what shall be said of the inviolability of those engagements of His love for the accomplishment of which He has voluntarily, in the view of all our unworthiness, pledged in solemn oath and promise His own infinite perfections? One cannot but conceive it designed to present us with an idea of the conversion of enemies to God, and afford a prelude of the accession of Gentiles to His Church. Such as God designs to save He inclines to sue for mercy. Servitude became their condition whose lives mercy spared; but that was honourable, as it was holy, and to be preferred to all the degrading liberties and superstitions of idolatry. Life was the constant reward of their service, and in many instances, it may be hoped, grace was connected with their labour. By spiritual instructions imparted in that temple where they served, though in the meanest office, the gracious among them would become sharers in more valuable blessings than any that could be connected with the highest earthly honours. None can be truly in the service of God but they will find better pay and purer satisfaction than any who are serving themselves or the world. (*W. Seaton.*) *Pious frauds:*—In the Gibeonites there was faith—a belief that Israel was under the protection of a remarkable Divine power, under a Divine promise the truth of which even Balaam had very recently acknowledged—"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." Undoubtedly a religious feeling lay at the bottom of the proceeding. A great Divine Being was seen to be involved, who was on Israel's side and against his enemies, and it would not do to trifle with Him. But in their way of securing exemption from the effects of His displeasure the grossest superstition appeared. They were to gain their object by deceit. What a strange conception of God! What blindness to His highest attributes, His holiness and His truth! What a miserable God men fashion to themselves when they simply invest Him with almighty power, or perhaps suppose Him to be moved by whims and prejudices and favouritisms like frail man, but omit to clothe Him with His highest glory—forget that "justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne, mercy and truth go before His face." The conduct of the men was the more strange that it was impossible that they should not be speedily found out. And it was quite possible that, when found out, they would be dealt with more severely than ever. True, indeed, Joshua, when he did detect their plot, did not so act; he acted on a high, perhaps a mistaken, sense of honour; but they had no right to count on that. We cannot but respect the way in which Joshua and the princes acted when they discovered the fraud. It might have been competent to repudiate the league on the ground that it was agreed to by them under false pretences. It was made on the representation that the Gibeonites had come from a far country, and when that was seen to be utterly untrue there would have been an honourable ground for repudiating the transaction. But Joshua and the princes did not avail themselves of this loophole. The fact that the name of the Lord God of Israel had been invoked in the oath sworn to the Gibeonites constrained them to abide by the transaction. They carried out that great canon of true religion—first and foremost giving "glory to God in the highest." But though the lives of the Gibeonites were spared, that was all. They were to be reduced to a kind of slavery—to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and the altar of God." Does anything resembling this fraud of the Gibeonites ever take place among ourselves? In answer, let us ask first of all what is the meaning of pious frauds? Are they not transactions where fraud is resorted to in order to accomplish what are supposed to be religious ends? How can anything be a real religious gain to a man, how can it be otherwise than disastrous in the last degree, if it develops a fraudulent spirit,

if it perverts his moral nature, if it deepens and intensifies the moral disorder of his heart? If men saw "the beauty of holiness," "the beauty of the Lord," they could never bring their minds to such miserable distortions. It is pure blasphemy to suppose that God could thus demean Himself. It is self-degradation to imagine that anything that can be gained by oneself through such means could make up for what is lost or for the guilt incurred by such wickedness. And this suggests a wider thought—the fearful miscalculation men make whensoever they resort to fraud in the hope of reaping benefit by means of it. Yet what practice is more common? The question is, Does it really pay? Does it pay, for instance, to cheat at cards? Does it pay the merchant to cheat as to the quality of his goods? Does it not leak out that he is not to be trusted, and does not that suspicion lose more to him in the long run than it gains? Or, to vary the illustration. When one has entrapped a maiden under false promises, and then forsakes her; or when he conceals the fact that he is already married to another; or when he controls himself for a time, to conceal from her his ill-temper, or his profligate habits, or his thirst for strong drink, does it pay in the end? The question is not, Does he succeed in his immediate object? but, How does the matter end? Is it a comfortable thought to any man that he has broken a trustful heart, that he has brought misery to a happy home, that he has filled some one's life with lamentation and mourning and woe? We are not thinking only of the future life, when so many wrongs will be brought to light, and so many men and women will have to curse the infatuation that made fraud their friend and evil their good. We think of the present happiness of those who live in an atmosphere of fraud, and worship daily at its shrine. Can such disordered souls know ought of real peace and solid joy? All Eastern nations get the character of being deceitful; but indeed the weed may be said to flourish in every soil where it has not been rooted out by living Christianity. But if it be peculiarly characteristic of Eastern nations, is it not remarkable how constantly it is rebuked in the Bible, even though that book sprang from an Eastern soil? No doubt the record of the Bible abounds with instances of deceit, but its voice is always against them. And its instances are always instructive. Satan gained nothing by deceiving our first parents. Jacob was well punished for deceiving Isaac. David's misleading of the high priest when he fled from Saul involved ultimately the slaughter of the whole priestly household. Ananias and Sapphira had an awful experience when they lied unto the Holy Ghost. All through the Bible it is seen that lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truly are His delight. And when our blessed Lord comes to show us the perfect life, how free He is from the slightest taint or vestige of deceit! Is it possible for us ever to be worthy of such a Lord? First, surely, we must go to His Cross, and, bewailing all our unworthiness, seek acceptance through His finished work. And then draw from His fulness, even grace for grace; obtain through the indwelling of His Spirit that elixir of life which will send a purer life-blood through our souls, and assimilate us to Him of whom His faithful apostle wrote: "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

The Gibeonites:—Do we not see here, first and foremost, the pitiable shifts to which all spiritual fear is driven? The fear of Israel came upon the Gibeonites, and the result was an invention, a false arrangement, an attempt to escape the inevitable. This is the story of to-day. Volumes might be written upon this one thought, namely, that spiritual fear is always and of necessity driven to the most pitiable shifts. Spiritual fear says, "What can I do? I will undertake long pilgrimages; I will discharge severe and exhausting penances; I will build churches, and seem to worship; I will commingle with the people of God as if I were one of them when my heart is a thousand leagues away from the very poorest soul in all the sacred number." The trick of the Gibeonites is the game of to-day. Spiritual fear knows not the spirit of truth, and cannot, of course, know the spirit of joy. Are we not always cursed by this spirit of fear? It leads us to misconstructions of God. He ceases to be God when He is looked at through the medium and under the base inspiration of servile fear. The man in whom the spirit of fear is cannot read the Bible. It is a mere idol to him. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Saints may be outwitted by the world:—Saints are outwitted by the world in the things of the world, and no marvel; neither does it impeach their wisdom, any more than it does a scholar's to be excelled by a cobbler in his mean trade. Nature, where it intends higher excellencies, is more careless in those things which are inferior; as we see in man, who, being made to excel the beasts in a rational soul, is himself excelled by some beast or other in all his senses. Thus the Christian may well be surpassed in

matters of worldly commerce, because he has a nobler object in his eye that makes him converse with the things of the world in a kind of non-attendance; he is not much careful in these matters; if he can die well at last, and be justified for a wise man at the day of resurrection, all is well. (*H. G. Salter.*) *Reprehensible self-distortion*:—Self-abasement is proper; but self-distortion is wrong, false, wicked, hateful to Omniscience. It is the voice of Jacob, though the hands be the hands of Esau: the Pharisee in another face. Was the artifice any the less real on the part of Jeroboam's wife when she appeared in the presence of Ahijah the prophet, though a queen in disguise? Was not the conduct of the Gibeonites crafty and reprehensible? The attempt to make ourselves worse is as bad as trying to make ourselves better. It is hypocrisy either way, and God hates it in every form, in every disguise, for every purpose. Do no violence to self-hood. Be natural, simple, straightforward. Go to the Father in penitence and trustfulness, and then may you say, "For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." (*Thomas Parsons.*) *Beguiled by the crafty enemy*:—How often is the believer who, with Joshua, would have withstood some fierce assault, because driven by it to dependence upon the almighty arm, the all-sufficient grace, of his Divine Captain and Defender, with Joshua beguiled by the tempter's wiles and "the deceitfulness of sin"! The Gibeonites presented themselves to Joshua and to Israel as not falling within the number of those nations whom they had been enjoined to destroy utterly, with whom they must make no truce nor covenant, whom their eyes must not pity nor spare. Does your experience prove that sin is always presented to you as sin—in its native hideousness, its essential heinousness, its inseparable danger? Does the tempter always show the hook with the bait? Are you never tempted to make a league with—to tolerate—to conform to—that which ought to be proscribed and opposed without reserve? Never in danger of calling evil good and good evil; of putting darkness for light and light for darkness; of putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter? In a word, are there no Gibeonites among your soul's enemies? (*J. C. Miller, D. D.*) *Old shoes and clouted upon their feet*.—"Old shoes and clouted," *patched clothing*:—There are two sorts of hypocrites—those who profess to be better than they are: they form a large class; and those who profess to be worse than they are. There is great scope for hypocrisy even in wearing clothes. There are a great many people who wear very expensive garments at the cost of other people; because they have never paid for them, and never hope to do so. They represent one class of hypocrites. But occasionally you meet with a man who looks dreadfully shabby. His coat has a goodly number of patches, and every garment he wears gives proof of having been well worn. He dies, and leaves many thousands of pounds, sewn in some bag or other, and concealed in the chimney or under the mattress. Now, he is a hypocrite of the other type; he professes to be much poorer than he is. The Gibeonites were hypocrites of this order on this occasion. They acted as they did of a set purpose, not in order to show that they were poor, and thus to gain sympathy, but for quite another purpose. They sought to impress upon Joshua that they had come from a far country: that they had walked a weary journey, and that they had worn out their sandals, their clothes, and wine bags on the journey. They sought to make Joshua believe that they were led to him by kind, unselfish motives: that they had been prompted by such high regard for Joshua and the people whom he led as to earnestly wish to be on good terms with them. One cannot help trying to picture to one's self what happened at Gibeon just before they started. A goodly company of men went forth as ambassadors, and all wanted the oldest clothes they could get. I wonder whether there were second-hand dealers at Gibeon? The articles must have gone up suddenly in price if there were; and what an opportunity for clearing old and bad stock out—all the old sandals, and the old clothes! However that may have been, they got what they required, and at length appeared before Joshua, and represented to him that they had come a long journey, during which they had worn out their clothes, and that they had not had the opportunity of reclothing themselves; but that meanwhile they had been very careful of their garments in patching them diligently and well. It would not have done for them to have come in rags, and therefore they were careful to show to Joshua that, worn out as their garments were, yet they had made the best use of them, and had in each case put in a stitch in time to save nine. I wish that, while abstaining from all the deceit of these men, we could learn one lesson from them. Would that poor people always acted as economically as these people pretended to have acted on this occasion. If there are any of you who are

placed in circumstances where it is necessary to have many patches on your garments, and other boys who are placed in better circumstances than you feel inclined to laugh and sneer at you, never be ashamed of your patches; always consider that every patch on your coat tells everybody what an industrious mother you have at home. On the other hand, a hole that is allowed to remain long and to expand day by day is a reflection on all concerned. Now look at this from another standpoint. You see these people wanted to impress Joshua with the fact that on this one journey they had worn out all the clothing they had provided for themselves. Have you ever thought what a great deal we all wear out in life? Have you ever thought how many garments, how many shoes, and how many hats every boy of twelve has worn out since the day he was born? I suppose the oldest man here would stand perfectly aghast if all the garments he had worn and cast aside were only made to pass before him. Now that is something worth our consideration. It at least teaches us this—that there must be a marvellous Providence which takes care of us in a very extraordinary way. Then, think again of the food consumed. If we only thought of this we should begin to ask, “Where have all these garments come from? and how has all this food been provided? Thus, we should thank God more for His providence, and be less ready to cast away garments when they were half worn, and to think ourselves too good to wear a garment that is comparatively threadbare, though we may be too poor to buy a new one. Now just one word more—it is this. We not only wear out clothes and consume food, but also these bodies of ours, on the journey of life. We have only one body for the journey of life: in other words, we have only one suit for the soul. It is a marvellous suit, it expands as the soul expands. But it is not like the spirit itself; it is not immortal: it is subject to a great deal of wear and tear. Now God mends this for us day by day. But by and by, even with all His care, it begins to wear out. There are some here who are getting on in life. Their soul’s garment is not what it was. They cannot run as fast as they could when they were boys: they cannot do as much work as they did when they were young men in the prime of life. What is the matter? Oh, the old garment is beginning to wear, and the good God has to patch it up a little. The doctor says sometimes, “Well, I can patch him up a little bit.” But what a grand thing it will be when we shall never wear out! When this garment is put aside, God will provide for us another that will never grow old, and we shall engage in a service of which we shall never tire. (D. Davies.)

Causes of raggedness:—Many a clouted shoe, many a ragged garment has been paraded before the eyes of men during the three thousand years that have passed since the jaded asses of Gibeon entered the camp at Gilgal. Let me name some shams to be avoided. 1. Beware first of the shams of social life. Let us rather put up with the blame of being blunt and uncivil than feel that we are constantly begirt and bedizened with shams as deceitful as were the clouted shoes and the ragged raiment of these men of Gibeon. 2. Let me urge you also to beware of the shams of trade and commerce. And I do not limit these to what may be found in the shop and the market-place. I extend the warning to every professional pursuit. There are shams in them all. It has grown into a proverb, that “there are tricks in all trades”; and the proverb is more pointed because it is so true. Be poor men all your lives rather than richer ones, if riches can only be won by practices as disreputable as were the clouted shoes and the ragged raiment of the deputies of Gibeon. 3. And let us beware, above all, of the shams of religion. The most loathsome of all hypocrisy is that which assumes the garb of religion. The man who dares to assume this that he may further his own selfish ends joins himself to Ananias and Sapphira, and is not afraid to sin against the Holy Ghost. Oh! in whatever else we are hypocrites, let it not be in assuming the language and demeanour of followers of Christ while our hearts are far from Him and rebelling against Him! for this is worse a hundredfold than the clouted shoes and the ragged raiment of the Gibeonites. And of these representative shams that I have named, and of all others, it is to be remembered that one day will declare them. But though I have drawn these lessons from the words of the text, as spoken of those who wore the clouted shoes and the ragged raiment, to effect a dishonest treaty, and to give colour to a lying tale, yet the words occurred to my mind as descriptive of those by whom the clouted shoes and ragged raiment are not assumed from choice, but worn from the grim necessity that they have no other. And it is concerning this class of our communities, and our duty towards them, that I wish now to speak. It is a humbling fact that amid the civilisation and wealth of our land, of which we are so proud, there are hundreds and thousands of poor, neglected waifs—men,

women, and children—who are homeless and unsheltered. Of the children, at any rate, we must say that by some cruel misfortune they are degraded to a sphere immeasurably below their birthright as children of immortality. They are more sinned against than sinning. If they are called by the opprobrious name of “human vermin,” whose fault is it that they are such? If they have been declared to be “attired in the unalterable livery of scoundrelism,” whose fault is it that this new and terrible representative class has been suffered to grow up in our midst in monster proportions? If they have been called by a more truthful title, the “Arabs of the streets,” “their hand against every man,” must it not be confessed that it is because every man’s hand has so long been against them? It is our bounden duty to inquire something into the producing causes of this great mass of human sorrow, and misery, and want, and sin; let us try to do so. Of course there is a certain amount of this utter poverty for which the idleness and laziness of the people themselves must be blamed. It is true now as when Solomon said it, that “drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.” But what can we say for those homeless children who are striving to earn an honest penny by gathering holly, by holding horses, and so on? Their homelessness and raggedness has come down to them; they are born with it; their only heritage one of woe! I trace it to two causes: first, improvidence; and second, extravagance, especially in the two articles of dress and drink. But since rags and tatters are already the heritage of many thousands of children, from the improvidence and drunkenness of their parents, we must do something more than aim at removing the producing causes; we must help those hapless ones who are already in rags. I know that we shrink from doing so. This is one of the penalties of abject misery. But this feeling of aversion, though common, is unchristian! Our Lord never shrank from contact with the poorest, and filthiest, and most ragged and loathsome leper. And so it becomes us, who profess to follow in His steps, to seek to gather in even the most ragged outcast on our streets and lanes. (*J. E. Clarke, M.A.*)

The men . . . asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.—*Seek direction from God.*—Let the fault and neglect of the leaders of Israel instruct you. They were deceived because they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. The Urim and Thummim and the High Priest were in the camp, and from them an infallible answer might have been obtained. Go ye then, in the hour of temptation, to God by prayer. Implore His counsel and direction; and the Holy Spirit, in answer to your fervent petition, shall give you a right judgment in all things. Cry each of you to God, “What I know not, that teach Thou me.” “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,” &c. Study the Bible; be instant in prayer; so shall the eyes of your understanding be opened to discern the causes of danger; and so shall you be enabled to live with that holy caution which, through Divine grace, will make a way for you to escape. “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*)

Going astray.—There is an old but wholesome proverb which speaks of “making more haste than good speed.” We find the same truth, otherwise expressed, in Scripture; expressed as a part of the will of God, from whose right of control over man flow all those duties of caution, deliberation, and foresight which are inculcated nowhere so forcibly as in the Bible. We have in this passage a very remarkable illustration of our homely English proverb; and at the same time a very remarkable illustration of forgetfulness of the Divine saying, “Acknowledge God in all thy ways, and He shall direct thy paths.” “The men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel of the Lord.” I. THIS WAS UNJUSTIFIABLE. 1. They had the teaching of direct precepts that forbid it. They were told that the land which was given them to possess was filled with a wicked people, whose cup was full, and that their “strange work” was their extermination. Thus instructed, they were to make no covenant with any of the inhabitants of the land, but to smite “utterly both man and beast.” This precept, or rather reiterated command, they forgot; acting under impulse they forgot what was written, and governed by feeling they overlooked the law. 2. They had the teachings of their own experience that should have suggested caution. Let us not so conduct ourselves: let us remember the past only to be wiser for the future; let obedience to law be the rule of our life, lest some stern and inexorable calamity should come and crush us into inevitable submission. 3. All this was perfectly unjustifiable. Whatever consequences might have resulted, they could only blame themselves. Precept and precedent were against them, yet blindly and willfully they defied both. II. THE RESULTS OF THIS FORGETFULNESS. 1. To the Israelites. The moment the mistake was found out the multitude, who had said nothing before, began of course to murmur. So frequently, when men connive at each other’s iniquities and mistakes,

as soon as one of their number is reduced to trouble his partners in folly will be the first to upbraid him. God may forgive us our sins and our follies; but He will not by miracle interpose to save us from the natural consequences of our violation of the laws by which He manifests the everlasting unchangeableness of His moral government. 2. To the Gibeonites. Lying and cheating always defeat themselves in the long run. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *Hasty judgments*:—The children of Israel made two mistakes here. I. They received these men by reason of their victuals. **THEY JUDGED IN A HASTY AND SUPERFICIAL WAY.** By hasty judgments we are led into wrong in several directions. 1. Hasty judgments lead us to wrong others. 2. Hasty judgments lead us to wrong God. You take a superficial view of your troubles, and you think God is a tyrant and is cruel. 3. How many reject the truth by such hasty judgment. Some trifle suffices—a silly criticism they heard years ago—to lead them to give up Christianity and lose their souls. This, then, is the first lesson of the text: To form no judgment concerning any man or any thing on insufficient or defective data. II. They “asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.” **THEY ACTED UPON THEIR OWN WIT AND DISCERNMENT.** If you have any wit, you are to use it. You may think you know all about the harbour of success, every shallow, every sunken rock, yet it would be better to take a pilot on board. I prefer to employ a praying doctor, a praying lawyer. (*H. M. Scudder, D.D.*) *A judgment over self-reliance*:—What an ominous sound there is in those words! They portend disaster, and it befell. Up to this moment the initiative had always been taken by the Lord. Now for the first time it is taken by Joshua and the people. In all the previous chapters the words run thus: “And the Lord said unto Joshua”; but there is no such phrase in this. Israel through her chosen leaders acted for herself, and easily fell into the trap. If only they had inquired of the Lord the dimming light in the sacred stone would have betrayed the fatal secret and arrested the formation of the league. Let us lay the moral to our heart. Earth’s sombre tints and cross-lights are very perplexing; and it is often extremely hard to detect the truth. The foolish virgins are so much like the wise; the tares so resemble the wheat; the hireling imitates so precisely the Shepherd’s voice; the devil’s mimicry of an angel of light is so exact; bye-path meadow is parted from the King’s highway by so narrow a boundary. We urgently need, as the apostle prayed for his Philippian converts, that we may have, not only all knowledge, but all discernment, so that we may prove the things that differ (Phil. i. 10, R.V. margin). In one place this power to discriminate is said to result from use (Heb. v. 14); whilst in the passage already quoted it is attributed to an abounding love. But following the suggestion of the narrative before us, we may say that it will follow naturally on the careful cultivation of the blessed habit of asking counsel at the mouth of the Lord. Never trust your own judgment. When voices within or without would hasten you to decide on the strength of your own conclusions, then be careful to refer the whole matter from the lower court of your own judgment to the supreme tribunal of God’s. If there is any doubt or hesitation left after such reference, be sure that as yet the time has not come for you to understand all God’s will. Under such circumstances wait. Throw the responsibility of the pause and all it may involve on God, and dare still to wait. As a traveller over the hills, when the mist has come down, elects to stand or lie where it overtakes him, rather than wander on, perhaps to the brink of a precipice, so wait. If you trust God absolutely it is for Him to give you clear directions as to what you should do. And when the time for action arrives He will have given you such unmistakable indications of His will that, though a fool, you will not be able to mistake them or err therein. (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) **Joshua made peace with them.**—The grand inquiry here is whether this league was lawful or not? Answer the first: Some have these sentiments, that it was unlawful upon those grounds, because (1) God forbade Israel to make any league with the Canaanites, and bade to destroy them all (Exod. xxiii. 32, xxxiv. 15; Deut. vii. 2) without making any exceptions, &c. (2) Secondly, the people murmured at this league (ver. 18), which they ought not to have done, had it been lawful. (3) Joshua denounces those Gibeonites accursed for deceiving him (ver. 23), which he would not have done had nothing been done but what was just and equal. (4) He charged them with circumventing him by dissimulation (ver. 21). Answer the second: but others affirm it was a lawful league, as Augustine and all the rabbis, &c., upon those grounds. First, it was lawful for Israel to offer peace to other nations before they besieged any of their cities (Deut. xx. 10), which shows this league was lawful as to the substantial part of it. Secondly, this sanguinary law of killing all the Canaanites was not absolute and universal, but admitted of an exception of penitents and true converts, as

appeareth from Jer. xviii. 7, 8, and John iii. 4. Thirdly, that this law was thus limited (being only a positive law, and so might be qualified with a natural and moral equity) appears in Israel's sparing Rahab and her relations. Fourthly, the reason of that sanguinary law was lest those Canaanites that were not killed might entice the Israelites to their idolatry. Now that reason ceased at their turning from idolatry and becoming proselytes to Israel, &c. Fifthly, that the Gibeonites were converts appears, for their hearts were not hardened as the other Canaanites were (chap. xi. 19, 20). They came to Joshua here in the name of the Lord (ver. 9), and they had this blessing, to have a near approach unto God in their service of the sanctuary (ver. 27), where David could have been content to be a poor door-keeper (Psa. lxxxiv. 10). Sixthly, Had this league been unlawful it had been better broken than kept; if it had been a sin to make it, the sin would have been double to keep it; but Joshua and all the princes upon the review of it did conscientiously keep it (vers. 19, 20, 22, 23). Seventhly, God severely punished the violators of this league, long, even 400 years, after, as 2 Sam. xxi. 3. Saul's rash zeal cost the seven of his sons' lives, and so almost rooted out his whole posterity. Eighthly, The utter destruction of all the other cursed Canaanites came not so much or so necessarily upon them by virtue of any absolute or peremptory precept for destroying them as it did from their own obstinacy and obduration of their hearts, whereby they did not only neglect but also scorned to make peace (chap. xi. 19, 20). (C. Ness.)

Hewers of wood and drawers of water.—*Mistakes divinely overruled*:—This is a beautiful and comforting example of the way in which God overrules our mistakes, and brings blessing out of our sins, as the chemist obtains his loveliest dyes from the refuse of gas retorts. Inadvertently, and without due consideration, some of my readers may have entered into alliance with a Gibeonite, whether in marriage, in business, or in some other sphere. Are they therefore to abandon their high privilege, and forsake their lofty ministry to the world? Must they cease to be God's portion, and the priests of men? Not necessarily. Let them turn to God in repentance and confession, and He will teach them how these very hindrances may become great means of help, so that they shall hew the wood for the burnt-offering, draw the water for the libations, and promote the prosperity and well-being of the soul. Out of the eater shall come forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.)

CHAPTER X.

VERS. 1-5. Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua.—*To arms! To arms!*—The greatest poet of Greece has sung in stately numbers the deeds of heroes whom his race adored. We listen to their counsels, we hear their battle shouts, we see their awful blows. Yet after all this plain, unvarnished tale depicts with more fidelity and power the progress and results of a conflict, the most sublime in its accompaniments that this earth has ever seen. In this chapter we have recorded not only one of Joshua's most brilliant victories, but one of the world's greatest battles: a struggle surpassing in importance and interest Issus or Arbela, Marathon or Cannae, and affecting to an incalculable extent the religious and political, the moral and the material, welfare of mankind. First of all we listen to the summons—"Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon," &c. Notice from whom the summons comes. From Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem. This is a strange thing. From this man's name, Lord of Righteousness, and from his heritage, Jerusalem, we would have expected something very different. He is certainly the successor, probably the descendant, of Melchizedek. Here is a man who bears the best of titles, but is, alas! unworthy of it. Nothing could be better than his name; few things are worse than his fame. Learn from this sad lesson that piety is not hereditary. The descendants of the righteous may be a wicked seed. This is a sad thing. A noble ancestry is not a thing to be despised. It is unwise and ungrateful to ignore the records and the glories of the past. This is also a dangerous thing. The opposition of those who have thus fallen is always most dangerous. None are so bitter and remorseless, so vehement and virulent, so venomous and subtle, as renegades. Notice to whom Adoni-zedek's message was sent. It was not sent to all the members

of the great national league. That was impossible, because the submission of the Gibeonites had split the confederacy into two unequal parts. Instead of one vast army marching to crush the invader there must now be two: one in the south, the other in the north. That of the south is smaller, therefore more easily set in motion; and it is also placed nearer the centre of attack. Thus we see how God has restrained the wrath of the enemy and deprived him of half his might. Even so all coalition against Him must fall to pieces. Transgressors are always lacking in cohesion. It was to Gibeon that Adoni-zedek summoned his confederates. Thus his enmity was manifested against their defection. Still this summons of Adoni-zedek betokens fear. It is to some extent the blustering of a bully who is at heart a craven. We know this, for we are told that "When Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it . . . that they feared greatly." Therefore because they fear they do not come alone. They keep their courage up by company. How many are like them. They do fear when spiritual truths are brought before them, when God's judgment stares them in the face; yet they try to find comfort in the thought, "Well, if I am lost a great many will be badly off." Nay! nay! It is a vain thing to banish fear by such thoughts. Such a fear as that works destruction; because being accompanied by a rebellious heart and a darkened mind it led to union against God. Hatred against the Gibeonites is a very distinct characteristic of Adoni-zedek's message. Yet, after all, what right had they to be thus angry with their old friends? Had not the Gibeonites a right to have a mind of their own, especially in a matter that concerned their very existence? But the human heart remains the same. When the sinner turns from his rebellion and humbles himself before God, then is the time for the wrath of man to be revealed. This hatred is most unreasonable, for, like these Gibeonites, the penitents in throwing down the weapons of their rebellion set an example which it is the highest wisdom to follow. The cunning and the impiety of these Canaanites are also revealed by this confederation. They will prevent further defection; they will gain one of the most important strongholds in the land; they will make the old league possible. Thus they displayed their craft. And in doing so they proved their impiety. (*A. B. Mackay.*) *Rage of the world against deserters from its ranks:*—It is thus in the spiritual life. Upon no outer enemy does the world turn with such rage and resentment as upon those who desert their ranks to join the Lord's host. All the legions of hell are marshalled forth against the young believer who has newly signed the terms of treaty with the Joshua of the better covenant. As Bishop Hall says, "If a convert come home, the angels welcome him with song, the devils follow him with uproar and fury, his old partners with scorn and obloquy." In spite of all this, let not those who have become allied to the Israel of God quail; but let the sequel here before us reassure them. (*G. W. Butler, M.A.*) *Combinations against the Church:*—What combinations have been formed, what artifices practised against the Church!—one wile to allure, another to frighten, and sometimes to destroy. As against the Lord Himself, so against His people, the great and the mighty of the earth have consulted their ruin, and for a season availed to harass and distress the saints; nor can this be matter of surprise to those who know their own character, and remember what themselves were till converted by the grace of God. The Church's gain is the world's grief, as it is the world's loss. Oh, what oppositions in families, what combinations out of old connections and associates, have been raised against those who, no longer of the world, have been chosen out of it, and through grace enabled to turn their backs upon its vanities and pursuits! No sooner is it known that any have made peace with our spiritual Joshua than the world is up in arms, and war declared, lasting as the irreconcilable enmity of fallen nature. Not one who openly declares himself on the Lord's side, and is inwardly devoted to His glory, but, according to the station he occupies, and the influence of those around him, will experience a full measure. (*W. Seaton.*)

Vers. 6-11. Come up . . . quickly, and save us, and help us.—*Help! help!*—The chapter opens with a cry from Jerusalem, the summons of Adoni-zedek—"To arms! To arms!" Here we have another and a very different cry, a cry from Gibeon; a cry to Joshua for help. **I. THE TROUBLE OF THE GIBEONITES.** They are in sore straits. What a vivid picture of spiritual truth have we here! "He that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey." Do you make your peace with God? that instant, and by that act, you are at war with Satan. No sooner is the treaty of salvation signed than the infernal hosts are rallied. The ink is scarcely dry before he begins

his attack. Old friends become new enemies. A man's foes are often those of his own household. When we come into such trouble let us not think that a strange thing has befallen us. It is the common fate of God's children, from the highest to the meanest, and to the end of time. Though the Captain of salvation is the Prince of Peace, He has come not to send peace on the earth but a sword; and so will it be till every enemy is cast out and all flesh shall own Him Lord. These Gibeonites felt this attack all the more dangerous because it was the onset of men with whom in the past they had been on such intimate terms. All their conditions and resources were as well known to these five kings as to themselves. And the remembrance of these things made this attack all the more formidable. But what was all the knowledge which the five kings had of the Gibeonites compared with the knowledge Satan has of us? Therefore, how terrible must be his attack! If we are not ignorant of his devices, he is not ignorant of our weakness. II. But if this cry suggests the trouble of the Gibeonites, IT ALSO POINTS OUT THEIR RESOURCES. If they are in great trouble they are not without resource, and at once they avail themselves of it. They dwelt in a fortified city, but they did not depend on its walls and bulwarks. They had no confidence in themselves. Their own resources were insufficient. All their confidence was placed in Joshua. Would that we always showed like wisdom! Sin and Satan are more than a match for the strongest saint. As they looked to Joshua, so must we look to Jesus. As they depended on that covenant of peace which had been ratified, so must we. As they dispatched runners post haste to Gilgal, so must we send out swift-footed messengers of prayer. Our very existence as saints depends on their success. III. THE EARNESTNESS OF THE GIBEONITES. How keen and piercing is their cry! How urgent is their request! The message was no doubt short, they did not waste their words; but it was full of earnestness. It was the message of men thoroughly roused and anxious. Though short it was very full. They sought to stir up Joshua's energy. It is as if they said, "We have no hope apart from you. We are all dead men if you fail us. We know you can save us and trust you will." They also manifested faithfulness to Joshua, by the last two words of their message—"Help us." Why were these words added? "Save" is the word of dependence—"Help" suggests the determination to do what they can. It is as if they said, "While we feel that in our own strength we must be worsted, yet we are determined to make a stand against them. On no account will we come to terms. We will never open our gates to the enemy. We will not even hold parley with him. Till you come, and even if you do not come, we will do the best we can." Accordingly this shows that they were faithful to their new leader. Surely their conduct in this emergency may well be imitated. Oh, for like earnestness in crying, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord!" How languid are our prayers! How unconscious are we of danger! It is good for God to open our eyes by trouble, if it leads us to cry like these Gibeonites. IV. THE SUCCOUR OF THE GIBEONITES. Help was sure. Joshua would have belied his name, would have been unfaithful to his covenant, would have been untrue to his nature, if he had not hastened to their relief. And help came speedily. Joshua lost not a moment. Help also came in time. Joshua was not too late. The Gibeonites did not become a prey; they had cause to rejoice over a great deliverance. Do we in every extremity cry to God? Help must come. God never said to any, "Seek ye My face," in vain. Jesus, like Joshua, is never too late. If He tarries there is good reason for it. It is always for our good. He may come when Lazarus is laid in the grave, but He never comes too late. He is never too late in history. The world had a long time run its course before He came. Why? Because that time was set. "In the fulness of time God set forth His Son." He has promised to come back again, and depend upon it He will not come back too late. What though 1,800 years have passed away? nothing will divert Him from His purpose; nothing will prevent His appearing. "Amen," therefore we say, "Amen, even so, in Thy good time, for that is quickly, come, Lord Jesus." And notice, in conclusion, that it may be said of these Gibeonites that they were twice saved. First they were saved from the wrath of God; then they were saved from the wrath of their enemies. So we are saved from the wrath of God and from the wrath of Satan. The Gibeonites were saved by faith, for they trusted in Joshua and in the God of Israel. They were saved by works, for they determined to oppose Adoni-zedek or die. They were saved by hope, for they looked to Joshua for succour and were not disappointed. So we are saved by faith when we fall at the feet of Jesus and put our trust in Him. We are saved by works, when in the strength of God we wrestle against principalities and powers and spiritual wickednesses in

high places. We are saved by hope when we look for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour. The Gibeonites were saved by coming to Joshua in their fear of judgment. They were saved by Joshua coming to them and extricating them out of all their trouble. So we are saved by coming to Jesus. The instant we fall at His feet we receive the salvation of our souls. And we are saved by Jesus coming to us (Heb. ix. 28). (*A. B. Mackay.*) *The newly-converted assailed*:—1. No sooner is the soul brought into the bonds of the covenant with our Joshua or Jesus, but presently the spiritual enemies of the soul muster up all their forces against it, as the five cursed kings did against Gibeon as soon as they had entered into a league with Joshua here (2 Tim. iii. 12; Acts xiv. 22). 2. The soul when thus assaulted must immediately send the messenger of prayer to its Joshua or Jesus. 3. As those new converts the Gibeonites showed their confidence in that God, whose religion they had newly embraced, therefore sent they for Joshua, not at all doubting of salvation by him. So the like confidence should be found in all new converted souls, that their Joshua will relieve them, and turn their spirit of bondage into the spirit of adoption. (*C. Ness.*) *Ready help*:—The help required was great: "Slack not thy hand from thy servants." It is not little the Christian needs. How often, in seeking Divine aid and security, has the believer to say, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me"! &c. Ready help was intreated. "Come up to us quickly, and save us." It was well they were not what they once represented themselves to be—the inhabitants of a far remote country; for then help had come too late, had it come with bottles rent and bound up, shoes clouted and worn out, garments old and threadbare. Great is the mercy to be near our mercies, that when life, and all that is dear to us, lies at stake, salvation may be found at hand. (*W. Seaton.*) *Value of promptitude in action*:—Let us note not only the nobility of this acknowledgment of the claims of the new allies, but also the promptitude and energy with which their rescue is undertaken. How many good resolves are marred and made of none effect by lack of decision in their execution. We rest in the thought of our noble plans, and meanwhile we hesitate and defer to carry them out in the performance: thus the evils we might have stayed grow beyond control: the opportunity has sped away; the hearts of those who looked for our help are sick with hopes long deferred. Too late! too late! is the disappointed cry with which they greet our tardy steps. (*G. W. Butler, M.A.*) **Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand.**—*Courage!*—On the eve of a great engagement a wise leader often rouses the enthusiasm of his followers by a few well-chosen words. We know how the message of Nelson, before the battle of Trafalgar, stimulated every man in his fleet to do his utmost; and not only so, but it has also come ringing down the years that intervene with telling effect on every noble heart in great emergencies. God deals with His servants after the same fashion; therefore, here, before Joshua passes forth to the rescue of the Gibeonites, he gives them words of cheer. Notice when God gave this encouragement. It was when Joshua had resolved to set out to the help of the Gibeonites. There is no evidence that Joshua asked for or even expected such encouragement. He felt bound to do his duty, to keep faith with the Gibeonites, and while in the act of responding to their cry, this encouragement came. The very fact that this cheering word was unsolicited made it doubly sweet. We may have similar experiences. When we walk in the path of duty we may always reckon on the Divine encouragement. If we go to God's work with good will, however hard it may be, and whoever may oppose, we may always count on the good will and the good word of God, and surely that ought to suffice. How encouraging, how comforting, how strengthening, is the answer of a good conscience towards God! Notice, also, the terms of this encouragement now given. They were very clear. They had no particle of ambiguity. How the healthy soul rejoices in certainty! How freely does God delight to give it! And the fact that the words Joshua now heard were familiar to his ear, phrases repeated again and again, made this assurance doubly sweet. God is dealing with him now as He has graciously done in all the past; and every repetition and new fulfilment of a promise adds to its value. For the old promise has been tried and tested again and again, and proved to be sufficient. It is good when we have such experience as Joshua; when we have not only a true word, but one which in our own experience we have tried and proved to be sufficient for every emergency. Therefore notice next the effect that this encouragement has upon Joshua. It fills him with new energy. The clearest assurance of success does not do away with the use of means, rather is it a sharp spur to make the most of them. Joshua, though thus assured, yet, because thus assured, acts as if everything

depended on his energy and the swiftness and strength of his attack. And so in a very important sense it did. But we may not only trace the effect of this promise in the energy with which it filled Joshua and his soldiers, but also in that marvellous prayer which rose to his lips in the great crisis of the fight that ensued. It is this great promise of God which justifies and explains that great prayer of Joshua. Joshua "spoke to the Lord" on that day, and his words were wonderful. His prayer was very short, but we are startled by its boldness. The prayer was public, therefore Joshua risked all his reputation on its answer. The prayer was humble. He had no desire to parade his power; he had no need to win the allegiance of Israel. His one thought was the perfect fulfilment of that work which by this promise God had said would be accomplished. God had spoken. His power and glory are pledged to the fulfilment of that word. Can He not perform? God gave Joshua a large promise, and Joshua laid before God a large prayer. Thus both God's power and Joshua's faith were magnified and made honourable. In like manner may we make use of all God's promises; and we only prove our unbelief by leaving them a dead letter. Who can over-estimate the value of prayer, who can put a limit to its power? Did we believe in the promises of God as firmly as Joshua, we would be able more closely to imitate his prayers. Men make difficulties here where the simple soul can find none. As a living father can answer the request of his children, so the Lord can hear and answer the prayer of His people. And He answers every prayer addressed to Him; not always in the same way, but always in the best way. Now notice, lastly, the fulfilment of this promise. No doubt the good generalship of Joshua and the valour of his soldiers had much to do with it. They marched with swiftness, they laid on with might and main, they never paused in the pursuit, yet all that they did was obscured by the wonderful interposition of God. Joshua and Israel did what they could, and yet God did all. It is well to remember that nature may become one great arsenal for the defence of those that fear God, for the destruction of all His enemies. It was no superstition, but true godliness, which enabled our forefathers to see the finger of God in those storms which swept the great Armada to its doom. How often does God in His adorable Providence render the very objects in which men trust the means of filling them with shame and confusion of face! How manifestly was God with Israel! How evident is it that "The Lord reigneth!" Israel needed that assurance, and we need it too. Whatever may come to pass from year to year, from century to century, He and He alone is guiding the world and the Church to that goal which He has foreknown and appointed. This is the sheet-anchor of all our hopes for humanity. (*A. B. Mackay.*) They were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.—*The Lord's artillery*:—We have seen how Gibeon made peace with Joshua. Adoni-zedec, king of Jerusalem, was exceedingly displeased with the men of Gibeon for making peace with the enemy. 1. The Divine cause has enemies. 2. But the enemies of the Divine cause have both earth and heaven against them—the sword of Israel and the hail of God. The living God has two great forces; if you escape one, you fall under the power of the other. All things fight for God. The hailstones are His friends and allies; the stars in their courses beat and throb according to His purpose and express His intent. The bad cause has no friends; it comes to an ignominious end; it is overwhelmed by hailstones. It is so humbling. The bad cause perishes in contempt. The five kings ran away and hid themselves in a cave, and Joshua said, "Bring them out!" (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 12. *The sun stood still, and the moon stayed.*—*The battle of Bethhoron*:—In some respects this victory had a special significance. In the first place, it had a most important bearing on the success of the whole enterprise; its suddenness, its completeness, its manifold grandeur being admirably fitted to paralyse the enemy in other parts of the country, and open the whole region to Joshua. By some it has been compared to the battle of Marathon, not only on account of the suddenness with which the decisive blow was struck, but also on account of the importance of the interests involved. It was a battle for freedom, for purity, for true religion, in opposition to tyranny, idolatry, and abominable sensuality; for all that is wholesome in human life, in opposition to all that is corrupt; for all that makes for peaceful progress, in opposition to all that entails degradation and misery. The prospects of the whole world were brighter after that victory of Bethhoron. The relation of heaven to earth was more auspicious, and more full of promise for the days to come. In the next place the tokens of Divine aid were

very impressive. After the experience which Joshua had had of the consequences of failing to ask God for direction when first the Gibeonites came to him, we may be very sure that on the present occasion he would be peculiarly careful to seek Divine counsel. And he was well rewarded. Then as to the miracle of the sun and the moon standing still. It is well known that this was one of the passages brought forward by the Church of Rome to condemn Galileo, when he affirmed that the earth and the moon revolved round the sun, and that it was not the motion of the sun round the earth, but the rotation of the earth on her own axis that produced the change of day and night. No one would dream now of making use of this passage for any such purpose. Whatever theory of inspiration men may hold, it is admitted universally that the inspired writers used the popular language of the day in matters of science, and did not anticipate discoveries which were not made till many centuries later. A far more serious question has been raised as to whether this miracle ever occurred, or could have occurred. To those who believe in the possibility of miracles, it can be no conclusive argument that it could not have occurred without producing injurious consequences the end of which can hardly be conceived. For if the rotation of the earth on its axis was suddenly arrested, all human beings on its surface, and all loose objects whatever must have been flung forward with prodigious violence; just as, on a small scale, on the sudden stoppage of a carriage, we find ourselves thrown forward, the motion of the carriage having been communicated to our bodies. But really this is a paltry objection; for surely the Divine power that can control the rotation of the earth is abundantly able to obviate such effects as these. We can understand the objection that God, having adjusted all the forces of nature, leaves them to operate by themselves in a uniform way without disturbance or interference; but we can hardly comprehend the reasonableness of the position that if it is His pleasure miraculously to modify one arrangement, He is unable to adjust all relative arrangements, and make all conspire harmoniously to the end desired. But was it a miracle? The narrative, as we have it, implies not only that it was, but that there was something in it stupendous and unprecedented. It comes in as a part of that supernatural process in which God has been engaged ever since the deliverance of His people from Egypt, and which was to go on till they should be finally settled in the land. It naturally joins on to the miraculous division of the Jordan, and the miraculous fall of the walls of Jericho. We must remember that the work in which God was now engaged was one of peculiar spiritual importance and significance. He was not merely finding a home for His covenant people; He was making arrangements for advancing the highest interests of humanity; He was guarding against the extinction on earth of the Divine light which alone can guide man in safety through the life that now is, and in preparation for that which is to come. Who will take upon him to say that at an important crisis in the progress of the events which were to prepare the way for this grand consummation, it was not fitting for the Almighty to suspend for a time even the ordinances of heaven, in order that a day's work, carrying such vast consequences, might not be interrupted before its triumphant close? One other notable feature in the transaction of this day was the completeness of the defeat inflicted by Joshua on the enemy. This defeat went on in successive stages from early morning till late at night. First, there was the slaughter in the plain of Gibeon. Then the havoc produced by the hail and by Joshua on the retreating army. Then the destruction caused as Joshua followed the enemy to their cities. And the work of the day was wound up by the execution of the five kings. Moreover, there followed a succession of similar scenes at the taking and sacking of their cities. When we try to realise all this in detail, we are confronted with a terrible scene in blood and death, and possibly we may find ourselves asking, "Was there a particle of humanity in Joshua, that he was capable of such a series of transactions?" But it must be said, and said firmly for Joshua, that there is no evidence of his acting on this or on other such occasions in order to gratify personal feelings; it was not done either to gratify a thirst for blood, or to gratify the pride of a conqueror. Joshua all through gives us the impression of a man carrying out the will of another; inflicting a judicial sentence, and inflicting it thoroughly at the first so that there might be no need for a constant series of petty executions afterwards. This certainly was his aim; but the enemy showed themselves more vital than he had supposed. And when we turn to ourselves and think what we may learn from this transaction, we see a valuable application of his method to the spiritual warfare. God has enemies still, within and without, with whom we are called to contend. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but

against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." When we are fighting with the enemy within our own hearts leniency is our great temptation, but at the same time our greatest snare. What we need here is courage to slay. And in reference to the outside world, want of thoroughness in warfare is still our besetting sin. If only the Church had more faith, and, as the fruit of faith, more courage and more enterprise, what help from heaven might not come to her! True, she would not see the enemy crushed by hailstones, nor the sun standing in Gibeon, nor the moon in the valley of Ajalon; but she would see grander sights; she would see men of spiritual might raised up in her ranks; she would see tides of strong spiritual influence overwhelming her enemies. Jerichos dismantled, Ais captured, and the champions of evil falling like Lucifer from heaven to make way for the King of kings and Lord of lords. Let us go to the Cross of Jesus to revive our faith and recruit our energies. (W. G. Blaikie, D.D.) *Firing of sun and moon in the heavens*:—I. CONSIDER THE ARGUMENTS, USUALLY ADVANCED AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF THE SUN AND MOON STANDING STILL IN THE HEAVENS. Not merely is it objected that such an occurrence would be an unwarrantable interference with the laws of nature; but the historian's veracity has also been called in question. It is argued that in recording the circumstance he does not express himself scientifically; but that, on the contrary, he evinces ignorance of the true principles of astronomy: that therefore he should not be regarded as an inspired writer, this circumstance being sufficient in itself to shake credit in his testimony. To this objection we reply—Joshua did not mean to furnish us with a treatise on astronomy. He expressed himself according to the opinion formed on scientific topics during the times in which he lived. Do not we, ourselves, who know that it is the earth which moves, and not the sun, commonly speak of his rising and setting; while perfectly aware that in reality he neither rises nor sets. Certainly the lengthening out of the day (on the occasion of Joshua defeating the five kings) must have been caused by the earth not revolving so rapidly on its axis as it usually does. It is well known that in the equatorial regions the earth moves from west to east at the rate of one thousand miles in the hour; and that the rapidity of motion gradually diminishes as we go from the equator to the poles; so that, at the poles, there is no motion whatever. Supposing that, instead of moving at its usual speed, our earth were to revolve, on its axis, only five hundred miles in the hour: the result would be that the day would be protracted to double the ordinary length, because the apparent passage of the sun first, and of the moon next, over the concave surface would be proportionally retarded. But it is further objected that such an interference with the course of nature would have occasioned irreparable mischief. What! Is anything too hard for God? Cannot He, who called nature into existence, suspend its laws and operations when He pleases? Is any man so well acquainted with the complex machinery of nature as to be prepared to say that the conception and development of animal life are possible things; but that the slackening of the earth's rotary motion is an impossibility? And now, before dismissing this head of our subject, we shall adduce from pagan mythology a proof that the miracle referred to in our text did really occur. The superstitious Greeks, in olden times, worshipped the sun, under the name of Apollo, who (according to them) had a son who was called Phaeton. Apollo was supposed to drive the chariot of the sun daily through the skies. Phaeton requested his father to permit him to drive the chariot for a single day. Apollo granted the request. Phaeton proved an unskilful charioteer, in being unable to curb the horses, which therefore went out of the proper track. Jupiter (whom the ancient pagans regarded as the supreme god) irritated at Phaeton's rashness, and fearing that a conflagration of heaven and earth might ensue, struck the youth with the thunderbolt and hurled him into the river Po in Italy. This heathen anecdote cannot be altogether an invention. There lies a truth at the bottom of it. Some irregularity in the sun's apparent diurnal course must have occurred at an early period of history; otherwise ancient heathens would have no foundation whereon to build their superstitious legend. And let us observe that where heathen testimony can be brought to corroborate revelation the testimony is invaluable; because it is the testimony of enemies.

II. We proceed to show that THERE EXISTED AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR THE MIRACLE IN QUESTION BEING PERFORMED. Yes; there is an intimate connection between this miracle and the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. If sun and moon had not stood still at Joshua's command there would (on human calculation) have been no chance of salvation for a single member of our fallen race. If Israel had not had

sufficient light to guide them in pursuing their Canaanite enemies these enemies would have escaped during the darkness of the night. Had they escaped the five kings might have rallied; and, instead of Israel exterminating them, they might have exterminated Israel. Thus the advent of the promised Redeemer would have been prevented: for God had decreed that of Jacob's seed (in the line of Judah) Messiah should descend. No doubt the Divine plans have long been settled in the councils of eternity; and the Most High will take good care that Satan shall not defeat them. But then God employs second means to work His ends. He ordains every single step and event which will be conducive thereto in order that a single link may not be broken in the chain of His providential dealing. III. The conflict which Israel, under Joshua, had to maintain with the wicked nations of Canaan prefigured that deadlier conflict which we ourselves, under a greater than Joshua, have to keep up with the world, **THE DEVIL**, and **THE FLESH**. To enable us to make head against these spiritual foes, who have in view nothing less than our destruction, God in mercy lengthens out the day. There is a spiritual sun, and there is a spiritual moon: even as there exist a literal sun and moon. God has set these moral luminaries in the spiritual firmament, to give such persons as have hitherto turned a deaf ear to the gospel space to believe it and be saved, ere it be too late; and also to afford light to those who already believe that they may continue firm to the end. (*John Caldwell, B.A.*) *How Joshua stopped the sun*:—For ages multitudes of Bible readers have seen in this narrative a stupendous miracle. Seeing the statement some have rebelled against it, and refused to believe it. Others have conscientiously striven to believe the statement, and defend it. Now, if a miracle is really declared to have taken place upon that day, its stupendous nature forms no objection whatever to my faith. Every miracle is to me stupendous, or else it is no miracle at all. Where God is concerned nothing is impossible. What objection then is there? The first, that such an act would seem, at any rate to be out of keeping with God's economy of power; it serves no direct purpose here. Mere flourishes of almightiness are never found in the Bible. Every miracle in the Bible is a means to an end, and there is a proportion between the means and the end in view. There is no waste. I search the Bible in vain for any reference to the fact that the earth was stopped, or the sun stayed. I find no such reference at all. No use whatever is made of this in any other age, or in any other book. God led His people out of Egypt with a high hand, and the nation was cradled among miracles, and those miracles are appealed to time after time, age after age, to the end of the Bible. But there is a remarkable silence with regard to this. But my chief objection to the ordinary view is that I do not believe that the Bible says there was a miracle at all. I hold that, given a fair translation of this chapter, and an average amount of intelligence in the reader, and a reasonable freedom for traditional bias, the alleged stupendous miracle disappears entirely, and gives way to something far more valuable. And I claim that it is one of the inestimable and innumerable benefits conferred upon us by the Revised Translation of the Bible, that by its means the average reader can, without the help of any commentary, see at a glance how the case stood, and what really took place on that great day. Now, you will ask, What is the difference, then, between the Revised and the Old Version? Why, simply this. If you read this chapter in the Old Version the verses follow one another in unbroken continuity, and no hint whatever is given to the reader that when he arrives at the twelfth verse he is no longer reading what the author of the Book of Joshua himself wrote; he is not warned that the author, at the twelfth verse, breaks off from telling his own story, and introduces a quotation as a climax to the description of the battle, and that that quotation is a poetical one, taken from a book once popular, but now entirely lost, the Book of Jasher. If you read the Old Version it would seem to you that from the twelfth to the fifteenth verses is as much prose as the rest of the chapter, whereas in the Hebrew Bible, from the first, these verses were marked as a piece of quoted poetry; and in the Revised Version the thing is done almost in the same way. So that the reader who just looks at this chapter as it stands in the Revised Version will see that in the first part of the chapter he has to deal with history, and in this part he has to deal with poetry—a poetical quotation introduced by the historian as the climax of his description of the great battle of Bethhoron. Now it appears to me that this simple fact solves the difficulty entirely—relieves the faith of multitudes from a great burden; and, best of all, deprives a certain class of unbelievers of a very coarse but at the same time a very effective weapon. What have we here, then? Precisely what we have in many other parts of the Bible—

namely, two accounts of the same thing: one the sober account of the historian, and the other the more glowing account of the poet. For instance, you have the same thing in the Book of Judges. You will remember—for you are Bible readers—you remember the great battle of Mount Tabor. The Jews were groaning under the tyranny of Jabin, the king of Jerusalem, and at last there arose Deborah. She aroused Barak, Barak routed the army of Sisera; Jael completed Barak's work, and with a tent-pin and a hammer killed Sisera in her tent. This is the story of the battle of Mount Tabor, as told by the historian. But in the chapter next to it you will find the song of Deborah, and in that song an inspired poetess gives her account of the battle from the standpoint of the poet. She says: "They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." It was Barak who did it, and Jael, and the tent-pin and the hammer. No, no; they fought out of heaven. "The stars in their courses," says Deborah, "fought against Sisera." Is there any man on the face of the earth that has ever stood up to say that because Deborah said that the battle of Mount Tabor was actually won by planetary impulses, therefore the stars really entered the Jewish army and fought against the oppressor? Who is there that does not see at once that in that case we have to deal with poetry? We have something like that even in the New Testament. Our Lord Jesus Christ said on the very first day when discipleship was born—He said to one of His first disciples—"Ye shall see the heavens opened, and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Did they ever? Never, never. They never saw the blue rent; they never saw angels walking up and down the body of Christ. Never; it was a poetical form—a great mystical spiritual promise thrown into the larger language of poetry. And so the Gospel closes—"They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall do them no manner of harm." Is that being carried out in everybody or in anybody that believes the name of Christ? No, not literally. The serpent will kill a Christian as well as an infidel. Poison is as effective on a saint as on a sinner. What does it mean then? It is a grand spiritual fact, put in the large language of poetry. And that is what we have in this chapter. But you will say, Is not the Bible a serious book? Of what value is the introduction of a bit of poetry like this when it misleads so many? I reply—I. YES, THE BIBLE IS INTENSELY SERIOUS. This is not quoted as an ornament; it is for use. And if you ask, What is the value of it? I reply it is immensely valuable. Apart from this poetical quotation the whole chapter is comparatively worthless. Why? Because a body without a soul is worthless. The Bible is valuable to us in so far as it touches my life and yours. To tell me that Joshua routed those people does not help me very much. That is the body of it. I want to get at the soul of it. I want to understand Joshua himself, to modernise him, to make him a brother and to get some good out of him. Well, this bit of poetry helps me: this is the key to it. If I read this I see how the thing is done, and I see how I can do the same thing, in a measure, when I am called upon to do it. This piece of poetry is a window through which we can look into Joshua's heart. The great battle of Bethhoron was a battle that threatened to be a drawn battle. There stands the man on the ridge. The men have been running away faster than he has been able to pursue them, and at this moment it seemed as if nature were conspiring against him; as if he were not to have the usual hours of the day. A black, mysterious cloud was coming to help the people who were running away from him. Don't you understand the agony that would come into a man's soul at that moment?—the impassioned prayer that would go up to God from his heart—not to stretch the laws of nature till they crack—but to give him the usual day, to keep the sun from going down at noon. No child was Joshua, crying for the moon. No man with such sick fancies could have done the work he did. What this man prayed for was a fair day's light to do a fair day's work in the strength of and for the glory of God. And do not you know something of the fear that came over him? If you are trying to do any work you too will come to this point. It will seem to you as if God were going to make your day too short. You will see the night falling all too soon. The night cometh, and you will say, "Oh, for more light. Life is not long enough; I am being taken away in the very middle of my days." And you will then know what it is to cry, "Sun, stand thou in the heaven; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon." II. "AND THE SUN STOOD STILL, AND THE MOON STAYED, UNTIL THE NATION HAD AVENGED THEMSELVES." That is the key—"until the nation had avenged themselves." What was coming up from the Mediterranean was not some awful preternatural piece of night, as Joshua feared. It was only a shower: a hailstorm. It was not going to help his enemies, but to

slay them. The sun was not hasting from the heavens; the heavenly orbs would do their work as usual. The sun and moon were to be depended on; but if Joshua really wanted to have a longer day than usual, that did not depend on the sun and moon, he had to make it himself. How? Just as he lengthened the preceding night. From Gilgal to Gibeon, how long? Three days' journey. What did Joshua do? Why, he took the twelve hours and stretched them till they became thirty-six. He did three days' march in one night. So if Joshua wants a longer day on Beth-horon, it is not the sun that can make it for him, nor the moon either. He must go back on his recipe of the night before, and take the twelve hours of the day and stretch them. It is for Joshua himself to make the day longer, for it is not up in the skies that days are lengthened, but here on earth. The secret of a long day lies with Joshua, and not with the sun. No, the sun will not wait for you; but you can quicken your pace, and so lengthen your days. The longest day in your life is the day in which you work hardest, think the closest, live noblest. III. Is that all? No. WAS NOTHING DONE BY GOD? YES, EVERYTHING. "And there was no day like that," says the old poet, "before it, or after, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man." By stopping the sun? No; "The Lord fought for Israel." That cloud coming up from the Mediterranean, that Joshua mistook for the night, was one of his own soldiers marching to meet him; it was one of his own allies. Nature herself was in league with him. It was the hailstorm, one of God's reinforcements coming to do the work of God. It is one of the deepest truths of experience that "all things work together for good to them that love God." The hailstorms are still in league with the Joshuas. Are you false and mean in your aims? Are your ways corrupt on the earth? Then I tell you, whoever you are, you may succeed for a while, or you may seem to succeed, as the tares that ripen in the autumn sun that the fire may burn them all the easier by and by. You may seem to succeed for a while, but the very framework of the universe must be shattered; God's throne must crumble in decay; heaven itself must be carried at the assault of hell's dark troops before you can ultimately and really succeed. You too will be caught some day between Joshua and the hailstorm of the Lord. But are you seeking to be true, trying to be right, yet often finding things arrayed against you? Then, in God's name, go on. You misread the signals. The blackness that threatens you is only an ally in disguise. You are bound to succeed in the battle of the Lord. The nature of things is in league with righteousness. IV. "AND JOSHUA RETURNED INTO THE CAMP AT GILGAL." Did he know what he had done? No. He knew he had done something; that it had been a great day, but he had no idea how great it was. It was one of the thousand-year days of God. It is still with us. That sun that Joshua cried to is still shining, and the moon has never left the vale of Ajalon. Serve the Lord with all your might, and you will do a work greater than you imagine, or dream, or desire. Our time-tables are altogether wrong—sixty seconds to the minute, sixty minutes to the hour; that will do very well for the rough and tumble work in the city, but apply a time-table like that to Gethsemane. Read the Gospels, watch in hand, beneath the shadow of the Cross—"From the sixth to the ninth hour Jesus hung on the Cross, dying." Sixty minutes to the hour, sixty seconds to the minute! It will not do. These are eternal things, and they upset all our calculations. We do not know what we do when we serve God. Life is greater, grander than we dream. Do not think life is small. We sow time, and, lo, we reap eternity. We may so live as to leave behind us a light shining till the world itself shall end. "Returned to the camp." Ah, men and women, the pathos of that old phrase! You and I will return to the camp very soon. The day over. Well, you may arrest the sun before night; but the sun, once it has dipped beneath the western wave, cannot be brought back. Yesterday! Where is it? It is beyond, in the great eternity. Can you run after the lightning and catch it and bring it back? Sooner shall you do that than at the end of the day recover the sun that has set. We shall be returning to camp soon. What histories are we bringing back—you and I? The number of our days is with God; but the length, fulness, quality, and eternalness are with us. (*J. M. Gibbon.*) *Providential help*:—1. We may learn whither to have recourse for help whenever the state of the weather has proved unfavourable to our respective undertakings. Is our land drenched with floods, that threaten to wash away or decay the seed lately sown? or chilled by cold and blighting winds? or parched up with a scorching heat, unmitigated by a passing cloud or a solitary shower? To complain and murmur under such visitations is as vain as it is impious; whereas prayer for their alleviation or removal will probably procure us God's favourable

consideration, and certainly work for our spiritual profit. 2. Again, we learn by what unlikely means the Almighty brings about the deliverance of His people and the discomfiture of His enemies. To promote this great end, all hearts are in His hand, all events are at His disposal; yea, He directs and controls the elements themselves, so as to extort from the sons of men the confession, "This is God's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." What befell the Spanish Armada, fitted out for the invasion and conquest of Great Britain? "The Lord sent a great wind into the sea," to destroy the remnant of those ships which had hitherto escaped defeat; so that the final discomfiture of the fleet was as much owing to the tempestuous violence of the ocean as to the desperate valour of the English. However inextricable your difficulties, however insuperable your dangers may appear, the time for surmounting or escaping them may be at hand: your last extremity is God's gracious opportunity: the valley of Achor He is changing into the door of hope, and making the vast magazine of ordinary and extraordinary dispensations instrumental to your eventual happiness and eternal glory. But tremble, ye wicked, though peace and prosperity at present attend your path. The resources in the hand of a retributive Providence are leagued against you, which, if delayed now, will fall on your devoted heads with triple weight hereafter. 3. But I may instance some still clearer points of resemblance between this special interference of the Almighty in the case of Joshua and His providential arrangements at the present day. Every year presents to us an appearance in the heavens as deserving our surprise and admiration as that which attracted the notice of the camp of Israel. From the depth of winter to the height of summer the sun gradually travels over a wider space in its daily course. Morning after morning it rises earlier; evening after evening later sets. At length it escapes our sight for a few hours only; and during that short interval the twilight in a great degree compensates for its absence. Lest, moreover, during winter nearly utter darkness should veil the skies, on account of the sun's few and contracted visits, the stars on frosty nights shine with a brilliancy unknown in summer, while the unclouded moon supplies its place, a welcome substitute, guided by whose friendly rays at any time the wanderer may confidently rely on reaching his place of destination. I scarcely need remind you what assistance this lesser light lends the labourer in late harvests by rising about the full at the same hour for some evenings in succession; or how, when the sun does not rise above their horizon for months together, and they would otherwise be enveloped in continual darkness, Divine Providence lights up for the inhabitants of the polar regions the brilliant aurora borealis, or northern lights, to illumine and cheer their "noonday nights." Is not as effectual a provision made for light by these contrivances as though the sun and moon in set terms stood still, and hasted not to go down about a whole day? Are they not as hard to be accounted for? 4. By comparing this miracle wrought by the hand of Joshua with those performed by Jesus Christ, we may learn to ascribe all proper honour to His person, all due reverence to the religion He came hither to establish. (*H. A. Herbert, B.A.*) *The sun standing still*:—A new suggestion in regard to the standing still of the sun and the moon at the apostrophe of Joshua is given by the Rev. J. Sutherland Black in his edition of "Joshua," issued as one part of the Smaller Cambridge Bible series. His new postulate is to the effect that no physical miracle occurred, or was desired; he thinks the cosmical features of the event do not touch upon the supernatural at all. His explanation runs thus: "To understand the quotation from the Book of Jasher, we must figure to ourselves the speaker at two successive periods of the summer day—first on the plateau to the north of the hill of Gibeon, with Gibeon lying under the sun to the south-east or south, at the moment when the resistance of the enemy has at last broken down, and again, hours later, when the sun has set, and the moon is sinking westward over the valley of Ajalon, threatening by its disappearance to put an end to the victorious pursuit. The appeal to the moon is, of course, for light—i.e., after sunset. The moon appears over Ajalon; that is somewhat south of west, as seen by one approaching from Beth-horon. There was, therefore, evening moonlight. Joshua prayed first that the sunlight, and then that the moonlight following it, might suffice for the complete defeat of the enemy." *The desire and the improvement of life*:—It is the language of the passions, in the midst of a fervid and impetuous career. "Sun, stand thou still," equally exclaim the sons of pleasure and of ambition: every rank, pursuit, and age joins in the same prayer. In the morning of our existence, when all things display their fairest aspect, and in the midst of a succession of pleasurable scenes time rolls rapidly

along : should a moment of reflection intervene, who does not exclaim, with a sigh, "How brief, how vain is life! how silently and swiftly do the hours advance and vanish!" "O sun, stand thou still"; give us a few more of thy bright morning beams, that we may a little longer taste the sweetness of unsullied pleasure. When we advance to the noon of the human course; amidst all the weighty cares, the thronging projects and objects of strenuous pursuit, that by turns awaken our ardour and elude our expectation—if, amidst this busy scene, we throw a glance upon the enlarged and enlarging space we have already passed, and the short and shortening limits of that which remains—how naturally does the heart send forth the involuntary, fruitless wish, "'Sun, stand thou still.' Hasten not so precipitately to crush our aspiring hopes, and extinguish in untimely darkness our unripened purposes: shine a little longer in thy meridian brightness, that we may not only exert our strength, but reap some recompense of our toil." Arrived at this period of imaginary tranquility—though many ties may be loosened which once bound us to the world, yet new objects of attachment rise, and new motives for wishing that our stay might be prolonged—or if expectation saddens, and all around the prospect grows more dim and desolate, still do we linger fondly on the verge of life, though bereft of its most valued comforts, from that unconquerable dread with which the untried and unknown future strikes the imagination. "O sun, stop, stop thy course. Stand thou still in the midst of heaven, yet another year, another day, to soften our removal from the cheerful light, from the society of our fellow-beings, that, with more composed and collected thoughts, we may stand before the tribunal of our Creator." Thus various and inexhaustible are the excuses of each successive stage for wishing to lengthen out the brief span of life; and the same sentiment pervades all the different conditions and circumstances of mankind. If prosperity smile upon us, we think the sun, which lights us every day to a succession of pleasures, moves too quickly to his setting: "O sun, stand thou still" in the midst of this fair horizon—hasten not to draw the veil of night over these delightful prospects. And if adversity oppress our spirits, we complain that the days which are clouded with grief, like those which are illumined with joy, equally pass away never to return. "O Sun, stand thou still," let the dark and lowering tempest pass from before thy refulgent orb: let thy sweet and pleasant light again gladden our hearts, that our few remaining hours may glide peacefully to the close. But if he, who, without his own fault, and by inevitable circumstances, has been deprived of happiness, may complain of the swiftness of time and the brevity of life, how much deeper regret must that man feel who is conscious of having wasted its most valuable seasons, in thoughtless inactivity! Well may he cry out to time, to suspend its course, "Sun, stand thou still," or rather reverse thy flaming and impetuous career. On the other hand, the virtuous man. But who is so virtuous as to have no faults to repair, no defects to supply—the man, however, comparatively virtuous, whose youthful days have been introductory to a scene of honourable and useful exertion; who may justly look upon himself as a blessing to his fellow-creatures; and who is pursuing, with steady vigour, his well-chosen course; gradually extending his usefulness and his good affections; and is a progressive pattern of every social and every religious duty; though he may submissively await the Divine disposal, yet will he view, not without awe, the narrow space which even virtue itself can boast of here below; and will be almost tempted to wish that it might be the will of Divine Providence to protract the duration of a span so brief, so inadequate to his views and his desires: "'Sun, stand thou still'; withdraw not thy precious and useful light so soon; let me still pursue the happy course on which I have entered." Unavailing are all such wishes; the tide of time will be neither accelerated nor retarded by our entreaties; the sun will neither suspend nor deviate from his course. Since, therefore, we cannot rule the course of nature, let us endeavour to rule ourselves. If we are so unhappy as to have wasted our past hours in folly or to have abused them by misconduct it is in vain to sit down and fold our arms in melancholy inaction; wishing that the past might be recalled, and grieving that the future cannot be hindered from advancing. We should rather call upon our souls and all that is within us to amend our faults, and repair the ills we have thereby incurred, before it be too late; like travellers who having wandered from the right path hasten to regain it before the sun goes down. If, on the contrary, we have happily chosen the path of virtue, let us cheerfully and thankfully pursue our way. Pleasant but fleeting is the season of youth, life's cheerful morning. You cannot prolong its absolute duration; but you can add inestimably to its value. You can extend its happy influence over every

remaining period, and draw from it a rich harvest of knowledge, virtue, and true felicity. Youth is the blossom, the promise of mature years—these are equally transitory with the former. In vain you implore the sun to stay, but you may call him to witness a train of pious and charitable actions as he passes; you may crowd into a small extent a multitude of valuable labours; it is not for us to fix the limits, but to fulfil the duties of life—well pleased to act in concert with the great first mover of all things, among the innumerable instruments of His benevolent designs, and not unwilling to cease from action, whenever He shall see fit to transfer the pleasing though arduous toil from ourselves to others. No sooner has the sun passed his meridian than the shadows lengthen and night approaches. The dawn, the noon, the evening, all glide with uninterrupted speed; and the hour when we must bid farewell to all their successive scenes nature cannot now long delay. All that remains is, by reason and reflection, by prayer and repentance, to calm the perturbation of our minds—by holy resignation to the will of God, and a cheerful performance of our remaining duties, to seek His aid and protection—then, though we cannot escape the stroke of death, we shall render it less painful and alarming; thus disarmed of its sting, it will lose its greatest terrors; and will appear somewhat like a sound and refreshing slumber, falling on the over-wearied mariner, who is within sight of his desired haven, and who expects, with the dawn of the succeeding day, to meet the glad congratulations of all whom he loves. (*P. Houghton.*) *Sun, stand thou still:*—"Oh," you say, "the sun and moon didn't stand still." One man comes to me and says, "According to the Copernican system the sun stood still anyhow, and it was no miracle for it to stand still." Another man says, "If you stop the sun, you upset the whole universe, and throw everything out of order." Another man tells me it was only the refraction of the sun's rays which made the sun seem to stand still. Another man tells me that all that was necessary to have this miracle right, was to stop the world on its own axis, and it was not necessary to stop it in its revolution through its orbit. The universe is only God's watch. I suppose He could make it. Then I suppose He could stop it. Then I suppose He could start it again, and stop it again. Oh! not the sun standing still! Yes. A bad man does not live out half his days. His sun may set at noon. But a good man may prolong his days of usefulness. If a man, in the strength of Joshua, will go forth to fight against sin and in behalf of the truth, he shall live; a thousand years will be as one day. John Summerfield was a consumptive Methodist. He stood looking fearfully white in Old Sand Street Methodist Church, preaching the glorious gospel, and on the anniversary platform in New York pleading for the Bible until the old book unrolled new glories the world had never seen. And on his death-bed he talked of heaven until the wing of the angelic messenger brushed the pillow on which he lay. Has John Summerfield's sun set? Has John Summerfield's day ended? No! He lives in the burning words he uttered in behalf of the Christian Church. He lives in the fame of that Christ whom he recommended to the dying people. He lives in the eternal raptures of that heaven into which he has already introduced so many immortal souls. Faint, and sick, and dying, and holding with one hand to the rail of the altar of the Methodist Church, with the other hand he arrested the sun in the heavens, seeming to say, "I can't die now; I want to live on, and live on; I want to speak a word for Christ that will never die; I am only twenty-seven years of age. Sun of my Christian ministry, stand still over America." And it stood still. Robert M'Cheyne, of Scotland, was a consumptive Presbyterian. He used to cough in his sermon so hard that the people thought that he would never preach again; but thousands in Aberdeen, and Edinburgh, and Dundee, heard the voice of mercy from his lips. The people rejoiced under his ministry. His name to-day is fragrant in all Christendom, and that name is mightier than ever was his living presence. The delirium of his last sickness was filled with prayer, and when in his dying moment he lifted his hand for a benediction upon his friends, and upon his country, he was only practically saying, "I can't die now; I want to live on for Christ; I am only thirty years of age. Sun of my Christian ministry, stand still over Scotland." And it stood still. (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) **No day like that.**—*High days:*—I. THERE HAD BEEN NONE LIKE IT IN THE NUMBER AND STRENGTH OF THE CONFEDERACY WHICH WAS GATHERED AGAINST ISRAEL. The highlanders, and lowlanders, and the maritime tribes combined their forces to oppose and crush the invaders, who now, by the defection of Gibeon, possessed a pathway into the heart of the country. Israel had previously dealt with separate

cities, Jericho, Ai, Gibeon; but now six of the seven nations of Canaan joined together at the summons of the king of Jerusalem, who was allied with the kings of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. II. THERE WAS NONE LIKE IT IN JOSHUA'S LIFE FOR HEROIC FAITH. 1. It was a day of vigour. As soon as he received the message he saw the importance of at once vindicating the trust reposed in him. Inertness and indolence ill become those who are entrusted with great concerns. The stirring of God's Spirit in man makes the pulse throb quickly, purposes form themselves in the will; and all the nature is braced, and knit, to subserve the heroic soul. 2. It was a day of fellowship. Soon after the first message had come, with surely a certain amount of startling surprise, God had spoken to him and said, "Fear them not," &c. And so we may expect it to be always. Sometimes the assurance comes first to prepare us for what is at hand. But if not then it will reach us simultaneously with the alarm, reassuring us, and giving us quiet confidence in the midst of evil tidings, as the bird rocks in its nest over the rush of the waterfall, serene, though the branch beneath it sways in the storm. There are high days in human lives when thought and purpose, which had been quietly gathering strength, like waters swelling against a barrier, suddenly leap from their leash, and vent themselves in acts, or words, or prayers, such as stand out from the ordinary routine of existence, like the cathedral of Cologne from the mean houses that gather around its base. We are not, then, drunk with wine, but we are flushed, as to our spirits, with the exhilaration and sense of power which the Spirit of God alone can give, or, to put it in another form, we catch fire. There is too little experience of this capacity of rising into the loftiest experience of that Spirit life which is within the reach of us all, through living fellowship with God; but whenever we realise and use it, it is as when the feeble, smouldering wick is plunged into oxygen gas, or as when a flower, that had struggled against the frost, is placed in the tropical atmosphere of the hot-house. In such hours we realise what Jesus meant when He said, "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain," &c. 3. It was a day of triumphant onlook. The kings were summoned from their hiding-place, and as they crouched abjectly at the feet of their conquerors, Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the chiefs of the men of war, "Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings." And whilst they stood in that attitude of unquestioned victory, there broke on the exalted spirit-kindled imagination of the warrior-chieftain the sure prevision of the ultimate issue of the conflict in which they were engaged. He already saw the day when every knee should bow before Jehovah's might, when every king should be prostrate before Israel's arm, and when the whole land should be subdued. III. THERE HAD BEEN NONE LIKE IT IN THE EXTRAORDINARY CO-OPERATION OF JEHOVAH. The Israelites were the executioners of Divine justice, commissioned to give effect to the sentence which the foul impurities of Canaan called for. There is a judgment-seat for nations as well as for individuals. Within the limits of the ages as they pass, and on the surface of this earth, that throne is erected and that judgment is proceeding. We get some glimpse of this in the hand that wrote the doom of Belshazzar's kingdom on the walls of the palace which beheld a scene of wanton revelry lit by the light of the temple's sacred lamps. And the almighty Judge sees to it that His sentences are carried out. He has many agents—the Persian legions to execute his sentence on Babylon, the Vandals on Rome, the Russian Cossacks on Napoleon, as the Israelites on the Amorites, whose iniquity was now full, and threatened to infect the world. IV. SUCH DAYS COME STILL TO MEN. There are days in our lives so extraordinary for the combination of difficult circumstances, human opposition, and Satanic combination, that they stand out in unique terror from the rest of our lives. Looking back on them, we may almost adopt the language of the sacred historian, "there was no day like that before it or after it." But these days do not come if we are living in friendship with God, intent on doing His will, without there coming also His sweet "Fear them not, for I have delivered them into thine hands." Our only anxiety should be that nothing should divert us from His path, or intercept the communication of His grace. Like a wise commander we must keep open the passage back to our base of operations, which is God. Careful about that, we need have no anxious care beside. The greatness of our difficulties is permitted to elicit the greatness of His grace. He covers our heads in the day of battle. He is our shield and exceeding great reward. Though an host should encamp against us, we will not fear; though war should rise against us, in this we will be confident. Moreover, these days may always be full of the realised presence of God. All through the conflict Joshua's heart was in perpetual fellowship with the mighty

Captain of the Lord's host, who rode beside him all the day. The blessed colloquy between the two was unbroken, as between a Wellington and a Blücher, a Napoleon and a Marshal Ney. So amid all our conflicts, our hearts and minds should thither ascend and there dwell where Christ is seated, drawing from Him grace upon grace, as we need, like the diver on the ocean floor who inhales the fresh breeze of the upper air. At these times it is very necessary not merely to ask God to help us, because the word "help" may mean that there is a great deal of reliance on self, and whatever there is of ourselves is almost certain to give way in the strain of battle. Achilles was mortally wounded in the heel, the one place which did not share in the plunge given him by his goddess mother into the immortal stream. The Divine part of our deliverance will be nullified by the alloy of our own energy, strength, or resolution. Let us substitute for the word "help" the word "keep." Let us put the whole matter into the hands of God, asking Him to go before us, to fight for us, to deliver us, as He did for His people on this eventful day. "The Lord discomfited them before Israel." (F. B. Meyer, B.A.)

Vers. 15-27. **Bring out those five kings.**—*The prostrate kings*:—The kings of the Canaanites fled and hid themselves, but the Divine vengeance followed them; and after the rout of their hosts was completed they themselves were taken and put to death. Before this, however, they were humbled in the sight of Israel; and the captains were bidden by Joshua to put their feet on the necks of their foes. Thus their thorough subjection was pointed out; and the people of God were distinguished as triumphing over all opposition, even the most formidable. I. NO OPPOSITION IS SO GREAT, NO ENEMIES SO MIGHTY, BUT THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LORD JESUS CAN OVERCOME THEM. In outward and bodily things, and at the hands of men, the people of God are oftentimes sorely tried. Over and over again they have been slain all the day, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. The deep and mysterious providence of an all-wise God has suffered and ordered this. But inwardly, and as regards spiritual experience, is it not true that "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us"? As believers in Jesus we are exposed to constant opposition of a spiritual kind. As soon as ever the Christian life really begins, so soon does conflict commence. But is it not a good thing to change slavery for freedom; and to feel the opposition and rage of Satan rather than to be bound in his destructive chains? Then again, the rebel flesh puts forth its power, resisting the will of God, and proving that the carnal mind is enmity against God. But have we not found deliverance? We have heard the precious assurance, "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper"; we have taken up the Christian's war-cry, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me"; we have doubtless sung the believer's song of triumph, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Do I now speak to any soul in strong conflicts, and exposed to some sore temptation? Oh! poor tried and harassed one, look up, look up. Do not let the enemy engage all your attention: think of the mighty Friend who is standing by. Do not let the temptation quite swallow up your spirit; remember (1 Cor. x. 13). II. IT IS THE LORD JESUS WHO ACCOMPLISHES THIS GLORIOUS WORK FOR AND IN BEHALF OF HIS BELIEVING ONES. Mark the circumstances in detail which are narrated in the text, and see how conspicuous Joshua was throughout the whole transaction (vers. 22-26). Joshua called for all the men, summoned the host, then called out the captains, and bade them put their feet on the necks of the kings; then he encouraged his captains; then he executed the kings. The crowning speech, and crowning act, on that eventful day were his. Just so, it is only our heavenly Joshua who can make us conquerors, who can effect deliverance for us, who can enable us to set our feet upon the necks of those hosts, those temptations, those foes of whatsoever sort, which surround and assault us, and which, without His aid, are sure to be too many and too mighty for us to cope with and subdue. 1. In the help which we have received, or may now be enjoying, let us see the pledge of future victory. 2. It may be that some are in sore conflict and trial at this very time. Forget not who is able to save, even to the uttermost. The same Jesus who has strengthened thousands of conflicting souls and made them victorious is ready to help you. (C. D. Marston, M.A.) *Foes under foot*:—1. This solemn scene reminds us of the mad resistance of these kings. Here is the end of it. And what a contrast is this to that which they had conceived. As we look on these wretched kings we hear a voice asking in earnest, solemn tones, "Who hath hardened himself against God and hath prospered?" "Who can resist the arm of the Almighty?" And

again it says, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Can the clay rebel against the potter? Will the tool lift up itself against the workman? Will worms defy the Almighty? Why, then, oh! why are there found, not a few, but many, who still resist Him? 2. This scene also reminds us of the despairing flight of these kings. Finding that resistance was useless, they sought to escape by flight, but this proved also vain. The sinner cannot flee from the judgment of God. Many a man has been able to escape the just judgment of his fellows. It can never be so with the Divine justice. It rolls forth no empty thunders. Seeing all flight is vain, our only hope is instant and complete submission, if haply the Lord will have mercy on us and spare us for His name's sake. 3. The scene also speaks of their useless refuge. Their resistance was found to be utterly vain, therefore they had recourse to flight. But flight they found also unavailing, therefore they sought to hide, but this was also vain. By this new device they not only deceive themselves, they actually destroy themselves. Know that it is as vain to hide from God as to fly from Him. Yet the truth, "Thou God seest me," is one not easily learned. Often, as in the case of Hagar, it is only in the hour of dire extremity that the soul becomes truly conscious of the fact. Nothing is more common or more natural for fallen man than to hide from God. Even in childhood, if unwelcome thoughts of God obtruded themselves, how quickly did we learn to bury ourselves in the cave of other and more congenial thoughts and hopes. And as we grow older, and the heart gets more unsusceptible to spiritual realities, how easily can we hide in indifference. How natural it is to let slip everything that has been taught us of spiritual truth, to forget all warnings and admonitions, to become engrossed with the pleasures that lie around, and to forsake the good habits in which we had been trained. And not a few seek to shelter themselves in hypocrisy. The Church is the garden of God; and not a few are hiding from Him among the trees of His own garden. They come to the solemn assembly. They give of their substance to His work. They maintain propriety of conduct, and yet they know not God; yea, they are hiding from Him all the time, and by these very means. Others are hiding from God in business. From Monday morning till Saturday night they are engrossed in earthly cares, and even on the Lord's day their heads and hearts are more in their bank-books and ledgers than in their Bibles. But though men may for a few moments bury themselves in oblivion of God, they can never hide from Him. Soon the souls who thus hide will be dragged out to the bewildering light, to their shame and ruin. Have we, then, no hope? Is there no refuge for us? There is. We can never hide from God, but we can hide in God. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." 4. Here also we behold the utter degradation of these kings. It was far deeper than that of their subjects. As they were ringleaders in this revolt, their end was more terrible. They had to bow their necks under the feet of the children of Israel. This was a most significant act. It was a picture of the absolute subjection of all to the yoke of Israel. It was a pledge of the perfect conquest of the land, of the glorious ending of that work which had been so well begun. This also was written for our encouragement and instruction. All things must be brought into subjection to the true Joshua. They who follow Him are not overcome of evil, they are conquerors in the struggle against sin. However weak we may feel in ourselves, yet in His name we dare deal with the proudest and strongest sin that lurks in our hearts, as Joshua's captains did with these kings. That man cannot be following Christ who is not putting all spiritual foes under his feet from day to day. And we have here not only a picture of this daily and oft-repeated triumph over sin which Jesus gives His followers, but also a picture of that ultimate and complete victory over sin and Satan that shall be granted. There were other kings in Canaan besides these five kings, and they gave Joshua and his captains much trouble. Though the victory so far was real and glorious, it was by no means complete. They have faced and overcome these particular foes; but many more remain. Even so the Christian, though he should and must obtain the victory over all known sin, and keep it ever under foot, learns the longer that he lives that there are other sins which he had not dreamt of lurking in the recesses of his heart. Therefore he lays count for a protracted war. Yet he does not go forward with a faint heart to face these new foes. Rather, encouraged by the victories already granted, he goes on with assurance of like triumph. 5. We must also draw attention to the miserable end of these kings. Here, as we stand over the dead bodies of these kings, we hear a voice proclaiming, "So perish the king's enemies." There are judgments of God against sin in the past history of the world. In the future history of the world these judgments will again be on the

earth. Between the past and the future He has erected the Cross. That also is a centre of judgment. Yea, the judgment against sin on the Cross is far more perfect than either that judgment which goes before or follows after; for it is a judgment finished, a cup of condemnation drunk to the last drop, and that can be said of no other, past or future. Identified with that Victim, nailed with Him to that Cross, cursed in Him with all the curse due to sin, banished with that forsaken Victim in the great darkness, there is no condemnation, no judgment, to them that are in Christ Jesus. 6. In these conquests of Joshua we have a faint picture of the victories of Jesus. However numerous His enemies may be, they will be all scattered as chaff before the wind, as smoke before the hurricane. However mighty they may be, they will bite the dust in terror and dismay. However wise and noble, they will be crushed under His heel. (*A. B. Mackay.*) *Five kings*:—You all know something of a struggle that is continually going on in your own hearts between good and evil. You have all heard of the battle against sin. Well, the five kings are for us five sins, which day by day are warring against us. And let us be quite sure of this, if we do not conquer them they will conquer us. I. Here is the first—**KING ANGER**. What boy or girl is there who has not felt this king rising in his heart, and leading him on to unkind words and bad deeds. Kill the very first angry thought, and then it won't have time to grow into a great king to trouble you and all near you. II. "But," says some child, "I'm not given to being angry. I have a very good temper. I'm not afraid of that king." Don't be too sure. He may turn up some time when you are not ready for him. And in any case I fear, from the way you speak, that there is another king you will have to keep a very good look-out against—**KING PRIDE**. Do you know what he is? Some one gave a very good description of pride when he said that pride was a great big "I" and a very little "you." Some of you, I am sure, have read "Alice in Wonderland"; and you remember what happened to Alice when she ate the piece of cake marked, "Eat me." She found herself growing taller, and taller, and taller, until at length everything looked quite small beneath her. Now King Pride does for us all what the wonderful cake did for Alice. He puffs us up. He makes us very high and very great in our own sight. And the only way to deal with him is to do like Joshua's soldiers, and to take this king and put our foot upon his neck, and crush him to the ground. III. But we must pass on to our third king; and dangerous as were the first two, he is more dangerous still, for his name is **KING FALSEHOOD**. Have you ever told a lie, ever said what was not quite true to get your own way, or to save yourself from punishment? If you have, then you are letting King Falsehood reign over you, and a cruel, hard master you will soon find him to be. Determine at all costs to say nothing but what is strictly true. Once a great and good man was thrown into prison because he had written a paper which displeased King Charles I. He was tried and condemned to death for what he had written; but the king sent messengers to him in prison to say that if he would only deny having written the paper and signed it, he would be set free. And how do you think he answered? "I did sign that paper. I could save my life by telling a lie, but I would rather a thousand times tell the truth, even though my life must be the cost." That was noble. Be like that hero, Algernon Sydney. IV. Our fourth king need not detain us long—**KING DISOBEDIENCE**. He needs no explanation, but perhaps you will remember best about him if I tell you how he was once conquered by a brave English boy. Henry Havelock was his name, and at twelve o'clock one day his father left him on London Bridge, and told him to wait till he came back. One hour, two hours, three hours passed, and still the father did not come; but King Disobedience did. "Why wait any longer?" he whispered to Henry. "Your father has forgotten you, and will not expect you to remain. It is quite excusable to disobey him now after all these hours. You had better run home." But the boy would not consent. He had been told to wait till his father came, and like a soldier's son he drove the enemy back at every point. At seven o'clock that evening his wife asked General Havelock, "Where is Henry? I have not seen him all the afternoon." The General started up. "Oh," he said, "he's on London Bridge! I left him there at twelve o'clock, and told him to wait for me. In the hurry of business I quite forgot about him. But he's there still, I'm sure." And there indeed he was when his father went to fetch him. Seven long, weary hours he had waited, and fought King Disobedience. And hard though the battle had been he had won. V. And now there remains only one king; but he is so big and so strong that I shall ask the printer to print his name in extra large letters—**KING SELF**. Have you ever heard two voices inside you; one saying,

"Please yourself. Take your own way. Why should you think about other people?" And the other saying, "No, be generous; be kind. Give up what pleases yourself, and help others." I think you have, and I think you know which is the voice of King Self, and what a poor sort of a king he is to follow. He can make no one happy. Somehow the boy who is always trying to please himself is the boy who is never pleased at all. And then how uncomfortable he makes all round him. It was only because God had helped him that Joshua was able to defeat the five kings. And so shall we conquer if we fight in God's strength, not in our own. Kneel down to Him then, and ask Him to be with you, and to make you "more than conquerors" for Jesus' sake. (*Morning Rays.*) *Five modern kings*:—The names of the places may help us to consider the nature of their respective kings. 1. "The king of Jerusalem." That such a king should have been slain works violently in our memory and whole thought, for "Jerusalem" means peace—the city of peace, the restful city, the sabbatic metropolis, the home of rest. But is there not a false peace? The king of false peace must be slain. He has ruled over some of us too long. 2. "Hebron" means conjunction, joining, alliance. Is not the king of false fellowship to be killed? What concord hath Christ with Belial? God has always been against unholy alliances. Many a man He has, so to say, arrested with the words, Why this conjunction? What right have you to be here, pledging your character to sustain a known dishonesty? 3. And the king of Jarmuth. The word means high, that which is lifted up. And is not the king of false ambition to be slain and then hanged—to have contempt added to murder? Contempt is never so well expended as upon false ambition. 4. Then the king of Lachish. The word means hard to be captured, almost out of reach, or so defended that it will be almost impossible to get at the king. Is not the king of fancied security to be slain and hanged? 5. King of Eglon. The word "Eglon" means pertaining to a calf, and may be taken as representing the whole system of false worship. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 28–43. All these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the Lord . . . fought for Israel—Divine sovereignty:—I. GOD HAS AN INDISPUTABLE RIGHT TO DISPENSE HIS FAVOURS TO WHAT PERSONS AND IN WHAT PROPORTIONS HE PLEASES. As the sole proprietor, it is His to dispose of. 1. Worldly goods. One is accordingly born to affluence, while another is cradled in poverty. Before they existed they could, of course, have no claims or demerits; and therefore the difference in their lot must be owing to His sovereign disposal of events. 2. Bodily constitution and health. As variety marks all other of God's works, so here it happens that one is naturally robust, another sickly, a third deformed, &c. Who is it that maketh the strong, the beautiful, &c., to differ? The answer may be found in 2 Sam. xxii. 30, 35. 3. Mental qualifications. "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding." Much, it is true, depends on personal application. But much depends on natural capacity; given "to one five talents, to another two, and to another one"; and much on the opportunities, instructors, &c., which God either gives or withholds. 4. Spiritual privileges. Mankind soon began to have greater or smaller advantages in this respect, as they descended from families more or less holy; and the case is the same to the present day. Instance the Israelites and heathens formerly; Christians and pagans now. II. GOD HAS AN EQUAL RIGHT TO RESUME OR TO TRANSFER HIS FAVOURS. 1. We have seen that whatever we possess is of free favour at first, from the original proprietor of all. Such the acknowledgment of the psalmist, "Of Thine own have I given Thee." 2. No person becomes a proprietor of his possessions merely because he has long enjoyed them. Every blessing is a loan resumable at pleasure; and instead of gaining a right by holding it, the holder is becoming more and more indebted. The property is still God's (Psa. xxiv. 1, l. 10, 12). 3. On this ground He took His own land of promise from the Canaanites and transferred it to Israel. And He still puts down one and raises up another as it pleases Him. III. GOD MAY JUSTLY PUNISH EVERY VOLUNTARY TRANSGRESSION OF HIS RIGHTEOUS AND EQUITABLE LAWS. Here we remark—1. That His intelligent and moral creatures are what they are is owing to His sovereign pleasure. Thus Elihu (Job xxxv. 10, 11). 2. Since they are such, and capable of moral government, their nature requires a law, as a test of their obedience and for the exercise of their capabilities; and it is His prerogative, who is not only the sovereign Lord, but infinitely wise, to say what is right, to enact such law. 3. In order to make the law efficient it was necessary it should be guarded and enforced by penal sanctions. Whence it follows—4. That truth requires, while sovereignty authorises, the just punishment of disobedience to

His righteous and equitable commands. IV. IN EXECUTING HIS RIGHTEOUS PURPOSES GOD MAY EMPLOY WHAT AGENCY OR INSTRUMENTALITY HE PLEASES. He doubtless can and may work immediately on any and every part of His creation. Yet He seldom does so. Oftentimes He employs angels, as in the case of Sennacherib or Herod. And oftentimes storm, pestilence, earthquake, &c. Deists do not object to these. Yet they cavil at God's employing the sword of Israel; a difference merely in the circumstance of instrumentality. Let the subject teach us—1. Reverence. "Forasmuch as there is none like unto Thee, O Lord," &c. (Jer. x. 6, 7). The opposite disposition is reproved (Rom. ix. 20), and threatened (Isa. xlv. 9, 10). 2. Dependence. We enjoy no more or longer than He blesses us, and live no longer than He sustains (Psa. xc. 3, 14, civ. 27-29). 3. Humility. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom," &c. (Jer. ix. 23, 24; 1 Cor. iv. 7). 4. Gratitude. Who maketh thee to differ? (*Sketches of Sermons.*) **Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.**—*The old camp and the new foe*:—It must have been a great rest and refreshment for the weary warriors to come to such a camp from time to time. It would be to them a Sabbath amid their arduous labours. From this place they would after each visit go more boldly out to deal harder blows against the uncircumcised Canaanites. And it is the same with us in the war which we wage against the inner and the outer foe. We have our headquarters too, a visit to which should stimulate us even more than a visit to Gilgal did the Israelites. What is our Gilgal? The Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That remains always our centre. We should come back to it at all times; not only when driven there by defeat, in order to have shelter, but also after every victory, in order to give thanks. Thus shall we maintain faith and a good conscience. Then issuing from such headquarters, so safe, so restful, so hallowed, so purifying, we shall be filled with a holy enthusiasm and unconquerable strength, and march like Israel from victory to victory. When Joshua had come back to the old headquarters word was brought to him of the gathering of a new foe. This was the most numerous army that had as yet been gathered against him. And it was the most powerful, as well as the most numerous army which Joshua had encountered. For the first time in this campaign we hear of war-horses being used, and the war-chariots of iron which were such a terror to the ancient infantry. This army is also better led than any other that had taken the field. Jabin was the commander-in-chief. One of his successors is called king of Canaan (Judges iv. 2-24), and therefore he would in all likelihood have been the head of the great confederacy. The word "Jabin" is not a name, but a title borne by the kings of Hazor, and signifies "The Wise," just as Adonizadek means "Lord of Righteousness." Therefore, as we have seen the religious head of the Canaanites marshalling the southern army, so here we see the wise head of the Canaanites marshalling the northern army. The southern might be called the coalition of the priest; the northern the coalition of the sage. How graphically is the spiritual experience of the Christian depicted by these conflicts! No sooner is one set of foes subdued than another arises. There is no rest here. There is also a similarity in the kind of opposition which we have to encounter. As the advance of Israel was opposed now by Adonizadek and now by Jabin, so the advance of truth is opposed now by apostate Christianity and now by pompous philosophy. As it is with the Church collectively so is it with the individual. He may lay his account sooner or later to face these two, often in the same order. First comes superstition, with its high-sounding titles, its endless genealogies, its imperious claims, its elaborate ritual, its sensuous will-worship, its irrational bondage. It is resisted, it is overcome. Then comes rationalism, and it cries, "Well done. You have routed these infernal hosts. Now come with us. Finish the work you have so well begun. Cast from you the remaining rags of superstition. Follow the light of Reason. Shake off the remaining fetters and be free." Then the sage who argues thus will, like Jabin, muster whole hosts of imposing arguments. How quickly they come at his bidding: from north, south, east, and west, like the sand that is on the seashore for multitude. And when he reviews them, how imposing is their array! It is a critical time for the soul when he stands gazing on that imposing array, if he is not assured that the Lord is on his side; if he hears not, as did Joshua, the words, "Be not afraid because of them, to-morrow will I deliver them up all slain before Israel." But for faith in the Divine presence and this sure word the soul is in a sad case, and with quaking heart and tottering knees will quit the high places of the field. Alas! alas! how many in our day are dazed by the hosts of unsanctified science! The Christian soldier is not worthy of his name who is not ready with unfeigned faith in the truth of God to proclaim it boldly, whether men

hear or forbear, to oppose all the glittering phalanxes of false philosophy with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. As we look at this new army mustered to oppose Joshua, we cannot but renew our wonder at the infatuation of the Canaanites. What a solemn thought it is that the greatest miracles will not in themselves lead the heart of man to subjection! Yet, after all, why should we wonder at these Canaanites, when we have greater cause for wonder in the unbelief of many around us? What were all the miracles of which these Canaanites were cognisant compared with those with which we have been familiar since our childhood? (*A. B. Mackay.*)

CHAPTER XI.

VERS. 1-23. **When Jabin king of Hazor had heard.**—*Take heed how ye hear* :—

I. HEARING AND NOT HEARING. The tidings of the overthrow of Sihon and Og, and the fall of Jericho, seem to have made almost no impression on the sleepy King of Hazor. **II. HEARING, BUT HEARING IN VAIN.** When Ai fell there seems to have been a general movement all through Canaan west of Jordan (chap. ix. 1). Before Jabin had gathered the northern legions southern Canaan had been destroyed. **III. HEARING, AND HEARING TO RUIN.** When Jabin did exert himself, it was but to proceed straight to destruction. Thus do the wicked delay heedlessly, awaken slowly, and finally bestir themselves to anticipate judgment. (*F. G. Marchant.*) **Be not afraid because of them.**—*Divine directions for the fight* :—**I.** The directions which God gave Joshua on this occasion were prefaced by WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT according to the Divine custom. Though Jehovah is not to interpose with mighty power as on former occasions, yet He supports and strengthens His servant with timely encouragement. Nothing could be better timed than these words as a preparation for the work that had to be done. Joshua had been made fully acquainted with the foe. His scouts have returned covered with dust, and reported the position and numbers and equipment of this new enemy. As these particulars were all told we can imagine that the boldest held his breath for a time. Joshua's generals would look at each other as if to say, "What shall we do now?" God knows human nature, therefore at this emergency He steps in with the words, "Be not afraid because of them, for to-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel." God is always well timed in His announcements. When we seek with all our hearts to do His will we shall never lack encouragement, and the greater the enemy, the harder the task, the more emphatic will that encouragement be. And the encouragement God gave was very definite. He did not speak in a general way. He fixed the day, the hour, and the extent of the victory. Whatever our difficulties may be, if we only search God's Word we will find definite encouragement, that which exactly meets our circumstances. The encouragement was also emphatic. We lose somewhat, in our translation, the emphasis of the original. The "I" is most emphatic. The army before Joshua may be as the sand of the sea for multitude, but what are the hosts of Jabin to the hosts of Jehovah? And the man who has on his side Jehovah of hosts can also count on the hosts of Jehovah. Therefore Joshua, even in the sight of such a foe, has no cause for fear. Does not God deal in the very same way with us? With what emphasis does He point to Himself as the glorious source of light and love and life, so that our hearts may be encouraged to put all their trust in Him, to the casting out of every fear. And the encouragement was also suggestive. God's words bring to remembrance other scenes and other victories. Joshua was not the only one whom God had helped in similar emergencies. All the difficulties that may come upon us may be new to us, but not one of them is new to God. He has brought His people triumphantly through the same or worse before, and He can do so again. **II.** This Divine encouragement was coupled with a **DIVINE COMMAND.** The chief object of Israel's fear would naturally be the horses and chariots which were Jabin's pride and confidence; and it is to them that the command has special reference. God ordered His servants not to seize them and turn them against the enemy, but to destroy them utterly. This command is given for the express purpose of removing a temptation to carnal confidence. Jehovah wishes His people to look to Him alone for victory. This is to be their constant attitude, the

holy habit of their souls. The bearing of this command on us is plain, and the lesson is much needed in our day. We are to carry on God's work in God's way. There are many of the weapons and devices of the world which ought not to be pressed into the service of the Church. To handle the iron chariots and the prancing horses of human philosophy against the hosts of unbelief, at the same time retaining our confidence in God as the Giver of every victory, and the consciousness that not a single soul can be savingly convinced except by His might—this is an attainment which the history of the Church from the beginning has proved a practical impossibility. Our one work in the prosecution of the campaign of salvation is to preach "Christ and Him crucified," though fully conscious of the fact that to some it is foolishness, not worth a row of pins; and to others a stumbling-block, utterly repugnant. There is, and has always been, a fatal tendency to use the world's weapons in the Church's work; to worship intellect, learning, genius, scholarship, eloquence; to look on these things as the treasury and armoury of the Church; to depend on what is outward and human, instead of what is spiritual; to depend on that which appeals to the eye, the ear, the intellect, the emotions, rather than on the living God and His glorious gospel. They are the mightiest champions who, like the Master, do all the fighting "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power." Thus encouraged and commanded, Joshua brought his army into close proximity to the foe. He rested during that night, and when the grey dawn was lighting up the rushy marshes round the waters of Merom, he burst like a thunderbolt upon Jabin's camp. The victory could not have been more complete; and it was speedily followed up, as in the south, by the subjugation of all the leading cities in the northern portion of Canaan; the city of Hazor, Jabin's capital, being destroyed with fire. As we think on this crowning victory we remember the words, "An horse is a vain thing for safety, neither shall he deliver any by his great strength." Jabin found this out in that dire encounter. So will it be with all who harden themselves against the gospel of Christ. The more stout in heart they are to resist, the more terrible will be their overthrow. And if Jabin's overthrow reminds us of these things, this last great victory of Joshua also places very emphatically before us the conditions of success in the work of the Lord. They are few and simple, and easy to be understood. They comprise wise purpose, believing courage, sleepless energy, scrupulous obedience, hard blows. As a young student said to a friend when they were speaking of the work to which they had devoted themselves, "Our great work in preaching to people is not to dish up dainty ideas, but to pound them with the truth." Let us only listen to God's encouragement, obey God's command, march with unfeigned faith, and strike with all our might, and victory is sure. (*A. B. Mackay.*)

Types of Christian warfare.—1. The enemies of Christ are very many in number. 2. Not only are the enemies of Christ very numerous, but they are perfectly united. There is a common consent amongst them. They hate the good. They are unanimous, and their unanimity is power. 3. The forces of evil are many, united, and desperate. They have made up their minds to work rack and ruin. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

All the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves.—*Sharing the spoil*.—These at the end would amply make up for the toils and sufferings of conflict, and for all the privations and prohibitions they had been laid under. This is that which should engage the Christian's hopes, and on which his whole heart should be set, the end of warfare, when He who poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with transgressors, will, in assigning the fruits of His eternal conquests, divide the spoil with the strong, and His portion with the great. Unsearchable the riches, and invaluable the spoils, to be shared in the heavenly world: treasures of everlasting bliss and glory that await every holy warrior. These are appropriate only to the elevation of perfect being and blessedness; and then to be enjoyed, when the conflicts of time end in the triumphs of eternity. Nothing will be found marked with a prohibition, nor anything less be obtained, than an unwithering crown of life. This will compensate for all the sufferings that can now be endured, and for all the sacrifices that may ever be made, the hope of which, as realised in the mind, yields no small support. (*W. Seaton.*)

Ver. 15. He left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses.—*Things undone*.—"This year omissions have distressed me more than anything." So speaks Andrew A. Bonar, concluding one of the years of his life. How many of us

are similarly distressed! I. THE THINGS UNDONE ARE MANY. We have not left undone a duty here or there merely, but we have the painful consciousness of having missed so much that more seems undone than done. Darwin's biographer relates that the great scientist "never wasted a few spare minutes from thinking that it was not worth while to set to work." His golden rule was "taking care of the minutes." And so he became rich and accurate in knowledge. How much more might we have done in the home! We deal negligently with those about us until change or death takes them away! How much more might we have done in the world! We have loitered in the sheepfold to hear the bleating of the sheep, when we ought to have been in the high places of the field. How much more might we have given and taught and toiled in the Church of God! We are always evading manifest obligations, which are also precious privileges. With what fiery energy the bird, the bee, the butterfly, carry out the special commission with which they are entrusted! In nature everything seems to be done that can be done with the granted measure of time, space, material, and energy. But we are conscious of a very different and far less satisfactory state of things in the human sphere. Here inertia, laziness, slipperiness, procrastination, prevail. There are great gaps in our work. II. THE THINGS UNDONE ARE OFTEN THE THINGS OF THE GREATEST CONSEQUENCE. Emerson speaks of "the science of omitting." A very necessary and much-neglected science. "The artist," says Schiller, "may be known rather by what he omits." The master of literary style is best recognised by his tact of omission. The orator declares his genius as much by what he leaves out as by what he puts into his discourses. And in life the science of omission must have a large place. Life on its moral side, in its highest sense, becomes complete and successful by exclusion: if we are to make anything of it, we must reject much. When, however, an artist understands the science of omission, he leaves out the trivial, the vulgar, the irrelevant. Pater, speaking of Watteau, the French artist, says, "Sketching the scene to the life, but with a kind of grace, a marvellous tact of omission in dealing with the vulgar reality seen from one's own window." Yes, leaving out the vulgar features and commonplace detail. But the defect in our moral life is that in our science of omission we too often leave out the primary, the highest, the essential. The trivial, the fugitive, the inferior, the accidental, are given a place in our life, whilst the large, the noble, the precious, and the supreme are excluded. It is thus with us in questions of character. The weightier matters are more difficult, and we evade them. It is thus with matters of duty. We shirk the calls demanding courage, diligence, sacrifice, and content ourselves by doing abundantly the things which are more immediately connected with our pride, our interest, or our pleasure. Here we are often condemned. Great principles are left out of our character, because they are difficult to acquire and maintain; great duties are ignored, because they mean heroism and suffering; great opportunities are forfeited, because they demand promptitude and resolution; great works are declined, because they involve consecration and sacrifice. III. THE THINGS UNDONE ARE THINGS FOR WHICH WE MUST BE HELD RESPONSIBLE. We are often deeply concerned, as, indeed, we ought to be, with the things we have done amiss; but we are less troubled by the things left undone. Yet the negative side is as really sin as is the positive side. In these modern days it is rather fashionable for men of a certain type to stand quite aside from an active career. They are deeply impressed by the seriousness of life, by its difficulties, its mysteries; they decline, as far as may be, its relationships, its obligations, its trials, its honours, its sorrows. They will tell you that they have no gifts, no calling, no opportunity. But, however disguised, these lives are slothful and guilty. But most of us have somewhat of this slothful temper. True, we gloss with mild names this skirking of duty. We call it expediency, standing over, modesty, deliberation, forgetfulness, oversight; but it ought to be called sloth, hypocrisy, cowardice, sin. How much undone for God, for man, for our own perfecting! And as for the future, let us put into life more purpose, passion, and will. Let us be more definite, prompt, unflinching. Let us be at once more enthusiastic and more methodical. (IV. L. Watkinson.) It was of the Lord to harden their hearts.—*Resisted conviction*:—We must not suppose, of course, that God stepped in to produce, in the case of these Canaanites, a result which would not have accrued to them by the working out of the natural laws which He had instituted. God loved them as He loves the world. They were included in the propitiation of Christ. They might have been saved, as Rahab was. And when it is said that God hardened their hearts, we must understand that their hearts became hardened by sinning against their light, in accordance

with that great principle which God has established, that if a man resists his convictions of right he becomes more inveterate in his sinful ways. God is thus said to do what is done by the working out of the laws of that moral universe which He has constituted. It is clear that the Canaanites knew that God was with Israel. Rahab said (chap. ii. 10, 11). And the Gibeonites (chap. ix. 10). There is no doubt, then, that throughout the land there had gone forth the fame of God; and when the kings flung their hosts in battle against Israel it was as it has always been (Psa. ii. 2). (*F. B. Meyer, B.A.*) *Hardening the heart*:—I remember one day, in our natural history class, the professor explained to us how sponges became flints. He had all his specimens arranged along his table. He took the soft sponge, elastic and flaccid, that could bend any way—beautifully soft and fine. Then he took the next one; it was not so flexible: and he went on, each one only a little more flinty than the former, till he had the flint. That had been a sponge; though now its heart was so hard that you could strike fire from it with a steel. The sponge will become flint. There are little silicious particles that gather in the soft sponge; and by and by the siliceous is deposited in the interstices of the sponge; and on it goes till the silica has the victory, and the sponge becomes flint. A wonderful sermon from science. I have had companions like that—young men with hearts, oh, so soft! at their first revival. Impressions went home to them; they had tears and anxiety; yet, as years have passed, the hardness of heart has increased, as with one whom I met recently, who, since then, has bolted to America with a heart of flint instead of a soft heart. As the days went by, hardness increased; the silicious particles of rejection of Christ multiplied in number, till the man became a reprobate. Perhaps you are in that position. As I am preaching from the presence of God it has no effect. You are hearing it, but it is going in at the one ear and out at the other. See to it that the judicial hardening of your heart does not overtake you, and you learn by experience the despair of a lost soul. (*J. Robertson.*) *So Joshua took the whole land.*—*The people for whom the Lord fights*:—I. THE MAGNITUDE OF THEIR DIFFICULTIES SHOULD BE REGARDED AS ONLY THE MEASURE OF THEIR VICTORIES. "Joshua took the whole land." II. THEIR MOST SIGNAL VICTORIES ARE EVER INCOMPLETE. The whole land, yet not the whole (chap. viii. 1). III. THE TRIUMPHS WHICH THEY DO WIN ARE EVER THE FRUIT OF GOD'S PROMISES. "According to all that the Lord said unto Moses." This clause serves also to limit and explain the former. God had specially told Moses that the whole land should not be conquered too suddenly (Exod. xxiii. 29, 30). IV. THE INHERITANCE THUS GIVEN BY GOD SHOULD BE THE INHERITANCE OF ALL GOD'S PEOPLE. "Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes." V. THE REST WHICH THEY OBTAIN HERE FAINTLY FORESHADOWS THE PERFECT REST HEREATER. "And the land rested from war." 1. Rest after severe strife. 2. Rest only through faith and obedience. 3. Rest, but rest which still requires that they watch and pray. 4. Rest, which though but an imperfect pattern, should stand for a sure prophecy of the rest which is perfect. If we really enter into the rest of faith, it will be by that holy Spirit of promise, "which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." (*F. G. Marchant.*)

Ver. 23. The land rested from war.—*The fight from which they rested*:—Though the records of this war are short, we know that "Joshua made war a long time with all these kings." Only the most striking and salient features are recorded, and these are such as are well fitted for correction and instruction. The campaign in all probability lasted for six years. God, had He so chosen, could have brought all the Canaanites together and crushed them at one blow. He did not do so, and He gives us the reason why He did not. So far as His people were concerned it was for their spiritual training. Had He wrought such a wonder, they might have magnificently celebrated His praises as at the Red Sea, but as easily forgotten His mercies as at Marah. Jehovah sought to teach them and us by the continuance of this conflict, that His heritage is our portion only through faith in Him and faithfulness to His word. Yet there is an opposite error that must be guarded against. If we are not to expect one great and decisive victory, much less are we to expect a series of disastrous defeats. If too great a triumph might have led to presumption on the part of Israel, too great a trial might have induced despair. Accordingly, God neither gave the one nor did He permit the other, but always tempered both to the necessities of His people. Is not this a true picture of spiritual experience, full of instruction and encouragement? How often does the

young convert feel himself walking in a land of miracle? "Old things have passed away, all things have become new." The chains of iron and the fetters of steel fall from his limbs. The bars of brass are broken, and he quits the prison-house of Satan and walks abroad in abounding liberty and glorious triumph. Sometimes, indeed, in the buoyancy of his soul, he indulges in strange talk, shakes his head with precocious wisdom, and assumes unconscious airs of superiority in the presence of such as do not share his happy experience. But by and by he encounters some gross and humiliating defeat like that which befel Israel at Ai. He is humbled in the dust. With chastened spirit he begins to join trembling with his mirth, and he finds out, more and more every day, the need of constant trust and unquestioning obedience. He wakes up to the fact that in this fight of faith, as in that, the conditions of success are trustful courage, wise purpose, sleepless energy, scrupulous obedience, and hard blows. It will be interesting to notice the last foes encountered in this fight. We read in the immediately preceding verses: "At that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims." These Anakim were the first to fill the hearts of the Israelites with fear, and they were the last to be faced. Compared with them the Israelites felt themselves grasshoppers, and it was well that their giant strength was not braved at the beginning of the campaign, but reserved to its close. Israel did not face these giants till it had been trained in the war of the Lord; till it knew how invincible was the man who puts his trust in Jehovah; till it knew from its own experience how one could chase a thousand—till, in short, it was able to measure the strength of the Anakim not against its own, but against the omnipotence of Jehovah. The opposition, which was once deemed invincible, now shrinks into insignificance. How often is it thus in the experience of God's people. I have sometimes asked young converts why they had been so long in coming forward to confess Christ. And their reply has often been, "I saw what was required and expected of a Christian. I felt the many and great difficulties that lay in the way of confessing Christ. I knew something of the temptations and troubles that would come upon me if I became a Christian, and as I looked at these things I felt afraid, and shrank back conscious of my own weakness." Exactly! Before these difficulties, that would come upon you by confessing Christ, you feel as grasshoppers. Does that express your present position? You are like Israel at Kadesh-Barnea. You are standing on the very borders of the land, with all its beauty spread before you. Yea, you also are spying it out. You are considering the promises and blessings of Christ for time and eternity. You cannot but confess that it is a goodly heritage, a pleasant land flowing with milk and honey. Even though you have not entered the good land, you know that you are refreshed by its blessed fruits. Then why not enter in? It is free for you. No walls rise up between you and it to shut you out. No deep river rolls to prevent your entrance. Ah! you are afraid. There are giants there, and strong cities walled to the sky. If I confess Christ I shall have mighty temptations and troubles to face and overcome. Are such your difficulties? Well, I do not say you are strong. I do not say that there are no Anakim in the land. But I do say that you utterly misunderstand the meaning of the situation. The instant you go forward you enlist on your side the strength of Jehovah, and there is no sin, no temptation, no trouble, however gigantic, over which He cannot cause you to triumph. But there are lessons here for the Christian veteran as well as for the Christian recruit. He has left Moses behind, as a leader who can give no rest, he has put himself under the flag of Joshua, he has entered into the inheritance and fought the good fight of faith, with encouraging measure of success. Yet still there remain some temptations, some sins, some sorrows, some bereavements, which look very dreadful. They are like gigantic Anakim, before which you quail. Do not measure your might with theirs. Pit them against the omnipotence of your Father God. Any temptation, any sin, any trial, is too much for us in our own strength; but strengthened with His might the meekest can face and overcome the greatest of them all. Notice, again, that the fighting does not grow less severe as we go onwards. The Anakim were left to the last. So often the greatest burdens, sharpest trials, severest afflictions, fiercest temptations, come at the end. No man can ever rest here in fancied security. (*A. B. Mackay.*) *The rest for which they fought*:—The rest for which Israel fought had been promised more than four hundred years before (*Gen. xii. 1-3, 6, 7, &c.*). This promise, so old, so solemn, so wide, so definite, so clear, and so often repeated, was the formative and governing principle in the lives of all the patriarchs. This it was that made them Faith's Pilgrim Fathers. They believed these promises, their hearts embraced

them, and they confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers in the earth. But the promise was sure, though held long in abeyance for wise and loving purposes. The vision may tarry, but come it must; because God's gifts and calling are without repentance, unconditioned by aught in the creature; and because God's power and wisdom are without limit. He is the God of truth and of infinite resources. Through strange scenes, hard discipline, and varying experiences the seed of Abraham may pass, but all the time God is leading them to His promised rest. What a lesson in patience have we here! What encouragement to wait for the end of the Lord! Surely, as we consider them thus at the end of their toils and in the enjoyment of that great promise, we may exclaim, "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord." Is there anything as good in store for us? There is better. God's basket of bounty is not empty. God's act gave this promise first of all. After He created all things He rested from His works. He had gone out of Himself to work; He returned to Himself to rest. As certainly as the old creation, through ages of convulsion and astounding changes, attained its crown and climax in God's rest, so surely the new creation, by whatever mysteries and conflicts its development is characterised, shall usher in the glorious Sabbath of redemption. As surely as Joshua gave rest to those who followed him, so surely does Jesus give rest to all who put their trust in Him. The innumerable company of the redeemed have found in this promise a power sufficient to govern all their lives, a solace for every woe. But if the rest for which Israel fought was a rest long promised, it was also a rest which for a time was forfeited. "They could not enter in because of unbelief. Thou standest by faith. Therefore be not high-minded, but fear." Let us fear with that fear which has strong confidence, with which we work out our salvation, which mingles with holy mirth, which lasts through all the time of our sojourn here, and which is our safety. "Blessed is the man that feareth alway." Further, the rest for which Israel fought was imperfect. It was only a comparative rest. The land as a whole was taken. It was so far in their hands that they could with safety partition it among the several tribes, allowing each to perfect the work of conquest within his allotted territory. The Canaanites were unable to put an army in the field. Their united power was for the time utterly broken. Yet still they had cities here and there in their possession. They were to remain for a time, to prevent the land from lapsing into an irreclaimable waste, to exercise the people in war, and to be a test of Israel's faithfulness. We have therefore here a master-sketch of Christian experience. The believer enters into life by a miracle of grace and power. He is buried with Christ by baptism into His death. He is raised with Him and seated with Him in heavenly places. He finds his Gilgal at Golgotha, where the reproach of sin is rolled away, and he receives nourishment for his soul. Here, also, he learns the mystery of the Divine leadership of Him who has said, "Lo, I am with you alway." He takes Him as Prophet, Priest, and King. Then he learns the might of faith in casting down the walls which human pride and strength and skill have reared. He is also taught, it may be by humiliating defeat, the weakness of unbelief and disobedience, as was Israel at Ai. He is convinced that if he is not to make shipwreck he must hold fast "faith and a good conscience." Then with bitter sorrow he learns the value of self-judgment and confession of sin. The dark and dreadful valley of Achor becomes the only door of hope. Then with deeper intelligence he repeats with restored soul the Amen of allegiance, deliberately takes the law of God for his guide, and depends on the Cross for power of communion. He camps at Ebal and Gerizim, in the very centre of the blessed inheritance, surrounded by its fairest scenes, when his heart knows the meaning of these words, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Then, from new consecration, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh, he passes on to higher acts of faith and to nobler victories. Things in heaven as well as things on earth reveal faith's power. He can put his foot on the neck of tyrant sins, and laugh to scorn the horses and chariots of human might. Sometimes there are periods of desperate fighting, in which every fibre is strained to its utmost tension. Sometimes there are periods of comparative repose, a welcome lull, when the land rests from war. And in these happy days all the work may seem done, and perfect victory gained. Old and tough sins are conquered. Those that remain hide their diminished heads. Still they lurk in the dark recesses of the heart, ready to spring out and pounce upon us if for a moment we are off our guard. Therefore there is constant need of watchfulness. Lastly, the rest for

which Israel fought was prospective. From the very fact of its imperfections it pointed forward to a better. (*Ibid.*) *Rest from war*:—Interesting period! What so much the anticipation of the heart in conflict? As long as the land remained unsubdued rest could not be enjoyed. Besides, had there been nothing else to annoy peace and disturb the inheritance of the Church, whose heart could have rested in his lot, and been free from distress, amidst the judgments of heaven upon guilty idolaters, and upon whom Divine authority made it an imperious necessity in Israel to execute a sentence of extermination? Sweet to the expectation and welcome of hope, a period when, in the perfect and undisturbed rest of heaven, war will cease for ever, and sighs of woe be eternally removed. The peace of heaven will be lasting as sweet. There no Canaanites will be left to dispute their right, or remnants of broken powers ever rise to assert, and attempt to restore their long forfeited claim. That land shall have rest from war, as long as the destroyer of sin and conqueror of death shall live. Joyous prospect! Soon the armour of light will be exchanged for robes of incorruptible glory, and the helmet of salvation for the conqueror's crown. As under the dominion of the Prince of peace, and themselves the subjects of its reigning influence, Christians will rest from war; as commanded, they will cease from anger and forsake strife. Nor will they ever embroil themselves in the contentions of others, unless as peace-speakers and peace-makers. (*W. Seaton.*)

CHAPTER XII.

VERS. 1-24. These are the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote.—*The goodness and severity of God*:—This chapter is a short summary of the work that has been done. In this *résumé* of the conquest Moses is not forgotten. He is named as well as Joshua. The Holy Ghost delights to point out how God causes many instruments to work out His designs, and thus takes all praise from man. Thus the chapter is a miniature, suggesting all the victories that Israel won, and all the defeats which overwhelmed the Canaanites. Accordingly it is valuable as a demonstration that both the promises and the threatenings of God will be fulfilled to the letter. Here as in a glass we see on the one hand the course and the end of those who follow God, and on the other the course and the end of those who resist. Or, we have pointed out to us the narrow way that leads to life, and the broad road that leads to destruction. May we ponder these things and learn the way wherein we should walk. I. THE DIFFERENT ROADS. That of Israel was the path of obedience. Everything was done by Divine command. But it was not always easy work for Israel to obey. The commands of God not only led along a narrow way, but often brought them up to a strait gate. They had just to go right on, according to the command of God. Obedience was their watchword. To stop and parley was to be lost. Patient endurance characterised them all through. When an old general was asked why he picked out the old veterans for a forced march he replied, "Because they have the most staying power." For hard work of any kind this is what tells in the long run; and from the first encounter with Sihon and Og to the last wrestle with the Anakim Israel exhibited this quality both in things physical and things spiritual. Obedience was the path: patient endurance was the characteristic of those who walked therein. On the part of the Canaanites their course was marked by rebellion. They said, "Who is Lord over us?" Thus they hardened themselves against God's will, and fought it out to the bitter end, learning no lesson and yielding no submission. These two paths of obedience and rebellion have not ceased to be trodden. Neither of them is grass-grown. Thank God there are many who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality. If there must be patient continuance on the part of those who walk the narrow way, there must be constant contention on the part of those who hurry down the broad road. There must be the resistance of the Holy Ghost, of the warnings of conscience, of the light of truth. There must be at times the fear of death and judgment and eternity. II. THE DIFFERENT OBJECTS placed before each. That placed before Israel was something very definite and tangible, viz., the sure promise of Jehovah. To them that promise was the title-deed of the Holy Land;

therefore all through this war they had in their eye a Divine inheritance, and all the glory and honour which this implied. Can we find any similar incitement on the part of the Canaanites? Nay. Theirs was a hopeless struggle. They were without God and therefore without hope. They obeyed unrighteousness, and were therefore filled with unrest. So is it now. They who walk in the obedience of faith have a glorious object before their eyes to stimulate and encourage them. They seek for glory and honour and immortality. And they have good hope through grace of obtaining it. Yea, they have God's faithful promise, and therefore glorious assurance of the result. But where is the hope of the rebellious? It is but a vague, unsatisfying dream. At the very best they have no certainty of a happy issue. When they pass hence it is "A leap in the dark." What a miserable plight is this! Notwithstanding their vast coalitions, their imposing armies, their formidable weapons, their notable leaders, they go forward with fear. The Sihon and Og of materialism, the Adoni-zedek of sacerdotalism, the Jabin of false philosophy, can inspire no true and blessed hope in the hearts of their faltering followers. III. THE DIFFERENT ENDS. We see the Israelites marching on from victory to victory; entering into Canaan, enjoying the smile of God, and reaping the fruit of their labours. We see the Canaanites swept with the besom of destruction, and all that is left of their mightiest kings is the chronicle of their tombstones as given here. The ends are different because the beginnings are different. Of Israel it might be said, "These all fought in faith." Of the Canaanites it might be said, "These all died in unbelief." Paul has laid plainly before us in the Epistle to the Romans these two ends, as we must know them. On the one hand he places eternal life, glory, honour, peace. On the other he places indignation, wrath, tribulation, anguish. One or other of these is the terminus to which every life is hastening. And he also plainly tells us that without faith it is impossible to walk in the good way or to attain the glorious end. Remember then God's solemn record of the dead. He marks His own as precious jewels, to be worn in His crown in the day of glory, but He counts His enemies but worthless ashes to be trodden under foot. In the Divine record of the dead there are no omissions, no oversights, and no lies. He counts His enemies and He counts His friends. How will He count you? (*A. B. Mackay.*)

CHAPTER XIII.

VERS. 1-33.—Thou art old and stricken in years.—*Joshua's old age*:—"The Lord said unto Joshua, Thou art old and stricken in years." To many men and women this would not be a welcome announcement. They do not like to think that they are old. They do not like to think that the bright, joyous, playful part of life is over, and that they are arrived at the sombre years when they must say, "There is no pleasure in them." Then, again, there are some who really find it hard to believe that they are old. Life has flown past so swiftly that before they thought it was well begun it has gone. But however much men may like to be young, and however much some may retain in old age of the feeling of youth, it is certain that the period of strength has its limit, and the period of life also. To Joshua the announcement that he was old and stricken in years does not appear to have brought any painful or regretful feeling. Perhaps he had aged somewhat suddenly; his energies may have failed consciously and rapidly, after his long course of active and anxious military service. He may have been glad to hear God utter the word; he may have been feeling it himself, and wondering how he should be able to go through the campaigns yet necessary to put the children of Israel in full possession of the land. So Joshua finds that he is now to be relieved by his considerate Master of laborious and anxious service. Not of all service, but of exhausting service, unsuited to his advancing years. Joshua had been a right faithful servant; few men have ever done their work so well. He has led a most useful and loyal life, which there is some satisfaction in looking back on. No doubt he is well aware of unnumbered failings: "Who can understand his errors?" But he has the rare satisfaction—oh! who would not wish to share it?—of looking back on a well-spent life, habitually and earnestly regulated

amid many infirmities by regard to the will of God. Yet Joshua was not to complete that work to which he had contributed so much: "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." At one time, no doubt, he thought otherwise, and he desired otherwise. When the tide of victory was setting in for him so steadily, and region after region of the land was falling into his hands, it was natural to expect that before he ended he would sweep all the enemies of Israel before him, and open every door for them throughout the land, even to its utmost borders. Why not make hay when the sun shone? When God had found so apt an instrument for His great design, why did He not employ him to the end? If the natural term of Joshua's strength had come, why did not that God who had supernaturally lengthened out the day for completing the victory of Bethhoron lengthen out Joshua's day, that the whole land of Canaan might be secured? Here comes in a great mystery of Providence. Instead of lengthening out the period of Joshua's strength, God seems to have cut it short. We can easily understand the lesson for Joshua himself. Joshua must be made to feel—perhaps he needs this—that this enterprise is not his, but God's. And God is not limited to one instrument, or to one age, or to one plan. Never does Providence appear to us so strange as when a noble worker is cut down in the very midst of his work. A young missionary has just shown his splendid capacity for service, when fever strikes him low, and in a few days all that remains of him is rotting in the ground. "What can God mean?" we sometimes ask impatiently. "Does He not know the rare value and the extreme scarcity of such men, that He sets them up apparently just to throw them down?" But "God reigneth, let the people tremble." All that bears on the Christian good of the world is in God's plan, and it is very dear to God, and "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." But He is not limited to single agents. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *God takes note of our failing strength*:—He says, concerning this man and that, Grey hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not. About some supposedly strong men, He says, They are wearing out; they are old at forty; at fifty they will be patriarchal, so far as the exhaustion of strength is concerned; they will die young in years, but old in service. God's work does take much out of a man, if the man is faithful. A man may pray himself into a withered old age in one night: in one little day a man may add years to his labour. We can work off-handedly: the work need not take much out of us; but if we think about it, ponder it, execute it with both hands—if it is the one thought of the soul, who can tell how soon the strongest man may be run out, and the youngest become a white-haired patriarch? But blessed is it to be worked out in this service. A quaint minister of the last century said, "It is better to rub out than to rust out." How many are content to "rust out"! They know nothing about friction, sacrifice, self-slaughter, martyrdom. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.**—*Unconquered territory*:—I. REVEALED TRUTH YET TO BE LEARNED. We have not yet secured all the sacred knowledge which God has made possible, and which it would be profitable for us to acquire. Here is this book set out before us, the great region of revealed religion. May we not say that "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed"? Who among us is familiar with all its histories, is acquainted with all its facts, knows all its truths, has seen all its beauties, or learned all its lessons? Some of you have been through the pass of Llanberis—perhaps twenty times. Did you ever see it twice alike? Always the same thing; and yet a different appearance, because seen under different circumstances. If you were to go through it twenty times twenty times, it would never appear twice alike. The light would be falling on it at different angles, and thus make a difference. On a cloudy day you would see something you did not see on a bright day, and on a rainy day you would see something you did not see on a fine day. It is thus with this book. You say that you read the Bible through last year, and you ask, "What is to be gained by reading it through again this year?" Have you the same hopes? the same joys? the same sorrows? the same aspirations? the same motives? and the same experiences? I care not how often you have read it, you have never read it as you feel now, with your present experience and in your present circumstances. II. A HOLY CHARACTER TO BE ACQUIRED. There remaineth much of that to be possessed. Men in ancient times had not a Divine standard to measure themselves by, or a Divine pattern to contrast themselves with, and learn how deficient they were and full of blemishes. We have had a perfect pattern set before us. In the life of our Lord Jesus Christ we have the map of the good land; see it in its length and

breadth, and realise how true it is that there are glorious portions of it over which our flag has not floated, provinces which we have not made our own. III. CHRISTIAN USEFULNESS. I am not going to slander the Christian Church, and tell you that former times were better than these. There is nothing gained by telling lies for God. If you want to quicken God's people you must not talk as if the Church were more sleepy now than it ever was before. I do not believe it. As I read ecclesiastical history, I cannot find many periods when the Church, as a whole, was more vigorous and devoted than now. Let us not ignore what God has done for us, and enabled us to do. "Not unto us, but unto Him be the praise and glory." But when we take into account all that has been done and all that has been attempted against the world's ignorance, vice, and ungodliness, may we not still say, "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed"? It is not the season for slothfulness, selfishness, or prayerlessness; the call is urgent and great. "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." Why did God keep His people to that struggle? He gave the people the land, and then they had to fight for it. They crossed the Jordan with the best title-deeds man ever possessed; they came from heaven, they were given by Him to whom all the earth belongs. The title-deed of the people said, "The land is yours"; and after God had given it to them they had to buckle on the sword, sharpen the spear, and go and win every acre of it. This is God's way—He gives it to you, and yet He says, "Get it; work it out with fear and trembling." Why does He treat us so? I cannot tell; but this I know, that if we cease to work the powers of evil never will. (*Charles Vince.*) *The Christian's work*:—Canaan, though commonly used as a type of heaven, is, in some of its aspects, a type rather of a state of grace than of a state of glory. And taking this view of it, I remark that—I. CANAAN, AS THE ISRAELITES FOUND IT, REPRESENTS THE STATE OF MAN'S HEART WHEN THE GRACE OF GOD ENTERS IT. Think of a soul like thine, made at first in the image of God; a being such as thou art, once occupying a rank in creation next to and but a little lower than that of angels; a heart like thine which, though blighted by sin, still retains some traces of departed glory, alienated from the true God, held captive of the devil, ruled by unholy passions, full of corruptions as difficult to root out as were these sons of Anak who, in Goliath and his giant race, disturbed the peace of Israel and defied the armies of the living God many long years after the land was, in a sense, both conquered and possessed. The Hebrews did not enter Canaan to find an empty land, which they had nothing to do but to occupy; nor does Jesus, when He enters our heart by His Spirit and saving grace. It is in possession of His enemies. They are there to dispute His rights, and resist His entrance—sons of Anak, indeed; more formidable still; for giant sins are less easily conquered than giant men. II. THE BLESSINGS OF THE KINGDOM OF GRACE, LIKE THOSE OF CANAAN, HAVE TO BE FOUGHT FOR. Bring out every sin before the Lord, and let it be condemned to death; pass the sword of the Spirit through and through it, till it has breathed out its cursed life, and has no more dominion over you. As the apostle says, "Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from all iniquity." Beware how you leave innate corruption and old sinful habits to draw down on you the anger of a holy God and the afflictions threatened on Israel (Num. xxxiii. 55). III. THE MOST ADVANCED CHRISTIAN HAS MUCH TO DO IN THE WAY OF SANCTIFICATION. How truly may it be said to the most experienced, aged, honoured Christian, as the Lord said to Joshua, "Thou art old and well stricken in years, and yet there is much land to be possessed. Sin still has more or less power over you, and it should have none; your corruptions are wounded, dying of mortal wounds, but they are not yet dead; your affections are set on heaven, yet how much are they still entangled with earthly things; your heart, like the needle of a sailor's compass to its pole, points to Christ, but how easily is it disturbed, how tremblingly and unsteadily does it often point to Him; your spirit has wings, but how short are its flights, and how often, like a half-fledged eaglet, has it to seek the nest, and come back to rest on the Rock of Ages; your soul is a garden in which, when north and south winds blow to call out its spices, Christ delights to walk, but with many a beautiful flower, how many vile weeds are there—ready to spring up, and ill to keep down; requiring constant care and watching." Indeed, so many impurities and imperfections cleave to the best of us, that it seems to me a change must take place at death only second to what took place at conversion. How that is done is a mystery which we cannot fathom; but it would seem as if grace, like that species of cereus which opens its gorgeous flower only at midnight burst out into fullest beauty amid the darkness of a dying hour. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *The uncompleted work*:—

There is much land to be possessed in—I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. Columbus was not content to pick up a few shells on the beach of the new world—he explored the continent; alas! we are too soon satisfied with coasting for a little on that great continent of the Divine nature. II. THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE. Christians are too prone to keep to the beaten tracks; they do not make excursions into less familiar paths; some pages well thumbed, others clean and uncut. III. CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. Canaan was occupied by seven nations of ugly names; but our hearts and lives are cursed by still uglier things. We must not be content until all these are brought under obedience to Christ. IV. THE HEATHEN WORLD. (F. B. Meyer, B.A.) *On progress in religion*:—Christians, God has assigned you a glorious portion. Opening before you the discoveries of revelation, He said, "Make all this your own; advance; leave nothing unpossessed." At first you were filled with spiritual ardour, "laying aside every weight," &c. But, alas! your love has waxen cold. I. Yes, Christians, THERE REMAINETH YET VERY MUCH LAND TO BE POSSESSED—many cities and strongholds, many fine plains, and "springs of water," many beautiful valleys, and very "fruitful hills"—or, to speak less in figure, much of your religion is unattained, unoccupied, unenjoyed; you are far from its boundaries. Very little of it indeed do some of you possess; you command only a small, inconsiderable corner, scarcely affording you a subsistence. 1. Consider your knowledge. After so many years of bearing, what additions have you made to your stores? Are you filled with holy prudence to ponder "the path of your feet," to "look well to your goings," and to discern snares where there is no appearance of danger? Do you "walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise"? 2. Observe your holiness. For the knowledge of persons may surpass their experience; and a growth in gifts is very distinguishable from a growth in grace. Review, then, your sanctification; and suffer me to ask, Have you no remaining corruptions to subdue? Is your obedience universal, unvarying, cheerful? Have you fully imbibed the tempers of your religion? Are there no deficiencies perceivable in every grace, in every duty? 3. Think of your privileges. It is the privilege of Christians to be "careful for nothing." It is the privilege of Christians to "enter into rest." It is the privilege of Christians to "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the privilege of Christians to "count it all joy when they fall into divers temptations; and to glory in tribulation also." And all this has been exemplified. Men have "received the gospel in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: they have taken pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake"; they have "taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods"; they have approached the flames with rapture; they have loved and longed for "His appearing"—but where are you? Always in darkness and alarms, &c. Do you belong to the same company? II. Whence is this? Why will you suffer all this remaining religion to be unpossessed? How shall I awaken you from your negligence, and convince you of the PROPRIETY AND NECESSITY OF MAKING FRESH AND CONTINUAL ADVANCES? 1. I place before you the commands of God. You are forbidden to draw back; you are forbidden to be stationary. Something more is necessary than languid, partial, occasional, temporary progression. You are required to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"; to "add to your faith, virtue," &c. 2. I surround you with all the images employed by the sacred writers when they would describe the nature of a religious life. For which of them does not imply progress, and remind us of the importance of undiminished ardour and increasing exertion? Light. Growing grain. Mustard seed. Leaven. 3. I call forth examples in your presence; they teach you the same truth. Who said, "I beseech thee, show me Thy glory"? A man who had "seen God face to face." Who prayed, "Teach me Thy statutes: open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law"? A man who had "more understanding than all his teachers," a man who "understood more than the ancients." 4. I hold up to view the advantages of progressive religion. (1) A Christian should be concerned for the honour of God. He is under infinite obligations to "show forth the praises of Him, who hath called us," &c.; but "herein is" our "Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." (2) A Christian should be concerned for the welfare of his fellow-creatures. He should be a blessing to his family, to his country. (3) A Christian should be concerned for his own prosperity. And has he to learn wherein it consists? Need he be told that adding grace to grace is adding "strength to strength," dignity to dignity, beauty to beauty, joy to joy? It is an awful proof that you have no real religion if you are satisfied

with what you have. A degree of experience, however small, would stimulate; the relish would provoke the appetite; and having "tasted that the Lord is gracious," your language would be, "evermore give us this bread." III. SOME ADMONITIONS WITH REGARD TO YOUR FUTURE EFFORTS. 1. Shake off indolence. Nothing is more injurious to our progress; and, alas! nothing is more common. Man loves indulgence; he needs a stimulus, to make him arise from the bed of sloth, to exert his faculties, and to employ the means of which he is possessed. And one would naturally conclude that in religion he would find it. As he sits at ease revelation draws back the veil, and shows him the most astonishing realities—an eternal world; whatever can sting with motive; whatever can alarm with fear; whatever can animate with hope. What a Being to please, on whom it depends to save or to destroy! What a state of misery is there to escape! What an infinite happiness to secure! 2. Beware of diversion. Discharge yourself as much as possible from superfluous cares. Distinguish between diligence in lawful business and "entangling yourselves in the affairs of this life." There are not only diversions from religion, but diversions in it; and of these also you are to beware. Here, finding you are unsuspecting of danger, the enemy often succeeds; for his end is frequently answered by things good in themselves. He is satisfied if he can draw off your attention from great things, and engross it with little ones; if he can make you prefer opinions to practice, and controversy to devotion. 3. Guard against despondency. There are indeed many things which, when viewed alone, have a tendency to discourage the mind. We know your weakness, and we know the difficulties and dangers to which you are exposed. But you have the promise of a faithful God. 4. Be afraid of presumption. Our dependence upon God is absolute and universal. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." His agency is more indispensable in spiritual things than in natural; sin has rendered us peculiarly weak, helpless, and disaffected. 5. It would be profitable for you to "call to remembrance the former days," and especially to review the beginning of your religious course. 6. It will not be less profitable for you to look forward, and survey the close of all. Christians! "it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is your salvation nearer." Would you slumber on the verge of heaven? The stream increases as it approximates the sea; motion accelerates as it approaches the centre. (*W. Jay.*) *Territory yet to be taken by the Church:*—Who in the sketch of the inheritance given by God, the outline of the borders assigned to them in the grant of heaven, and sealed by covenant oath, could, in this seat of plenty and portion of the Church, behold with satisfaction and content so much of what mercy had made their own, still retained under the dominion of darkness, and occupied to the keeping out of their full right the true heirs of promise? Who, whatever his achievements in conquest and attainments in grace, but in this view feels the confined results of all his operations, and sees on every hand very much land yet to be possessed? Notwithstanding all that has been achieved by the Church of God, the spiritual inclosures of grace, and those precious plants of righteousness, where once grew the thorn and the briar, none whose contemplations seldom reach beyond such beauteous spots of mercy, such flourishing vineyards of grace, can possibly conceive of the melancholy darkness which still broods over by far the greater part of the land, those moral wastes of ignorance and corruption which everywhere meet the eye and distress the heart of the Christian traveller. Ah! what extensive wastes of sin everywhere meet the eye, for the cultivation of which but few hands are found! Vast multitudes in the possession of intelligence, and bearing the stamp of immortality, are living without the fear of God, or any hope of futurity, as indifferent to all the momentous concerns of eternity as they are ignorant of all the affecting realities of the gospel. The worldly-mindedness, profligacy, and pride of the rich, and their prevailing disregard of all that is serious and devout, demonstrate that they are equally without God and without hope in the world, and, till renewed by grace, or removed by death, are the pollution and burden of the place where they live. These are the Anakims, a people tall and strong, and as the sons of Anak, a gigantic race, who in their power and influence contract the inheritance of the saints, and hold them from a more enlarged possession, till the powers of heaven subdue or destroy. But with the promise of an inheritance wide as the world, and stretched in its extent to the remotest boundaries of the earth, how much, very much land yet remaineth to be possessed! (*W. Seaton.*) *More beyond:*—Spain inscribed on her coins the picture of the pillars of Hercules, which stood on either side of the Straits of Gibraltar, the extreme boundary of her empire, with only an unexplored ocean beyond; and on the scroll over them was written,

"*Ne plus ultra*"—nothing beyond. But afterwards, when Columbus had discovered America, Spain struck out the negative and left the inscription, "*Plus ultra*"—more beyond.

CHAPTER XIV.

Vers. 1-5. By lot was their inheritance.—*The tribes apportioned:*—As the whole inheritance was the gift of God, so each one's share was assigned to him by His appointment. Not even Joshua himself in a display of the greatest wisdom and impartiality could have yielded satisfaction in a matter where so many, and all of one family, were concerned. Only the authority of the Father, who had entailed upon them as His redeemed children this common patrimony, could decide the portion of each tribe and of each family. This may yield great satisfaction to the heirs of promise, who are looking for a share in the heavenly inheritance. There, whatever degree of station, difference of capacity, or diversity of possession may exist, no one but will find his inheritance all he could desire and enjoy, and for ever beyond the possibility of becoming a cause of dissatisfaction to himself or of envy to others. To animate the hopes of the believer, and quicken his desires after it, an outline is presented in the descriptions of heavenly promise. Oh, for a realising faith, that elevation and meekness which characterise the high-born sons of God, and which by present hopes wean the heart from earthly bliss and sublimates its affections to highest joys. The portion of inheritance that fell to the members of this great family was, agreeably to previous instructions in the wilderness, determined by lot; and was to be viewed not as the result of chance, but as the wise and gracious appointment of their heavenly Father. No one but had reason to be satisfied with his portion, and to consider it assigned him with the indisputable exactness of a last will and testament. What a sweet thought to the true spiritual Church of God, the heirs of grace and glory, both with respect to their present condition and their future inheritance! He who did not overlook one tribe or family in the earthly Canaan, but provided for them as few or many, now, though the lot is differently determined, as minutely fixes the bounds of His people's habitations, and manages all their affairs. Nor less exact will appear the eternal consummation of His goodness, in the final results of providence, and completion of His covenant purpose. (*W. Seaton.*)

Vers. 6-15. Caleb . . . said . . . the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said.—*Caleb's reflection on the goodness and faithfulness of God to him:*—I. IT IS GOD THAT KEEPETH US ALIVE. The Scriptures often remind us of this, and urge it as a motive to religious fear, gratitude, and obedience. They teach us "that in Him we live and move and have our being: that in Him is the breath of every living thing and the spirit of all mankind"; that He gave it at first and that He taketh it away. More particularly, God preserveth us from many accidents that would be fatal to us. "He giveth His angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways." II. THE AGED HAVE PECULIAR REASON TO MAKE THIS ACKNOWLEDGMENT. When any arrive at old age, it is proper to do this, with peculiar seriousness and gratitude; considering that, like Caleb, they have been wandering all their days in a wilderness. Dangers surround us on every side. The aged cannot but often reflect upon this; what numbers they have survived! Their own infirmities render the acknowledgment of God's preservation of them almost natural and peculiarly proper. III. IT IS A GREAT SATISFACTION TO AGED CHRISTIANS TO REFLECT ON THEIR OBEDIENCE TO GOD, AND THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF HIS PROMISES TO THEM. They recollect with gratitude and delight, that grace, which began, maintained and improved the Divine life in their souls, amidst innumerable temptations, from without and within; and though they have fallen into trouble, they have been prevented from making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. It is pleasant to them to trace up all these streams to the fountain; to consider them as the displays of rich and free grace; as the accomplishment of the promises of God, and proofs of His fidelity. Their mercies were sweet in the enjoyment, and are sweet in the reflection, when they consider them as founded on the covenant of grace, made with all true believers through Christ Jesus. IV. THE EXPERIENCE WHICH AGED SAINTS HAVE HAD OF GOD'S GOODNESS AND FAITHFULNESS IS A STRONG ENCOURAGEMENT TO THEM TO HOPE AND TRUST IN HIM. Application: 1. Let us all remember our constant dependence upon God, and learn those useful

instructions which that is adapted to teach us. 2. What hath been said should be an inducement to young persons to follow the Lord fully. Instead of "possessing the iniquities of your youth," you will have unspeakable pleasure in being able to appeal to God, with Hezekiah, "that you have walked before Him in truth, and with an upright heart, and have done that which was good in His sight." 3. The example of Caleb is worthy the imitation of aged Christians. When, like Caleb, you are mentioning your age, your contemporaries, or what happened in the former part of your lives, let it be done with seriousness, with an humble and thankful acknowledgment of God. Further, let the remainder of your lives be faithfully devoted to God's service. One important branch of this is humbly to relate your own experience for the instruction and consolation of others. (*J. Orton.*) *Caleb's confession* :—We meet with old men who are continually asking us, with a slight twinkle in their eye, "How old do you think I am?" and the answer, of course, is meant to bring out that you never would dream that they were such veterans in years, they are so fresh, and sprightly, and springy. That is an evil thing, and would have been evil in Caleb but for this saving clause, "Behold, the Lord hath kept me alive." That is the saving clause, my green and vigorous aged friend, with whom all things have prospered. See to it that boastfulness be not found in your heart. Let not that "dead fly" spoil your ointment. Do not give to yourself the credit and glory of your strength and prowess of body, and brain, and mind. Give all the glory where all is due. "The Lord hath kept me alive." I want you to notice this also about Caleb. He says, "I have wholly followed the Lord my God"; and in the Hebrew that is quite a striking word—more striking than in the English. It is a pictorial word in the Hebrew, and describes a ship going out at full sail. Why, that is the very keynote of Caleb from beginning to end. He was the man he was, from the beginning to the end, because he was out and out—because there were no limitations and provisions with him. He was not a man who, as Paul would say, "made provision for the flesh for the lust thereof"; but having been called by God to His service, he made it his meat and his drink. He "went in" for God and His cause, like a ship in full sail. He flung every power of body, and soul, and spirit like a free sheet to the winds of God's grace, and God's Spirit, and God's Providence. He "let go." Young fellow, it is the ruin of you that you are holding back. You will never be a Caleb; you will never be a Joshua; you will never be a David—never, never—at this rate of it; hanging back and saving your life, and therefore losing it; taking so much of the programme because it fits you, and scoring out certain other items that you do not like. Go in for a full programme, if you would enjoy Christian life. (*John McNeill.*) *Joshua's grateful retrospect* :—A great Alpine climber was asked about the ascent of a high mountain, and said, "I was very weary before I got to the top, and found the best plan was just to follow the guide in front of me. At the summit I turned round, and when I saw the grand view, and the dangers through which the guide had brought me, I felt I could have fallen down on my knees to thank him for having led me to such a wonderful place." (*Our Own Magazine.*) *I am as strong this day as I was.*—Caleb—youth in old age :—I. A LIFE BUILT ON GOD'S PROMISE. Five times in his short speech does he refer to the word which "the Lord spake." The word of promise to Caleb dealt with two things—his prolonged life and his possession of the land "whereinto he went" (Num. xiv. 24). For five and forty years he had kept this word "hid in his heart," and now he puts out a hand, unweakened by age and long-delayed fulfilment, to grasp the realisation—a grand example of steady, persistent faith, which waits for the vision, though it tarry, and buoyantly welcomes it when it comes at last! A life thus filled with trust in God's faithful word has ever present instalments of accomplishment, as brooks by the way, to keep its hope fresh. The prolongation of Caleb's life was the pledge to him of the fulfilment of the remoter promise. Such a life is consciously surrounded with Divine operations, too plain to be ignored, and when looked at in retrospect, presents one solid and homogeneous mass of preserving providences, which are all summed up in saying, "Behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as He spake, . . . while Israel walked in the wilderness." Such a life has hope burning as a guiding star to the very end. The hopes of age are few and tremulous, if they be limited to earth. When the feast is near an end, appetite is dulled, and there is little to do but to get up and go away. But if we set our hope on God, our hope is immortal. He keeps the good wine till the last. II. A LIFE WHICH BEARS BEING REMEMBERED. We may freely admit that the tone of this retrospect savours of an earlier stage in the process of revelation than ours, and that, if this were a complete

account given by a man of his life, we should miss in it the voice of humble penitence, which must always sound through a Christian autobiography. But still, a life of trust and following Christ, however imperfectly, does yield calm remembrances, which nothing else does, and for the lack of which nothing can compensate. If we would lay up for ourselves against old age the treasure of such calm and humble memories, we must in youth and manhood choose God for our God, and take heed to follow Him, though we may be singular; and to do it wholly.

“I backward cast mine e’e
On prospects drear,”

said poor, brilliant Robert Burns, whose youth of riotous pleasure burnt itself out before he was forty, and had been full of self-reproach and bitterness long before the end. Many a life which grasps at delight and spurns the slow-going puritanical ways of God-fearing, sense-coercing Christians, comes at last to be gnawed by memories sharp and poisonous like a serpent's tooth. The only way to secure that at the end we may be able to say, “I have fought a good fight,” is to become Christ's soldier. Recruits for His army are most surely enlisted in youth. III. A LIFE-PRESERVING YOUTHFUL VIGOUR TO OLD AGE. This “old young man,” as Thomas Fuller calls him, followed the Lord wholly; therefore he “brought forth fruit in old age,” and the aged tree was “full of sap and green” in all its gnarled branches. In a very true sense a man may keep himself young all his days. A youth and manhood of Christian sobriety and self-restraint, temperate, chaste, and free from the “sins of youth,” which rot “the bones” and “lie down with” their victims “in the dust,” is likely to conserve physical vigour. A life of Christian devotion and faith will keep its spring flowers blowing till late autumn, and blossom and fruit will hang together. The buoyancy, carelessness, hopefulness, cheeriness of youth are not far away from the aged heart, which lives by faith, and therefore dwells at ease, and is glad and secure, though the shadows of evening be falling. IV. A LIFE STILL EAGER AT LAST FOR FURTHER ENTERPRISE. That is the true temper of the Christian soldier, seeking the hardest, not the easiest, work, and finding in danger an attraction. How nobly it has been exemplified in many a mission field, to which, whenever disease has smitten down one, two have been ready to go! An old Highland legend tells how his foster-brothers made a ring round the chief in a battle, and how, as each that shielded him with his own body fell, the foster-father cried, “Another for Hector,” and another strode into the fatal empty place. The annals of the Church are full of like incidents. The call for another to stand in some deadly breach for the sake of the elder brother has never been sounded in vain; and to-day American and English Christianity is showing that the old heroic fire burns yet, in the men who, on the Congo and elsewhere, have hazarded their lives for the name of Jesus, and been drawn to the field by its very dangers. (A. Maclaren. D.D.) *Caleb's vigour of mind in old age* was equal to his vigour of body in youth. As his strength was in the day that Moses sent him, so was his strength then for war, both to go out and to come in: yea, he had waxed stronger and stronger, and, as is said of the righteous, “brought forth fruit in old age.” As all other graces, true faith increases in its exercise, and becomes mightier by conflict. They who are strong in faith when young, and have the word of God abiding in them, are not likely to become weak in faith when old. Interesting sight, to behold one grown old in the service of God, still a veteran in the ranks, with a resolution never to yield or return his sword, while an enemy remains unsubdued. One had thought it now time for this old warrior to leave the field, and quietly to enjoy his earthly portion; and had his mind been affected less with things future than things present, had he sought rest only in Canaan, and not rest in heaven, he would have so thought himself. It is a lovely sight, and what must command admiration from all, to see an old believer to the very last ready to testify his faith in God and hope of the promise by a sacrifice of ease, and even at the hazard of life. But they may well be inspired with the fortitude of unyielding valour, and fight even till they die, who are under the command of Jehovah and the banner of the Cross; for a crown of life and eternal triumphs await the slain—they shall rise and reign for ever in the kingdom of glory. The Christian, whose brightest portion lies beyond this world, must not wonder if, as age creeps on, new conflicts arise, and if at last, before he take possession of his eternal settlement, the Anakims, a people tall and great, should still be to be conquered. They are all an easy conquest through Him that hath loved us, so that he may say as Caleb (ver. 12). (IV. Seaton.)

Give me this mountain.—*Caleb's choice*.—1. In this choice we find a revelation of a sturdy character. There is a powerful individuality about the man who chooses a mountain as his ideal possession. It means climbing and hard work. I knew a veteran who, late in life, bought a rugged mountain, built his house in one of its hollows, cultivated a portion of its slope, and let his sheep wander for a living over the remaining portion. He was as happy in breathing the clear mountain air, and in climbing the mountain steeps, as Adam was in Paradise. There was wonderful congeniality between him and his surroundings. There was a great deal of rugged grandeur about him. To come into contact with that man was as bracing as to climb his mountain, and to breathe the pure inspiring air upon its summit. In Caleb we have a man of similar robust make—a man who not only chose the mountainous district of Hebron while others sought the plains, but also chose that mountain while as yet every crevice in its fastnesses bristled with foes of giant stature. Caleb was charmed with the thought of a possession which involved most of faith and heroism in making his own. 2. This choice further reveals to us the continuity of his character. It is the brave man who stood before Israel and the ten spies who brought depressing news of the land, and exclaimed, "Let us go up at once and possess it," that now, forty years later, claims it as his privilege to drive the sons of Anak out of their last fastness. He had done enough to wear out half a dozen ordinary men. There seemed to be endless wear in him. This is the speech of an old soldier. You trace the same man, and he affirms—and gives proof of his affirmation subsequently—that he has the same vigour as of old. Throughout his life we trace one master-feeling, one supreme purpose, one distinctive personality. This unity running through life is one of the glories of a great character. 3. Caleb's choice shows his hopefulness and faith. We are not so surprised that when forty-five years of age he should have taken such a bright view of things, as that now in prospect of such a difficult task he should say, "If so be that the Lord be with me, then—" This is not the "if" of doubt, but the "if" of great possibilities, of a large hope, and of a mighty faith (R.V.). "It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive," &c. He is willing to risk all upon that "may be." He bases all upon what the Lord had promised. 4. This choice shows Caleb's wisdom. The mountain fastnesses of the land were the most difficult to win, but having been once won could best be held, and would finally become the greatest centres of strength. It is a general rule of life that what is hardest won is worth the winning most, and is the most lasting good when won. The strength of a life as well as of a country is in its mountain fastnesses and passes, and not in its broad and luxuriant plains. 5. The whole incident reveals the sacredness which Caleb and Joshua attached to a promise given by Moses forty years previously. Moses was dead, but the promise lived. Caleb repeated it, and Joshua honoured it. 6. Observe how the name of a comparatively unknown father is connected with the choice now made by a noble son. Caleb is usually designated as the "son of Jephunneh." Jephunneh seems to have belonged to an Edomite tribe, the Kenazites, but all that we know of him besides is that he was the father of Caleb. All that we know, too, of Nun is that he was the father of Joshua. These were two noble sons who made their fathers famous. Young men, take note of that! How largely the father's reputation is in the hands of his son! "A wise son maketh a glad father." (*D. Davies.*) **Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb . . . because that he wholly followed the Lord.**—*God rewards His faithful followers*.—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN CALEB'S FOLLOWING THE LORD WHOLLY. Though this may imply a great deal, yet it cannot imply absolute perfection. 1. It implies that his heart was renewed. He had a filial, dutiful, submissive spirit, which the Scripture calls a perfect heart. 2. It implies that he paid an external respect to all the intimations of His will. If he had allowed himself in one sin, or habitually offended in one point, he would have been guilty of all. It is essential to the character of a good man to follow the Lord in all His precepts and appointments. "This is the love of God that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous." 3. This amiable character implies that he persevered in obedience under every trial and temptation. Such a sincere, uniform, and constant course of obedience, for forty or fifty years, fully verified the Divine declaration that "he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." But this is not all. God not only approved, but rewarded his obedience. II. WHY THE LORD REWARDED HIM FOR FOLLOWING HIM WHOLLY. 1. Because his wholly following the Lord was a strong expression of his supreme love to Him. Obedience is the natural expression of love. "Ye are My friends," says Christ, "if ye do whatsoever I command you." Neither the hosts of Pharaoh, nor the absence

of Moses, nor the defection of Aaron, nor the giants of Canaan, could cool his zeal or warp his resolution. He determined to endure unto the end; and unto the end he endured. He loved God sincerely and supremely, and he meant to express his love to Him, by uniform obedience, under the most trying circumstances. This God saw, approved, and rewarded, agreeably to His own declaration, "I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me." 2. Caleb greatly promoted the glory of God and the good of His people, by his uniform and persevering obedience. This rendered him one of the principal instruments in the hand of God of conducting His people to Canaan, and of executing His wise and gracious purposes respecting them. By walking with God, and observing His wise and holy providence, he became a man of great experimental and practical knowledge, which enabled him to be very useful in guiding and instructing an ignorant and refractory people. It is natural to suppose that he had a principal hand in forming the lives and manners of that generation, which was educated in the wilderness, and eventually prepared for the promised inheritance. And his great and extensive usefulness was a good reason why the Lord God of Israel should reward his signal services, agreeably to His own maxim, "Them that honour Me, I will honour." 3. There was something very distinguishing in Caleb's conduct. None but he and Joshua persevered in their allegiance to God. This singularity of his obedience not only displayed, but really enhanced, the worth of his virtue and piety, and laid a proper foundation for God to reward him with peculiar marks of His favour. Reflections: 1. What great encouragement have all true saints to persevere in the ways of well-doing! 2. What great benefit may those, who follow the Lord wholly, derive from the evils and burdens of their wearisome pilgrimage! Caleb acquired a beautiful character, and a distinguished reward, by properly improving a series of great and complicated trials. He learned obedience by the things which he suffered. 3. How will saints hereafter admire the distinguishing grace of God by which they were conducted to heaven! 4. Does God speak respectfully of those who follow Him wholly, and graciously reward their faithful labours? Then we must justly conclude that we ought to honour those whom He delights to honour. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

Following the Lord.—I. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE EXPRESSION, "WHOLLY FOLLOWING THE LORD"? It is impossible to take the words in their strictly literal sense. There are so many slips, so many wanderings, so many shortcomings, that the strict perfection of obedience is unattainable by any of the children of Adam. But the expression is one which, nevertheless, can be applied to those who honestly and simply give themselves up through Divine grace to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

1. A realisation that the will of God is paramount. 2. A resting upon the Word of God as clear and authoritative. 3. A laying hold of the promises of God as sure. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH IT IS SAID OF CALEB THAT HE WHOLLY FOLLOWED GOD. 1. Caleb wholly followed God, though others who were in the same position of influence with himself deserted the side of God and of His truth. 2. Caleb wholly followed God, though the whole congregation feared to walk in the right way. 3. Caleb wholly followed the Lord in spite of opposition. The current of excited feeling set dead against him, and threatened to bear him down. And you will observe that it was not the mere opposition of abuse, insult, and prejudice; it assumed a far more dangerous form (*Num. xiv. 10*). His life was perilled. Yet no degree of violence, however determined, could drive him from the position which he had been enabled to take up. Oh, what encouragement there is here for those who find themselves in the midst of difficulties and trial for the sake of the Gospel! Caleb was a man of like passions with ourselves. Naturally he had the same aversion to the will of God that others have; but in his case grace was strong, faith triumphed. And what a glorious sight it is to see, when you behold one thus meeting any storm of indignation, coldness, or scorn from man, rather than forsake the way and truth of the Lord Jesus! (*C. D. Marston, M.A.*)

Caleb the soldier.—I. CALEB'S FIDELITY. Fidelity is one of the first properties of a soldier; and it were well that every good cause, and especially that of Christ, could boast of such fidelity as gallant men have often shown in the ranks of war. Mere boys have bravely carried the colours of their regiment into battle; and to save them from falling into the hands of the enemy they have been known, when they themselves fell, to wrap them around their bodies and die within their encircled folds. An incident more heroic still occurred on one of those fields where Austria lately suffered disastrous defeat. When the bloody fight was over, and the victors were removing the wounded, they came on a young Austrian stretched on the ground, whose life was pouring out in the red streams of a ghastly wound. To their

astonishment he declined their kind services. Recommending others to be removed, he implored them, though he might still have been saved, to let him alone. On returning sometime afterwards they found him dead—all his battles o'er. But the mystery was explained. They raised the body to give it burial; and there, below him, lay the colours of his regiment. He had sworn not to part with them; and though he clung to life, and tenderly thought of a mother and sisters in their distant home, he would not purchase recovery at the price of his oath and the expense of a soldier's honour—"he was faithful unto death." The property of a good soldier was eminently illustrated by Caleb. II. **CALEB'S COURAGE.** Courage, which has in all ages won the praise of poets and admiration of mankind, is a property for which our seamen and soldiers have been long and eminently distinguished. Descended from ancestors who met the Romans on the sea-beach, and those brave Norsemen who ploughed the stormiest oceans with their warlike prows, our countrymen have proved themselves worthy of their sires; and the repute of a courage which has been tested in many a hard-fought field has proved, under God, the strongest bulwark of our island-home. It is remarkable, and highly creditable to the resolution and bravery of our soldiers, that, notwithstanding all the wars in which they have engaged, no foreign nation flaunts a flag of ours as the trophy of its victory, and of our defeat. No British banner, so far as I know, hangs drooping in dusty folds from the walls of foreign castle or cathedral to make us blush; nor in that proud pillar the great Napoleon raised, whose bronze, formed of the cannon taken by him in battle, commemorates his victories, is there an ounce of metal that belonged to a British gun. I have heard indeed how cowards, probably drawn from the scum of the people, hung back when the bugler in the trenches sounded a new assault, and refused to cross ground so strewn with their fallen comrades as to resemble a field carpeted with scarlet cloth. Yet, whatever may be their defects, our soldiers have been commonly as much distinguished for their courage when the battle raged as for their clemency when the victory was won. For that courage, true, calm courage, which does not lie in insensibility to danger, nor in the violent animal passion which may bear a coward forward as a whirlwind does the dust, or a wave the seaweed on its foaming crest, Caleb presents the very model of a soldier. How bravely he bears himself when the other spies prove traitors! The source of Caleb's courage, of a bravery so admirable and dauntless, is not far to seek. In him, as in those noble Christian soldiers whom I have mentioned, and in others also who have maintained their religion in the camp, courage, if it did not spring from, was sustained by piety. He had faith in God. Therefore he did not fear the face of man, though that man were a giant, nor of death itself. From the same lofty source, and none other, the soldier of the Cross, he who fights with foes more formidable than giants—the devil, the world, and the flesh, that trinity of evil—is to draw his courage. More of it may be needed to face the jeers of an ungodly world than a blazing battery of cannon. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Caleb's history—piety portrayed and piety promoted.*—I. **PIETY PORTRAYED:** Caleb "wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." 1. Genuine piety is the sublimest of all pursuits. 2. Genuine piety accords with the constitutional cravings and powers of the human soul. II. **PIETY PROMOTED:** "Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb." (*Homilist.*) *The inheritance of Caleb:*—Caleb is one of those men whom we meet with seldom in Bible history, but whenever we do meet them we are the better for the meeting. Bright and brave, strong, modest, and cheerful, there is honesty in his face, courage and decision in the very pose of his body, and the calm confidence of faith in his very look and attitude. It is singular that there should be cause to doubt whether his family were originally of the promised seed. On the whole, the preponderance of evidence is in favour of the opinion that Caleb's family were originally outside the covenant, but had become proselytes like Hobab, Rahab, Ruth, and Heber. Their faith was pre-eminently the fruit of conviction, and not the accident of heredity. It had a firmer basis than that of most Israelites. It was woven more closely into the texture of their being, and swayed their lives more powerfully. It is pleasing to think that there may have been many such proselytes; that the promise to Abraham may have attracted souls from the east, and the west, and the north, and the south; that even beyond the limits of the twelve tribes many hearts may have been cheered, and many lives elevated and purified by the promise to him, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Caleb and Joshua had believed and acted alike, in opposition to the other ten spies; but Caleb occupies the more prominent place in the story of their heroism and faith. Caleb was evidently the man who led the opposition to the ten,

not only asserting the course of duty, but manifesting the spirit of contempt and defiance toward the faithless cowards that forgot that God was with them. In his inward heart Joshua was quite of his mind, but probably he wanted the energetic manner, the ringing voice, the fearless attitude of his more demonstrative companion. Certain it is that Caleb reaped the chief honour of that day. It is beautiful to see that there was no rivalry between them. Not only did Caleb interpose no remonstrance when Joshua was called to succeed Moses, but he seems all through the wars to have yielded to him the most loyal and hearty submission. His affectionate and cordial bearing on the present occasion seems to show that not even in the corner of his heart did there linger a trace of jealousy toward the old friend and companion whom on that occasion he had surpassed, but who had been set so much higher than himself. He came to him as the recognised leader of the people—as the man whose voice was to decide the question he now submitted, as the judge and arbiter in a matter which very closely concerned him and his house. And yet there are indications of tact on the part of Caleb, of a thorough understanding of the character of Joshua, and of the sort of considerations by which he might be expected to be swayed. “Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea.” “Moses the man of God.” Why does Caleb select that remarkable epithet? Why add anything to the usual name, Moses? The use of the epithet was honouring to all three. That which constituted the highest glory of Moses was that he was so much at one with God. God’s will was ever his law, and he was in such close sympathy with God that whatever instructions he gave on any subject might be assumed to be in accordance with God’s will. Moreover, in calling him “the man of God” when addressing Joshua, Caleb assumed that Joshua would be impressed by this consideration, and would be disposed to agree to a request which was not only sanctioned by the will of Moses, but by that higher will which Moses constantly recognised. Having fortified his plea with this strong reference at once to Moses and to God, Caleb proceeds to rehearse the service which had led to the promise of Moses. “Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me,” &c. Why does Caleb put the matter in this way? Why does he not couple Joshua with himself as having been faithful on that never-to-be-forgotten occasion? The only explanation that seems feasible is, that from the pre-eminent position of Joshua this was unnecessary, perhaps it might have appeared even unbecoming. A soldier making a request of the Duke of Wellington, and recalling some service he had done at the battle of Waterloo, would hardly think it necessary, or even becoming, to say how the Duke, too, had been there, and what surpassing service he had rendered on that day. “I brought him word again, as it was in my heart.” The statement is made in no boasting spirit, and yet what a rare virtue it denotes! Caleb, as we now say, had the courage of his convictions. To break away from your own set, from the comrades of your campaign, to upset their plans, and counsel those in power to a course diametrically opposed to theirs, is one of the most difficult of social duties. The men that have the courage of their convictions are often social martyrs, shut out from the fellowship of their brethren, shut out from every berth of honour or emolument, and yet, for their courage and honesty, worthy of infinitely higher regard than whole hundreds of the time-servers that “get on” in the world by humouring its errors and its follies. Nevertheless, though most of us show ourselves miserably weak by not speaking out all that is “in our hearts,” especially when the honour of our Lord and Master is concerned, we are able to appreciate and cannot fail to admire the noble exhibitions of courage that we sometimes meet with. “He that believeth shall not make haste.” Caleb believed, and therefore he was patient. Five-and-forty long years had elapsed since Moses, the man of God, speaking in the Spirit of God, had promised him a particular inheritance in the land. It was a long time for faith to live on a promise, but, like a tree in the face of a cliff that seems to grow out of the solid rock, it derived nourishment from unseen sources. It was a long time to be looking forward; but Caleb, though he did not receive the promise during all that time, was persuaded of it and embraced it, and believed that at last it would come true. It seems that when acting as one of the twelve spies, Caleb had in some emphatic way taken his stand on Hebron. “The land on which thy foot hath trodden will be an inheritance to thee.” Perhaps the spies were too terrified to approach Hebron, for the sons of the Anakim were there, and, in the confidence of faith, Caleb, or Caleb and Joshua, had gone into it alone. Moses had promised him Hebron, and now he came to claim it under circumstances that would have induced

most men to let it alone. The driving out of the Anakim was a formidable duty, and the task might have seemed more suitable for one who had the strength and enthusiasm of youth on his side. But Caleb, though eighty-five, was yet young. Age is not best measured by years. He was a remarkable instance of prolonged vigour and youthful energy. "As yet I am as strong," &c. As one reads these words of Caleb, one recalls the saying of a well-known physician, Dr. Richardson, that the human frame might last for a hundred years if it were only treated aright. There is something singularly touching in Caleb's asking as a favour what was really a most hazardous but important service to the nation. Rough though these Hebrew soldiers were, they were capable of the most gentlemanly and chivalrous acts. There can be no higher act of courtesy than to treat as a favour to yourself what is really a great service to another. Well done, Caleb! In the spiritual warfare, too, we do not want instances of the same spirit. We recall Captain Allan Gardiner choosing *Tierra del Fuego* as his mission sphere just because the people were so ferocious, the climate so repulsive, and the work so difficult that no one else was likely to take it up. We think of the second band who went out after Gardiner and his companions had been starved to death; and still more, after these were massacred by the natives, of the third detachment who were moved simply by the consideration that the case was seemingly so desperate. Or we think of Livingstone begging the directors of the London Missionary Society, wherever they sent him, to be sure that it was "Forward"; turning aside from all previous missionary stations, and the comparative ease they afforded, to grapple with the barbarian where he had never begun to be tamed; his eyes thirsting for unknown scenes and untold dangers, because he scorned to build on the foundation of others, and thirsted for "fresh woods and pastures new." We think of him persevering in his task from year to year in the same lofty spirit; disregarding the misery of protracted pain, the intense longings of his weary heart for home. A crowd of noble names comes to our recollection—Williams, and Judson, and Morrison, and Burns, and Patteson, and Keith-Falconer, and Hannington, and Mackay—men for whom even the Anakim had no terrors, but rather an attraction; but who, serving under another Joshua, differed from Caleb in this, that what they desired was not to destroy these ferocious Anakim, but to conquer them by love, and to demonstrate the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to change the vilest reprobates into sons of God. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Caleb the Kenezite*:—I. IN ALL PROBABILITY CALEB WAS A PROSELYTE. In Gen. xxxvi. 42, Kenaz is named as one of the Edomite "dukes." In 1 Chron. ii. 50, Caleb is called "son of Hur." Many critics assume that this indicates that he was adopted into the family of Hur. This foreigner had the true faith of an Israelite. Sometimes those whose early years have been spent in heathenism, home or foreign, become noted in Christian circles for their moral virtues and foremost in every good work. II. CALEB HAD THE COURAGE TO BE IN A MINORITY OF TWO (Num. xiv. 1-10). The secret of this courage was—1. His faith in God's promise. 2. That the Lord put His fear upon their enemies (Num. xiv. 9). 3. His sense of the Divine presence. III. CALEB'S WHOLE CONDUCT WAS CONSISTENT. "I wholly followed" may mean—1. The full measure of his days. 2. The whole-heartedness of his life. IV. AT THE END OF HIS CAREER HE RECEIVES HIS REWARD. 1. A happy old age. 2. An unfailling faith in God. 3. The people acknowledge his faithful service. 4. The seed of Caleb received the benefit resulting from the father's fidelity. (*Henry Smith.*) *Caleb's inheritance*:—I. AN OLD MAN'S INHERITANCE. Old age has its benedictions, its redeemed pledges, its inheritance. The faithful, tireless servant of God has his portion, though he has not gathered, sold, and joined field to field. Caleb had been seeking for a country, not scattering an estate. II. AN OLD MAN'S REQUEST. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints"; but the life approaching the grave with a weight of honourable service is alike cherished by the Lord. It must have been so with Caleb. His strength was as great for war as when he received his commission. The old man does not ask for land he may cultivate, on which to raise choice varieties of those grapes whose single clusters weary two men to bear them on a staff. He has led the life of a soldier. His service for the Lord he thinks still lies in that direction. Those giants who frightened his comrades forty years ago have been on his mind ever since. The Israelites are not likely to become more warlike in this rich country where they can till the soil. He therefore proposes to take care of those enemies of God himself. When Herod the Great wished to rid the cliffs of Arbela of robbers, he caused Roman soldiers to be let down in cages to fight the outlaws in the mouths of their caves. Caleb did not ask for a Hebrew regiment to

help him manage those sons of Anak. Hebron, that ancient city built seven years before Zoan in Egypt, ought not to remain longer in the hand of the infidel. Alien born or Hebrew, he cannot bear that God's people should be defied in their inheritance. In after-years, when crusading knights took this city, it was not with more righteous purpose than that which stirred the heart of this ancient servant of Jehovah. III. AN OLD MAN'S BEQUEST. Caleb's first work was to purify his inheritance. He got the iniquity out of it. He did not levy tribute on the brigands and live luxuriously on the income of robbery. This veteran was not a man of compromises. The enemies of God and righteousness could get no terms with him. His hands were not soiled with the revenue or the rents of a nefarious business. They did not close around the rewards of iniquity. Something of the spirit which in after-years stirred the heart of the Master as He drove the money-changers from the temple now rested on this old man. The spirit of reform was strong in him, and it had fuel to keep it burning, for it was fed by the Spirit of God and of righteousness. That mountain was not first cleared of timber, and lawns, parks, and terraces laid out and built on its slopes. There was perhaps no summer-house commanding a view of the distant Mediterranean, but there was some honourable estate to pass onward. There was a remainder which, according to Divine promise, would go to his descendants. It was cleared of the enemies of God. Whoever received it would get an inheritance without any bill of attainder against it for treason. Such a man as Caleb does not impoverish his estate, though he lessen it in behalf of righteousness. The bare mountain was to him a better property than a large rent-roll of criminal tenants. (*W. R. Campbell.*) Caleb's reward:—Caleb's reward illustrates the immense difference between a full and a partial following of God. It is the difference between the river and the sea. Both are water, and the river is all well in its way and is useful to man and beast in small services. The sea is something more than mere water, for it is infinite; and as we gaze upon it a sense of its immeasurableness comes over us as never is the case when we behold the largest lake or the Mississippi river. You cannot measure a wholly-following servant of the living God, and you can too easily take the dimensions of a half-and-half Christian. You come to form an idea of about how much money he will give to a needy enterprise, about how much time to a pressing work, how long he will stay to push a fresh project in the kingdom, and what pleasures and business engagements he will surrender to help revival efforts. We get tired of these easy measurements. But take a Caleb, and you cannot tell what Divine energies are locked up within him to come forth when needed. I. ONE WITH CALEB'S SPIRIT SEES CLEARLY THE GOOD THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PROMISED. He has sight and insight. Twelve good men go over the same country, but on the whole they see differently, and so report what they see. Ten, with a common-sense vision of the greatness of the foes, and making no allowance for hidden and supernatural factors, did not see things as they were. On the other hand, Caleb saw all that they did, but he had a power of seeing Him who is invisible, and so of seeing truly. The man who followed fully had a clear eye, a single eye, and his whole body was full of light. In this way he perceived the essential weakness and rottenness of confederated evil. All achieving men have the same vision, and so they persist and wait and return to the same attack until they win the day, and the people that once bade stone them bring out garlands for their graves. II. MEN OF CALEB'S SPIRIT, WHOLLY FOLLOWING THE LORD, HAVE THE POWER OF STANDING ALONE. The mass move with the stream. The few stand like a rock. No one knows who has not tried it what it costs the soul of self-searching, fear, doubt, sorrowful parting with loved friends, and the crushing weight of popular disapproval. In one of his noblest odes Horace speaks in admiration of him who can resist the heated demands of citizens who call for evil things. III. THOSE WHO ARE LIKE CALEB HAVE THE PATIENCE OF FAITH. It was a long and wearisome time before the word of God to His trusty servant was fulfilled—more than a whole generation. No doubt sometimes, for he was human, he wondered when God would arise and His enemies be scattered. Have you seen some new possession in the things of the Spirit? Repeat the promise. Though it tarry, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not tarry. We get tired and run away from our own prayers, so that when the answer comes some one else lives where we did when we prayed. Oh, let us seek the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ! IV. MEN OF CALEB'S SPIRIT HAVE TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH. Hebron was beautifully situated upon the hills to the south of Jerusalem, where even to-day there is a luxuriant vegetation and the grapes as of Eschol are gathered. From it one looks over a wide expanse of country, eastward, westward,

northward, southward, towards Edom. There David was crowned and reigned seven years. It was a splendid reward after forty-three years' delay. Perhaps on the great expedition with the spies Caleb marked the place and made a vow that, if the people entered in, he would have that abode, and the picture may have dwelt in his memory to cheer him in long years, just as the heavenly hills glow before the eye of Christian faith. But even at last the prize did not drop into his hands like a ripe apple. No; he must draw his sword and expel the sons of Anak who were in possession, for they also loved the high places. It costs to get the best, but it is wise economy to be satisfied with nothing less. Faith, the patience of faith, the fight of faith, the reward of faith—these come before us in this ancient story with the freshness of the Word of God. And now it remains to be said that there is a peculiar need of Calebs to-day, when great things are offered us in the providences of God and we have not far to go to enter into them. Make it personal. Sometimes the Spirit shows you while you are praying or reading or listening to others an attainment beyond all you have ever reached. It is your Hebron. No matter what the precise form of the blessing, if you have had it clearly set before you, it is a call to possess it by faith, just as Caleb went up to his reward among the hills of Palestine. All that your feet press is yours. Saints are more to blame for not walking upon the high places as children of the heavenly King than sinners are for not turning to God in penitence. Saints have great promises made to them and great helps offered them. Make it more general. Before the whole Church to-day there is a promised world to be won for Christ by prayer and toil. Our charter gives it to us for a possession, and the doors are wide for our entrance therein. Another field for faith is the deeper Christianising of the already Christian nations of the earth. Dr. Herron says in his little book, "*The Larger Christ*": "The realisation of heaven upon earth is more than a mystic ideal. It is the crowning fact of history. It is the solid reality with which God is displacing the insubstantial materialism underlying the rude social structures of human selfishness. It is the Divine errand upon which white-souled prophets have walked serene through a world ablaze with scorn. The pledge of God is behind it, and the victorious forces of the universe are allied in its behalf. The Bible is its written warrant and the Cross its seal which none can break. It may take us with violence, but it advances to conquer. And the saints shall judge the world!" (*Edward N. Packard.*)

CHAPTER XV.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPS. XV.—XIX.—*The law of distribution*.—We come now in earnest to the distribution of the land. The narrative looks very bare, but important principles and lessons underlie it. These lists of unfamiliar names look like the *débris* of a quarry—hard, meaningless, and to us useless. But nothing is inserted in the Bible without a purpose—a purpose that in some sense bears on the edification of the successive generations and the various races of men. 1. There is something to be learned from the maintenance of the distinction of the twelve tribes and the distribution of the country into portions corresponding to each. In some degree this was in accordance with Oriental usage; for the country had already been occupied by various races, dwelling in a kind of unity—the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Hivites, Jebusites, Perizzites, and Girgashites. What was peculiar to Israel was that each of the tribes was descended from one of Jacob's sons, and that their relation to each other was conspicuously maintained, though their dwelling-places were apart. As in the case of the separate states of North America, or the separate cantons of Switzerland, it provided for variety in unity; it gave a measure of local freedom and independence, while it maintained united action; it contributed to the life and vigour of the commonwealth without destroying its oneness of character or impairing its common purpose and aim. It promoted that picturesque variety often found in little countries, where each district has a dialect, or a pronunciation, or traditions, or a character of its own; as Yorkshire differs from Devon, or Lancashire from Cornwall; Aberdeenshire from Berwick, or Fife from Ayr. As in a garden variety of species enlivens and enriches the effect, so in a community variety of type enriches and enlivens the common life. In the case of the Hebrew

commonwealth the distinction of tribes became smaller as time went on, and in New Testament times the three great districts Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee showed only the survival of the fittest. A larger individuality and a wider variety would undoubtedly have prevailed if a good spirit had continued to exist among the tribes, and if all of them had shown the energy and the enterprise of some. But the wrong spirit came in, and came in with a witness, and mischief ensued. For distinctions in race and family are apt to breed rivalry and enmity, and not only to destroy all the good which may come of variety, but to introduce interminable mischief. For many a long day the Scottish clans were like Ishmael, their hand against every man and every man's hand against them; or at least one clan was at interminable feud with another, and the country was wretched and desolate. Among the twelve tribes of Israel the spirit of rivalry soon showed itself, leading to disastrous consequences. Many arrangements of our modern civilisation that conduce to our comfort when in good order become sources of unexampled evil when they go wrong. The drainage of houses conduces much to comfort while it works smoothly; but let the drains become choked, and send back into our houses the poisonous gases bred of decomposition, the consequences are appalling. The sanitary inspector must be on the alert to detect mischief in its very beginnings, and apply the remedy before we have well become conscious of the evil. And so a vigilant eye needs ever to be kept on those arrangements of Providence that are so beneficial when duly carried out, and so pernicious when thoughtlessly perverted. What a wonderful thing is a little forbearance at the beginning of a threatened strife! What a priceless blessing is the soft answer that turneth away wrath!

2. Again, in the allocation of the tribes in their various territories we have an instance of a great natural law, the law of distribution, a law that, on the whole, operates very beneficially throughout the world. In society there is both a centripetal and a centrifugal force; the centripetal chiefly human, the centrifugal chiefly Divine. Men are prone to cluster together; God promotes dispersion. In the early ages they clustered about the plain of Shinar; the confusion of tongues scattered them abroad. And generally, in any fertile and desirable spot, men have been prone to multiply till food has failed them, and either starvation at home or emigration abroad becomes inevitable. And so it is that, in spite of their cohesive tendency, men are now pretty well scattered over the globe. And when once they are settled in new homes, they require adaptation to their locality, and begin to love it. It is a proof of Divine wisdom that a world that presents such a variety of climates and conditions has, in all parts of it, inhabitants that enjoy their life. The same law operates in the vegetable world. Everywhere plants seem to discover the localities where they thrive best. There is always a place for the plant, and a plant for the place. And it is so with animals, too. The elephant in the spreading forest, the rabbit in the sandy down, the beaver beside the stream, the caterpillar in the leafy garden. Some of the great deserts that our imagination used to create in Africa or elsewhere do not exist. Barren spots there are, and "miry places and marshes given to salt," but they are not many. The earth has been replenished, and the purpose of God so far fulfilled. And then there is a distribution of talents. We are not all created alike, with equal dividends of the gifts and faculties that minister in some way to the purposes of our life. We depend more or less on one another; women on men, and men on women; the young on the old, and sometimes the old on the young; persons of one talent on those of another talent, those with strong sinews on those with clear heads, and those with clear heads on those with strong sinews; in short, society is so constituted that what each has he has for all, and what all have they have for each. The principle of the division of labour is brought in; and in a well-ordered community the general wealth and well-being of the whole are better promoted by the interchange of offices than if each person within himself had a little stock of all that he required. The same law of distribution prevails in the Church of Christ. It was exemplified in an interesting way in the case of our Lord's apostles. No one of these was a duplicate of another. And throughout the history of the Church the distribution of gifts has been equally marked. Chrysostom and Augustine, Jerome and Ambrose, Bernard and Anselm, were all of the same stock, but not of the same type. At the Reformation men of marked individuality were provided for every country. The missionary field has in like manner been provided for. India has had her Schwartz, her Carey, her Duff, and a host of others; China her Morrison, Burmah her Judson, Polynesia her Williams, Africa her Livingstone. The most unattractive and inhospitable spots have been supplied. Greenland was not too cold for the

Moravians, nor the leper-stricken communities of India or Africa too repulsive. And never were Christian men more disposed than to-day to honour that great Christian law of distribution—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." It was a great providential law, therefore, that was recognised in the partition of the land of Canaan among the tribes. Provision was thus made for so scattering the people that they should occupy the whole country, and become adapted to the places where they settled and to the pursuits proper to them.

3. Still further, in the allocation of the tribes in their various territories we have an instance of the way in which God designed the earth to minister most effectually to the wants of man. We do not say that the method now adopted in Canaan was the only plan of distributing land that God ever sanctioned; very probably it was the same method as had prevailed among the Canaanites; but it is beyond doubt that, such as it was, it was sanctioned by God for His chosen people. It was a system of peasant proprietorship. The whole lauded property of the country was divided among the citizens. The extremes of wealth and poverty were alike checked and discouraged, and the lot eulogised by Agur—a moderate competency, neither poverty nor riches—became the general condition of the citizens. It is difficult to tell what extent of land fell to each family. The portion of the land divided by Joshua has been computed at twenty-five million acres. Dividing this by 600,000, the probable number of families at the time of the settlement, we get forty-two acres as the average size of each property. For a Roman citizen, seven acres was counted enough to yield a moderate maintenance, so that even in a country of ordinary productiveness the extent of the Hebrew farms would, before further subdivision became necessary, have been ample. When the population increased the inheritance would of course have to be subdivided. But for several generations this, so far from an inconvenience, would be a positive benefit. It would bring about a more complete development of the resources of the soil. The great rule of the Divine economy was thus honoured—nothing was lost. We in this country, after reaching the extreme on the opposite side, are now trying to get back in the direction of this ancient system. All parties seem now agreed that something of the nature of peasant proprietorship is necessary to solve the agrarian problem in Ireland and in Great Britain too. It is only the fact that in Britain commercial enterprise and emigration afford so many outlets for the energies of our landless countrymen that has tolerated the abuses of property so long among us—the laws of entail and primogeniture, the accumulation of property far beyond the power of the proprietor to oversee or to manage, the employment of land agents acting solely for the proprietor, and without that sense of responsibility or that interest in the welfare of the people which is natural to the proprietor himself. It is little wonder that theories of land-possession have risen up which are as impracticable in fact as they are wild and lawless in principle. Such desperate imaginations are the fruit of despair—absolute hopelessness of getting back in any other way to a true land law—to a state of things in which the land would yield the greatest benefit to the whole nation.

4. In the arrangements for the distribution of the land among the twelve tribes we may note a proof of God's interest in the temporal comfort and prosperity of men. It is not God that has created the antithesis of secular and spiritual, as if the two interests were like a see-saw, so that whenever the one went up the other must go down. Things in this world are made to be enjoyed, and the enjoyment of them is agreeable to the will of God, provided we use them as not abusing them. In ordinary circumstances God intends men to be fairly comfortable; He does not desire life to be a perpetual struggle, or a dismal march to the grave. The very words in which Christ counsels us to consider the lilies and the ravens, instead of worrying ourselves about food and clothing, show this; for, under the Divine plan, the ravens are comfortably fed and the lilies are handsomely clothed. The characteristic of a good man, when he enjoys a share of worldly prosperity, is, that he does not let the world become his idol—it is his servant, it is under his feet; he jealously guards against its becoming his master. His effort is to make a friend of the mammon of unrighteousness, and to turn every portion of it with which he may be entrusted to such a use for the good of others that when at last he gives in his account, as steward to his Divine Master, he may do so with joy, and not with grief. (*W. G. Blake, D.D.*)

Vers. 1-12. **This then was the lot of . . . Judah.** — *The inheritance of Judah* :—Judah was the imperial tribe, and it was fitting that he should be planted

in a conspicuous territory. Judah and the sons of Joseph seem to have obtained their settlements not only before the other tribes, but in a different manner. They did not obtain them by lot, but apparently by their own choice and by early possession. Judah was not planted in the heart of the country. That position was gained by Ephraim and Manasseh, the children of Joseph, while Judah obtained the southern section. The territory of Judah was not pre-eminently fruitful; it was not equal in this respect to that of Ephraim and Manasseh. It had some fertile tracts, but a considerable part of it was mountainous and barren. It was of four descriptions—the hill country, the valley or low country, the south, and the wilderness. “The hill country,” says Dean Stanley, “is the part of Palestine which best exemplifies its characteristic scenery; the rounded hills, the broad valleys, the scanty vegetation, the villages and fortresses, sometimes standing, more frequently in ruins, on the hill tops; the wells in every valley, the vestiges of terraces whether for corn or wine.” (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 13-19. **To him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.**—*Othniel's conquest of Debir*:—I. THE SPIRIT WHICH INFLUENCED CALEB IN THE DISPOSAL OF ACHSAH. He sought to unite her to a man—(1) Honourable for his zeal and energy; (2) conspicuous for his bravery; (3) and willing to use his strength in the way of the Lord's commandments. (4) It seems likely also that Caleb sought to unite his daughter to one who was in a social station akin to her own. The promise was not to the man who should first enter Kirjath-sepher. This may have been the nature of the similar promise at the siege of Jerusalem, under David, although it seems by no means certain that, even in this instance, David did not refer to the captain who should first bring his company into Jebus and smite the garrison. He should be chief captain (2 Sam. v. 8; 1 Chron. xi. 6). However this may have been, Caleb's promise ran, “He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him,” &c. No man single-handed could “smite and take” a fortified city; and thus the promise probably refers to the leaders of the army who were under Caleb. This view has also the advantage that it does not exhibit to us an honourable man like Caleb putting up his daughter as the object of a wretched scramble, where a mere accident of a stumble or a wound might decide whose she should be. Possibly there were but few of the commanders under Caleb officially qualified to lead one or more divisions of the army against Debir; and of these Othniel might first have volunteered, or he only might have volunteered to lead the attack. Any way, out of regard for Achsah, Othniel was one who offered to conduct the assault, and he succeeded. II. THE HARMONY BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE DAUGHTER. 1. Achsah accorded with her father's will and with the custom of the age. There can be no doubt but that, at this period, a father was held to have an absolute right to the disposal of his daughter's hand (Gen. xxix. 18-28; Exod. xxi. 7-11; 1 Sam. xvii. 25, &c.). It does not follow, however, that a father would not consult his daughter's wishes. 2. She had confidence in her father's love, notwithstanding her recognition of his authority. She asked for a larger dowry (ver. 19). On leaving her father, to cleave to her husband, we thus find her seeking her husband's interest. 3. Her father cheerfully responded to her request. The confidence which was bold to ask was met by an affection which was pleased to bestow. III. THE HONOURABLE CHARACTER IN WHICH THIS BRIEF HISTORY INTRODUCES OTHNIEL. He comes before us as a man of courage, willing to risk his life for the woman he loved. He is seen to perhaps even more advantage in not preferring the request which Achsah prompted him to make. He may have refused to comply with his wife's wishes. The history does not actually say this; it merely shows that Achsah made her request herself. Othniel was bold enough to fight; he seems to have been too manly to have allowed himself to ask for this addition to what was probably already a just and good inheritance. He was brave enough to do battle against Debir; he was not mean enough to beg. If Achsah needed a larger dowry, such a request would come better from herself. (*F. G. Marchant.*) *A chance for ability*:—There begins the test of talent and force and quality in men. The speech is, Come, now! the palm be to the brave, the crown to him who wins it. Up to a certain point all things seem to be appointed, settled, almost arbitrarily distributed; but then there are chances in life that seem to come afterwards, as it were, amongst ourselves, competitions of a personal and social kind. How early this competitive spirit was developed, and how wonderfully it has been preserved through all history! The spirit of Providence seems to say, in homeliest language, now and again, Here is a chance for you; you had something to begin with, to that you can add more, by

pluck, bravery, force—to the war! We need such voices; otherwise we would soon slumber off, and doze away our handful of years, and awake to find that the day had gone. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) **Thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water.**—*Noble discontent*.—1. Such noble discontent, such aspiration for higher and better things, should urge us on in the realm of the daily duty. Simply the south land of a measurable and merely respectable discharge of the daily duty should never satisfy us. We should be stirred with a noble discontent for the water springs of the best possible doing it. Thus we transform ourselves from drudges into artists. Thus, too, we compact ourselves in noble character. 2. In the realm of intellectual advance we should be stirred with this noble discontent; we should turn from a merely general and surface and newspaper information toward the springs of water of a thorough and accurate knowledge. 3. In the realm of the best good of the community in which we dwell we should be stirred with a noble discontent. The south land of a merely usual municipal security and order ought not to satisfy us; we should be restless with discontent until the springs of water of a high moral atmosphere and action are predominant. 4. In the realm of Christian experience we ought to be stirred with such noble discontent; we ought to leave behind us the south land of a merely usual and routine experience, and seek the springs of water of the peace and joy and strength of a transfiguring likeness to our Lord (1 Cor. iii. 10, 16). (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) **The upper springs, and the nether springs.**—*The upper and nether springs*.—I. THE UPPER SPRINGS, AS THEY PICTURE FORTH THE JOY-SOURCES OF THE HIGHER NATURE. "My soul thirsteth for God—the living God!" Nor need we be disappointed. It is pensive to think that some thirsts, and honest thirsts too, must be disappointed. Not to all are given possibilities equal to their desires. Their ideals are above their realisation! But none need be disappointed in God! Christ has opened up a free and full channel of communication. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." We have read of waters in the East which, copious at some times, are scarce at others. To-day the waters pour forth their freshening streams, irrigate the land, and satisfy the thirst of man and beast; to-morrow the faithless well is dry. Not so with Christ. In Him the waters dwell. But more than this, Christ is not only the fulness of God, He is the available fulness for us. 1. Take fellowship with God. Inspired words used about this are not the language of poetic fiction or overwrought religious feeling. They are the actual experiences of meditative, devout, earnest, inspired men. "God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." 2. Take likeness to God. Who can conceive of a more magnificent ideal than God-like in the soul? Be ye holy as your Father, &c. Be ye followers of God, &c. Herein consists our true life. Not in the mere culture of art-faculty, but in the growth of the moral likeness to God! We become happier as we become more like Him. Less vexed with trifles, less anxious about losses provided they bring gains to the soul, less conformed to the world, more restful in the love of God! 3. Take the service of God. Christ does not call us to His work merely that we may work, that our moral nature may have something to do; the Lord hath need of us. I say this not only dignifies life, it makes it delightful (John iv. 34). These are upper springs! Co-workers together with God! 4. Take the friends of God. These are yours! We are made for each other! Church life is designed to draw forth common sympathies and common purposes. We are pilgrims to the same shrine; soldiers in the same battlefield; fruit-gatherers in the same vineyard; children of the same Father. Thoughtful Christian friendship is one of the choicest blessings we can enjoy. 5. Take the future of God's children. I love to think of them at home there. Upper springs coming from the throne of God and the Lamb: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." Shall we drink of those upper springs? I hope so! Do we love Christ now? Do we enjoy His service now? If so, when the morning of eternity comes to us, we shall know in a higher sense than we have ever known on earth the meaning of "the upper springs." II. THE NETHER SPRINGS, AS THEY ILLUSTRATE THE MERE SATISFACTIONS OF THE LOWER NATURE. Take care lest all life plays upon the surface! Take care lest all life's drinking be at the nether springs. I am not now speaking of the grossness of sensualism, but of mere sensationalism. It is possible to live a merely surface life. Let us remember that there are eyes and ears within us, that the invisible world, the world which embraces God and judgment and eternity, is always speaking through many voices to our conscience and heart. Mere earthly aims are nether springs. Some people are always drinking at the springs of position and success. They attempt to please men.

CHAPTER XVI.

VERS. 1-10. The lot of . . . Joseph.—*The inheritance of Joseph*:—Next to Judah, the most important tribe was Joseph; that is, the double tribe to which his two sons gave names, Ephraim and Manasseh. In perpetual acknowledgment of the service rendered by Joseph to the family, by keeping them alive in the famine, it was ordained by Jacob that his two sons should rank with their uncles as founders of tribes (Gen. xlviii. 5). It was also prophetically ordained by Jacob that Ephraim, the younger son, should take rank before Manasseh (Gen. xlviii. 19). The privilege of the double portion, however, remained to Manasseh as the elder son. Hence, in addition to his lot in Gilead and Bashan, he had also a portion in Western Palestine. But Ephraim was otherwise the more important tribe; and when the separation of the two kingdoms took place, Ephraim often gave his name to the larger division. And in the beautiful prophetic vision of Ezekiel, when the coming reunion of the nation is symbolised, it is on this wise (Ezek. xxxvii. 16, 17). The superiority allotted to Ephraim was not followed by very happy results; it raised an arrogant spirit in that tribe. The delimitation of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh is not easy to follow, particularly in the A.V., which not only does not translate very accurately, but uses some English expressions of uncertain meaning. The R.V. is much more helpful, correcting both classes of defects in its predecessor. Yet even the R.V. sometimes leaves us at a loss. It has been supposed, indeed, that some words have dropped out of the text. Moreover, it has not been found possible to ascertain the position of all the places mentioned. The portion of the land occupied by Ephraim and Manasseh is, however, on the whole, very clearly known, just as their influence on the history of the country is very distinctly marked. In point of fact, the lot of Joseph in Western Palestine was, in many respects, the most desirable of any. It was a fertile and beautiful district. It embraced the valley of Shechem, the first place of Abraham's sojourn, and reckoned by travellers to be one of the most beautiful spots, some say the most beautiful spot, in Palestine. Samaria, at the head of another valley celebrated for its "glorious beauty," and for its "fatness" or fertility (Isa. xxviii. 1), was at no great distance. Tirzah, a symbol of beauty, in the Song of Solomon (vi. 4) was another of its cities, as was also Jezreel, "a lovely position for a capital city." On the other hand, this portion of the country laboured under the disadvantage of not having been well cleared of its original inhabitants. The men of Ephraim did not exert themselves as much as the men of Judah. This is apparent from what is said in ver. 10, and also from Joshua's answer to the request of Ephraim for more land (chap. xvii. 15-18). In the definition of boundaries we have first a notice applicable to Joshua as a whole, then specifications applicable to Ephraim and Manasseh respectively. The southern border is delineated twice with considerable minuteness, and its general course, extending from near the Jordan at Jericho, past Bethel and Luz, and down the pass of Bethoron to the Mediterranean, is clear enough. The border between Ephraim and Manasseh is not so clear, nor the northern border of Manasseh. It is further to be remarked that, while we have an elaborate statement of boundaries, we have no list of towns in Ephraim and Manasseh such as we have for the tribe of Judah. This gives countenance to the supposition that part of the ancient record has somehow dropped out. We find, however, another statement about towns which is of no small significance. At ver. 9 we find that several cities were appropriated to Ephraim that were situated in the territory of Manasseh. And in like manner several cities were given to Manasseh which were situated in the tribes of Issachar and Asher. Of these last the names are given (chap. xvii. 11). They were Bethshean, Ibleam, Dor, Endor, Taanach, and Megiddo. Some of them were famous in after-history. Bethshean was the city to whose wall the body of Saul and his sons were fixed after the fatal battle of Gilboa; Ibleam was in the neighbourhood of Naboth's vineyard (2 Kings ix. 25, 27); Endor was the place of abode of the woman with a familiar spirit whom Saul went to consult; Taanach was the battlefield of the kings of Canaan whom Barak defeated, and of whom Deborah sang (Judg. v. 19). As for Megiddo, many a battle was fought in its plain. We can only conjecture why these cities, most of which were in Issachar, were given to Manasseh. They were strongholds in the great plain of Esdraelon, where most of the great battles of Canaan were fought. For the defence of the plain it seemed important that these places should be held by a stronger tribe than Issachar. Hence they appear to have been given to Manasseh. But, like Ephraim, Manasseh was not able to hold them at first. Undoubtedly these sons of

Joseph occupied a position which gave them unrivalled opportunities of benefiting their country. But with the exception of the splendid exploit of Gideon, a man of Manasseh, and his little band, we hear of little in the history that redounded to the credit of Joseph's descendants. Nobility of character is not hereditary. Sometimes nature appears to spend all her intellectual and moral wealth on the father and almost to impoverish the sons. And sometimes the sons live on the virtues of their fathers, and cannot be roused to the exertion or the sacrifice needed to continue their work and maintain their reputation. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

CHAPTER XVII.

VERS. 1-18. Zelophehad . . . had no sons, but daughters.—*The rights of women:*—The question decided by their case was the right of females to inherit property in land when there were no heirs male in the family. We find that the young women themselves had to be champions of their own cause. The decision was, that in such cases the women should inherit, but under the condition that they should not marry out of their own tribe, so that the property should not be transferred to another tribe. In point of fact, the five sisters married their cousins, and thus kept the property in the tribe of Manasseh. The incident is interesting, because it shows a larger regard to the rights of women than was usually conceded at the time. Some have, indeed, found fault with the decision as not going far enough. Why, they have asked, was the right of women to inherit land limited to cases in which there were no men in the family? The decision implied that if there had been one brother he would have got all the land; the sisters would have been entitled to nothing. The answer to this objection is, that had the rights of women been recognised to this extent it would have been too great an advance on the public opinion of the time. The benefit of the enactment was that, when propounded, it met with general approval. Certainly it was a considerable advance on the ordinary practice of the nations. It established the principle that woman was not a mere chattel, an inferior creature, subject to the control of the man, with no rights of her own. But it was far from being the first time when this principle obtained recognition. The wives of the patriarchs—Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel—were neither chattels, nor drudges, nor concubines. They were ladies, exerting the influence and enjoying the respect due to cultivated, companionable women. And though the law of succession did not give the females of the family equal rights with the males, it recognised them in another way. While the eldest son succeeded to the family home and a double portion of the land, he was expected to make some provision for his widowed mother and unmarried sisters. (*Ibid.*) **Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities.**—What with “could not” in the one, and “would not” in the other, the enemies of peace and purity were allowed to remain. But why was it, but because of the cowardice and unbelief of “could not”? for no rebellion and opposition of “would not” could hold out against the strength of Israel's sword. It is not so correctly our “cannot” as our “will not” that so many hold a share in our hearts to their annoyance and pollution; for what enemies might not a Christian conquer, what achievements not make, in the spiritual warfare, who goes forth in the strength of the Lord, and in the power of His might? (*W. Seaton.*) *What hinders:*—No, as they were then, and as just then they were going on, they “could not” drive out the Canaanites—that was true enough. 1. Their mood was wrong. They preferred ease to energy. Josephus tells us: “After this the Israelites grew effeminate as to fighting any more against their enemies, but applied themselves to the cultivation of the land, which producing them great plenty and riches, they neglected the regular disposition of their settlement, and indulged themselves in luxury and pleasures. The Benjamites, to whom belonged Jerusalem, permitted its inhabitants to pay tribute; the rest of the tribes, imitating Benjamin, did the same; and, contenting themselves with the tributes which were paid them, permitted the Canaanites to live in peace.” In such a mood of course they “could not.” 2. Lapped thus in luxury, and thinking more of their own pleasant ease than of their nobler duty, these Israelites had lost practical and prevailing faith in God. And so, of course, letting the weapon of their faith rust in a bad non-use they “could not” drive these Canaanites from their strongholds. 3. Lying thus in

this enervating ease, and losing thus their practical faith in God, the dangers and difficulties in the way of the extirpating these Canaanites were, to their thought, correspondingly increased. The strongholds, to their fearful ease-loving feeling, grew very strong; the fortresses perched upon the rocky hill-tops seemed very unassailable; the chariots of iron—which, drawn by maddened horses and horrible with long, sharp knives, would come dashing upon their ranks—grew awfully terrible. And thus again, of course, “they could not.” 4. But think now of these Israelites marshalled and armed for their duty; as ready to obey their God’s command; as determined to put Jehovah to the proof, and to go forth relying on His promise. How plain it is that the “could not” would have belonged to the Canaanites, and the “would” would have been the word for these Israelites. Then we had had Scripture of another sort, viz., And the children of Manasseh “would” drive out the inhabitants of those cities, and the Canaanites “could not” dwell in that land. (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) *Little will, and thus no way* :—I. INABILITY IN ITS RELATION TO UNBELIEF. The promises of God had been many, and the warnings urgent (Exod. xxxiv. 10-17; Num. xxxiii. 50-56, &c.). They who begin by disbelieving God may well fear to encounter powerful enemies. II. INABILITY IN ITS RELATION TO INDISPOSITION. The indisposition that comes—1. Through fear of men. 2. Through love of ease. 3. Through undervaluing the importance of God’s command. III. THE INABILITY OF GOD-AIDED MEN PRESENTLY SHOWN TO BE A MERE PRETENCE AND A POOR EXCUSE. 1. The revelation which comes through transgressors themselves. “When the children of Israel were waxen strong, they put the Canaanites to tribute.” “Could not” is here seen to be “would not.” That “tribute” told the entire story in its true colours. Tribute goes on telling secrets still. The tribute of Judas burned into his very soul, till he threw the thirty pieces on the temple floor, and cried over them in agony. The tribute of the craft by which Demetrius had his wealth let out the secret reason of his great love for the despised Diana (Acts xix. 24-27). The dishonest merchant cannot keep his gains from preaching. Transgressors win their way to success unobserved, and then betray themselves with the very gains they have won. 2. The revelation which comes through those who succeed transgressors. Out of this very section of the tribe of Manasseh arose Gideon, of the family of the Abiezrites (ver. 2). On this very ground of the half-tribe of Manasseh was fought the great battle which delivered Israel from the Midianites. And how was it fought? By an army from which more than thirty thousand had been sent to their homes; by a small force of three hundred men, who merely brake their pitchers, and held their torches on high, shedding light on a truth afterwards embodied in one of the famous sayings of Israel, “The battle is the Lord’s.” It was as though God were purposely reproving the faint-heartedness and idleness of these men who had lived in the days of Joshua. (*F. G. Marchant.*) **Why hast thou given me but one lot?**—*The complaining of Ephraim* :—A grumbling reference seems to be made here by Ephraim to his brother Manasseh, who had received two lots, one on each side of the Jordan. Alas, how apt is the spirit of discontent still to crop up when we compare our lot with that of others! Were we quite alone, or were there no case for comparison, we might be content enough; it is when we think how much more our brother has than we that we are most liable to murmur. And, bad though murmuring and grieving at the good of our brother may be, it is by no means certain that the evil spirit will stop there. At the very dawn of history we find Cain the murderer of his brother because the one had the favour of God and not the other. What an evil feeling it is that grudges to our brother a larger share of God’s blessing; if at the beginning it be not kept under it may carry us on to deeds that may well make us shudder. Joshua dealt very wisely and fearlessly with the complaint of Ephraim, though it was his own tribe. “You say you are a great people—be it so; but if you are a great people, you must be capable of great deeds. Two great undertakings are before you now. There are great woodlands in your lot that have not been cleared—direct your energies to them, and they will afford you more room for settlements. Moreover, the Canaanites are still in possession of a large portion of your lot; up and attack them and drive them out, and you will be furnished with another area for possession.” Joshua accepted their estimate of their importance, but gave it a very different practical turn. We have all heard of the dying father who informed his sons that there was a valuable treasure in a certain field, and counselled them to set to work to find it. With great care they turned up every morsel of the soil, but no treasure appeared, till, observing in autumn, what a rich crop covered the field, they came to understand that the fruit of persevering labour was the treasure which their father meant. We have heard,

too, of a physician who was consulted by a rich man suffering cruelly from gout, and asked if he had any cure for it. "Yes," said the doctor, "live on sixpence a day, and work for it." The same principle underlay the counsel of Joshua. Of course it gratifies a certain part of our nature to get a mass of wealth without working for it. But this is not the best part of our nature. Probably in no class has the great object of life been so much lost and the habit of indolence and self-indulgence become so predominant as in that of young men born to the possession of a great fortune and never requiring to turn a hand for anything they desired. After all, the necessity of work is a great blessing. It guards from numberless temptations; it promotes a healthy body and a healthy mind; it increases the zest of life; it promotes cheerfulness and flowing spirits; it makes rest and healthy recreation far sweeter when they come, and it gives us affinity to the great Heavenly Worker, by whom, and through whom, and for whom are all things. This great principle of ordinary life has its place, too, in the spiritual economy. It is not the spiritual invalid, who is for ever feeling his pulse and whom every whiff of wind throws into a fever of alarm, that grows up to the full stature of the Christian; but the man who, like Paul, has his hands and his heart for ever full, and whose every spiritual fibre gains strength and vitality from his desires and labours for the good of others. And it is with Churches as with individuals. An idle Church is a stagnant Church, prone to strife, and to all morbid experiences. A Church that throws itself into the work of faith and labour of love is far more in the way to be spiritually healthy and strong. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

Discontentment.—I. THE EASY WAY TO DISCONTENTMENT. Anybody can complain. Everybody is tempted to complain. Most of those who murmur think that they can show good cause for their complaints. No man is rich enough to be out of the reach of discontent. No man is poor enough to be below the possibility of happiness. II. THE UNFAILING TESTIMONY OF DISCONTENTMENT. 1. Complaints furnish no trustworthy evidence about a man's lot. How can they, when so many murmur in every kind of lot which the world knows? 2. Complaints bear unfailing witness against the murmurer himself. Scripture often condemns the man who complains, apart from considering the cause of complaining. III. THE TRUE ANSWER TO DISCONTENTMENT. 1. Joshua was too wise to dispute the assumption of greatness (vers. 15-17). He who tries to argue a discontented man out of his favourite assumptions does but waste breath. 2. Joshua turned the plea of greatness back on those who used it: "If thou be a great people, then"—work, fight. 3. Joshua sought to cure the murmuring of the heart through the diligence of the hand. The energy which is absorbed in gloomy thoughts, and poured out in bitter complaints, would generally double the small inheritance, if it were rightly directed. Apart from this industry and courage ever tend to happiness. 4. Joshua encouraged these murmurers to think that to the people of God no difficulties were insuperable. He would have them think of the invincible might which had promised to support their faithful efforts (Deut. xx. 1-4), and make them victorious. The after history shows us that a discontented spirit is not easily cured. These people showed the same haughty dissatisfaction again and again after the death of Joshua (Judges viii. 1-3, xii. 1-6). He who has cultivated contentment through faith in God is not readily disturbed; while the man who has learned, in whatsoever state he is, to find some fault with his fellows, has given room in his heart for a demon that is not easily expelled. (*F. G. Marchant.*) *The self-aggrandising spirit.*—They did not use the power which God gave them for the execution of His commands and for driving out the Canaanites, but they misapplied it to their own self-aggrandisement, and to the indulgence of their own covetousness; and they were not content with the lot they had received, although it was the most fruitful part of Palestine; but in a boastful spirit of self-adulation they said, "I am a great people"; they claimed a larger portion for themselves, in order that they might be enriched thereby. Here is an example of that self-idolising and self-aggrandising spirit in nations and in Churches which seek to extend themselves by colonisation and conquest, and even by missionary enterprise, not so much that they may gain kingdoms for Christ, and win subjects to Him, but in order that they may have vassals and tributaries to themselves. Is there not here a solemn warning to such nations as England, which publicly and privately derives an immense revenue from her two hundred millions of subjects in India, and yet has done little hitherto to bring them into subjection to Christ? (*Bp. Chris. Wordsworth.*) *Discontented with our lot.*—When the last national census was taken it would have been an interesting question to have asked just how many people were where they wanted

to be. I fear that the really contented souls would have been a very small minority. Contentment with one's spiritual condition is quite too common; and of such low-grade Christians there is not much hope of improvement. But those who are really contented with their present lot, present place of residence, present circumstances or fields of labour, are not in the majority. Take, for example, the ministers of the Gospel and see how many will say: "Well, my place of labour has *peculiar* difficulties; it is a hard field, and I have a great deal to encounter, and if I could get a first-rate call to some better place I would be off in a minute." Very probably you would. But, my good brother, if you will discover any parish on this round globe that has not some "peculiar difficulties" to encounter, then you will have found a people so perfect that they will not need any preaching. Mary Lyon's noble advice to her pupils at Mount Holyoke Seminary was: "When you choose your field of labour for Christ, go where nobody else is willing to go." Heaven is the only place I have ever heard of where there is no hard work or no difficulties. (T. L. Cuyler.) *Restless discontent to be avoided*.—My first parish was a very discouraging one, and I was just threatening to play Jonah and leave it when the Lord poured out His Spirit on the little flock and we had a revival that taught me more than six months did in a theological seminary. Many years afterwards I was sorely harassed with doubt whether I should remain in a certain pulpit or go to a very inviting one nearly a thousand miles away. I opened Richard Cecil's "Remains"—a volume of most valuable thought—and my eyes fell on these pithy words: "Taking new steps in life are very serious dangers, especially if there be in our motives any mixture of selfish ambition. 'Wherefore gaddest thou about to change thy way?'" I turned up that text in the book of Jeremiah; it decided me not to gad about or change my field of labour, and I have thanked God for a decision that resulted in my happy thirty years' pastorate in Brooklyn. There are unquestionably times and circumstances in which a minister or any Christian worker should change his place of labour, but never under the promptings of a restless, discontented, or self-seeking spirit. (*Ibid.*) **The Lord hath blessed me hitherto.**—*Retrospect*.—I. A CONFESSION: "The Lord hath blessed me hitherto." I will not at present speak to those of you upon whom the blessing of God has never rested. Remember, that every man is either under the curse or under the blessing. They that are of the works of the law are under the curse. Faith in Him who was made a curse for us is the only way to the blessing. But I speak to as many as have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the Lord saith, "Surely, blessing I will bless thee." You can say at this time, "God hath blessed me hitherto." 1. He has blessed you with those blessings which are common to all the house of Israel. You and I, who are in Christ, are partakers of all covenant blessings in Christ Jesus. "If children, then heirs"; and if we are children of God, then we are heirs of all things. "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," and therefore "all things are yours." Can you not say—"The Lord hath blessed me hitherto"? Has He ever denied you one of the blessings common to the covenanted family? Has He ever told you that you may not pray, or that you may not trust? Has He forbidden you to cast your burden on the Lord? Has He denied to you fellowship with Himself and communion with His dear Son? Has He laid an embargo on any one of the promises? Has He shut you out from any one of the provisions of His love? 2. But then, besides this, Ephraim and Manasseh had special blessings, the peculiar blessing of Joseph, which did not belong to Judah, or Reuben, or Issachar. Each saint may tell his fellow something that he does not know; and in heaven it will be a part of the riches of glory to hold commerce in those specialities which each one has for himself alone. I shall not be you, neither will you be me; neither shall we twain be like another two, or the four of us like any other four, though all of us shall be like our Lord when we shall see Him as He is. I want you each to feel at this hour—"The Lord hath blessed me hitherto." Personally, I often sit me down alone, and say, "Whence is this to me?" I cannot but admire the special goodness of my Lord to me. 3. I think, besides this, that these two tribes which made up the house of Joseph, also meant to say that, not only had God blessed them with the common blessings of Israel, and the special blessing of their tribe, but also with actual blessings. As far as they had gone they had driven out the Canaanites, and taken possession of the country. They had not received all that was promised; but God had blessed them hitherto. Come, we have not driven out all the Canaanites yet, but we have driven out many of them. We are not what we hope to be, but we are not what we used to be. We cannot yet see everything clearly, but we are not blind, as once we were. We have not seen our Lord as He is, but we have seen

Him; and the joy of that sight will never be taken from us. Therefore, before the Lord and His assembled people, we joyfully declare that "The Lord hath blessed us hitherto." Let us expand this confession a little, and speak thus: 1. All the blessings that we have received have come from God. Do not let us trace any blessing to ourselves, or to our fellow-men; for though the minister of God may be as a conduit-pipe to bring us refreshing streams, yet all our fresh springs are in God, and not in men. Say, "The Lord hath blessed me hitherto." 2. And, mark you, there has been a continuity of this blessing. God has not blessed us, and then paused; but He has blessed us "hitherto." One silver thread of blessing extends from the cradle to the grave. There is an unconquerable pertinacity in the love of God: His grace cannot be baffled or turned aside; but His goodness and His mercy follow us all the days of our lives. 3. In addition to that continuity there is a delightful consistency about the Lord's dealings. "The Lord hath blessed us hitherto." No curse has intervened. He has blessed us, and only blessed us. There has been no "yea" and "nay" with Him; no enriching us with spiritual blessings, and then casting us away. He has frowned upon us, truly; but His love has been the same in the frown as in the smile. He has chastened us sorely; but He has never given us over unto death. 4. And, what is more, when my text says, "The Lord hath blessed me hitherto," there is a kind of prophecy in it, for "hitherto" has a window forward as well as backward. You sometimes see a railway carriage or truck, fastened on to what goes before, but there is also a great hook behind. What is that for? Why, to fasten something else behind, and so to lengthen the train. Any one mercy from God is linked on to all the mercy that went before it; but provision is also made for adding future blessing. All the years to come are guaranteed by the ages past. II. THE ARGUMENT: "Forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto." 1. This is cause for holy wonder and amazement. Why should the Lord have blessed me? 2. Be full of holy gratitude. Get into the state of that poor man who was so greatly blessed to pious Tauler. He wished the man a good-day. The man replied, "Sir, I never had a bad day." "Oh, but I wish you good weather." Said he, "Sir, it is always good weather. If it rains or if it shines, it is such weather as God pleases, and what pleases God pleases me." Our sorrows lie mainly at the roots of our selfishness, and when our self-hood is dug up, our sorrow to a great extent is gone. Let us, then, utter this text, "Forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto," with hearty gratitude for His holy will. Summing up gains and losses, joys and griefs, let us say with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." 3. Say also, with holy confidence, "The Lord hath blessed me hitherto." Speak as you find. If any inquire, "What has God been to you?" answer, "He hath blessed me hitherto." The devil whispers, "If thou be the son of God"; and he then insinuates, "God deals very hardly with you. See what you suffer. See how you are left in the dark!" Answer him, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life; and if God takes from me any earthly good, shall I receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall I not receive evil?" He who can stand to this stands on good ground. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." But he that gets away from this drifts I know not where. 4. Furthermore, if this be true, let us resolve to engage in enlarged enterprises. If the Lord has blessed us hitherto, why should He not bless us in something fresh? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) **If thou be a great people, then get thee up.**—*Encroachments not permissible*:—Encroachments were not to be made upon their brethren, but new inroads upon their enemies, whom it had become their duty utterly to exterminate. This was the work which Providence had assigned to them, both for the enlargement of the portion, and for the exercise of their piety; and therefore the straitness in which they were placed, intended as it was for an excitement to diligence, fortitude, and faith, was no real crook in the lot. What employs men's hearts and hands for God must be a work with a blessing annexed to it, and always attended with its own reward. In the cultivation of Messiah's kingdom, the assigned inheritance of the Church, and extension of its borders in the world there are many wastes of sin to be taken in, many long-standing thickets of corruption to be hewn and cleared away. The straitened boundaries of Immanuel's land require many spiritual, never-weary labourers in well-doing. How much ought it to be the grief of every pious mind, and the matter of his most anxious concern, in seeing those vast territories yet the possessions of enemies worse than the Perizzites and giants on the borders of Ephraim. Whatever presses on the view to desist from undertakings to which we have the Lord's special

call, or the token of His marked approbation, the considerations of His power and promise are quite sufficient to encourage exertions. In a spiritual view all the Lord's people are a great people, and having great power are destined to mighty enterprises and achievements. In themselves and outward condition, none are more weak and contemptible; yet in their infinitely glorious Lord and Captain they are both great and powerful, so that through grace strengthening them they can do all things, even cut through the greatest obstructions, and conquer the most formidable enemies. Success was to crown action. Neither the axe nor the sword would be employed in vain; the woodland instrument nor the warlike weapon. Reward, though but in promise, sweetens labour, and the hope of triumph emboldens to conflict; but how much more the assurance of both! The Christian has no less encouragement in all the enterprises assigned him; for whether in works of faith, in labours of love, or in the toils of conflict, this is the invigorating address: "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." They had only to work and the way would open; to fight, and the enemy would yield to the sword, as the thicket to the axe. The possession was theirs, and needed only to be claimed. Who would not thus have his coast enlarged? for the inheritance that improves, and widens beneath its owner's own hand and eye has far more charms, and yields higher satisfaction than the seat of ease obtained by others. Heaven will be but the sweeter, the more welcome and valued, after the labours of this mortal life, and its conquests close in eternal triumphs. (*W. Seaton.*)

Labour the price of excellence:—This is the voice of God's providence to every soul that has dreamed of greatness, or of the possession of unfolded powers and abilities. By labour show your talent. Express what you are by what you do. Michael Angelo once exhibited a rare specimen of his art, and it was pronounced beautiful and wonderful. Months passed, and visitors saw nothing more in his studio, and when he was asked what he had been doing Angelo answered that he had been at work on the same statue, reducing this feature and developing that; and his visitors said those were but trifles, and he should be engaged on something great. To this he replied, "Trifles make perfection, and perfection itself is no trifle." That was a noble answer. Indeed, genius may be defined as that power which best magnifies trifles. It sees the worth of everything. It glorifies the small because of their relation to the great. The most finished actor of our age, on retiring from his profession, and on receiving a public testimonial as having made the best impression on his age in reference to his art, made the memorable remark, "Whatever is excellent in art must spring from labour and endurance." That sentiment may well be written on the shield of every aspiring young man. Greatness is from culture, rather than from genius; and if it had a voice for the world, it would sing of "The high endeavours and the glad success." There are unquestionably some instances of that original intensity of a mental faculty by which the mind springs, as it were, at a leap, to the results it desires; but it is certain that many of the most remarkable men have attributed to patient labour what the world have attributed, in them, to endowment. That Newton attributed his success to greater patience with the minute is well known, and Sir Joshua Reynolds held that superiority resulted from intense and constant application of the strength of intellect to a specific purpose. "Genius," he said, "is the art of making repeated efforts." The first effort he made with his pencil was the perspective of a book-case from sheer idleness; but his father saw it, encouraged him, and he went on by labour to success. Benjamin West, when he drew the babe's face as he watched it in the cradle, was kissed by his mother for the effort, and was wont to say, "That kiss made me a painter." And to every department of artistic, mechanical, and professional life the advice of Sir Joshua Reynolds to his scholars is adapted, where he said, "Make no dependence on your own genius. If you have great talents, labour will improve them; if you have poor talents, labour will increase them. Nothing is denied to well-directed labour. Nothing is to be obtained without it." Napoleon well said, when once asked to create a marshal out of a man who belonged to a noble family, but who had no other claim, "It is not I that make marshals, but victory." What we attribute to some gift may be traced to the kindling and concentrating power of feeling or passion, as is illustrated in the many instances where the greatest mental effort has sprung from passion. Scorched and stung by a Scottish reviewer, Byron wrote a poem, and he who was deemed but a simple rhymester became a poet, as he himself once said, "I went to bed one night, and woke up to find myself famous." So in sharp debates, in violent controversy, the most remarkable things have been uttered; men have gone beyond themselves and have astonished the world. A

mighty intensity of thought has burned within them, and they have brought the whole stock of intellectual attainment to bear upon the matter before them. The best things of many men in all departments of effort have been unpremeditated; but this gives no argument against labour, study, and forecast, because these men have been made capable of these great or uncommon efforts by the wealth of mind stored up. The ripe things of nature fall into hands prepared to receive them; and in a profound sense may the wise man's words be applied beyond religion, where he says, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." Genius, therefore, is really intensity of thought, feeling, emotion, activity. All the faculties of the man are in earnest. The whole man is glorified by the intensity of the determined spirit, and what is done is done with every energy—with a resoluteness that means with persistence of effort to conquer if such a thing can be. Take up any man's life who has risen to real, permanent eminence, and you see there the marks of labour; so that it may be said of many, as was said of Piso, "What he withdrew of application he deducted from glory." Goethe said truly, "What is genius but the faculty of seeing and turning to advantage everything that strikes us?" And so thought the celebrated French landscape painter, Poussin, who, when asked how he was able to give such an effect to his paintings, simply answered, "I have neglected nothing." The price of excellence, then, is labour. What most we need is to intensify our love of God and His gospel—to make faith more a fire—a fire that rouses up to action every inmate of the house, and shows what wonders can be wrought. A fire that demands more and more fuel, when it is rightly confined to its place, and that bids us go out of our Mount Ephraim, into the land of the giants, and cut wood. (*Henry Bacon.*)

*The responsibility of greatness:—*1. It is not a brave and wholesome thing to be too eager for favours and for help from others. There are men of this class in every community. They want to rise in the world, but they would rise on the exertions and sacrifices of others—not their own. We find the same in spiritual life. There are those who sigh for holiness and beauty of character, but they are not willing to pay the price. They would make prayer a substitute for effort, for struggle, for the crucifying of self. They want a larger spiritual inheritance, but they have no thought of taking it in primeval forests which their own hands must cut down. The truth is, however, that God gives us our inheritance just as He gave Joseph's lot to him. Our promised land has to be won, every inch of it. You must train your own faith. You must cultivate your own heart-life. You must learn patience, gentleness, and all the lessons of love yourself. No one can give you any Christian grace.

2. True friendship oftentimes declines to do for men what they can do for themselves. If you can wake up a young man, arouse his sleeping or undiscovered powers, so that he will win a fortune with his own hands and brain, that is an infinitely better thing to do for him than if you were to give him a fortune as a present. In the former case, in getting his fortune, he has gotten also trained powers, energy, strength, self-reliance, disciplined character and all the elements that belong to strong manhood. In the other case he gets nothing but the money. A little poem tells the story of two friends. One brought a crystal goblet full of water which he had dipped from flowing streams on far-off mountain heights. The hills were his, and his the bright, sweet water. But the water did not refresh his friend. The other looked upon him kindly, saw his need, and gave him—nothing. With a face severe he bade him seek his own hard quarry, hew out the way for the imprisoned waters, and find drink for himself. He obeyed, and the water gave him satisfaction. That is God's way with us. He does not make life easy for us. Surely it is a wiser love that puts new strength into your heart and arm, so that you can go on with your hard duty, your heavy responsibility, your weight of care, without fainting, than would be the love which should take all the load away and leave you free from any burden.

3. True greatness should show itself, not in demanding favours or privileges, but in achieving great things. The way a commander honours the best regiment on the field of battle is, not by assigning it to some easy post, to some duty away from danger. He honours it by giving it the most perilous post, the duty requiring the most splendid courage. So it is in all life—the place of honour is always the hardest place, where the most delicate and difficult duty must be done, where the heaviest burden of responsibility must be borne. It is never a real honour to be given an easy place. Instead of demanding a place of honour as a favour of friendship, which sets no seal of real greatness upon our brow, we should win our place of honour by worthy deeds and services. The truth is far-reaching in its applications. It should sweep

out of our thought for ever all feeling that others owe us favours; all that spirit which shows itself in self-seeking, in claims for place or precedence over others. The law of love is that with whatsoever we have we must serve our fellow-men. The most highly dowered life that this world ever saw was that of Jesus Christ. Yet He demanded no recognition of men. He claimed no rank. He never said His lowly place was too small, too narrow, for the exercise of His great abilities. He used His greatness in doing good, in blessing the world. He was the greatest among men, and He was the servant of all. This is the true mission of greatness. There is no other true and worthy way of using whatever gifts God has bestowed upon us. Instead of claiming place, distinction, rank, position, and attention, because of our gifts, abilities, wisdom, or name, we must use all we have to bless the world and honour God. (*J. R. Millar, D.D.*) *The proof of greatness*:—Petty jealousies are harder to deal with than anything else. Joshua had not only to conquer but also to divide the country. It was divided into several parts. Jealousy was aroused. Some said, You have not considered my greatness as you did that of Ephraim. In the present day a worker for God has need to pray for tact to deal with others. Our text is very suggestive, and may be applied in many ways. Prove thy greatness by clearing the forest. Pretension proved by achievement; thus prove thy strength by thy actions. 1. If great, why not clear the forest? Great power demands corresponding enterprise! Some financially are great; if so, let your contributions be beyond others who are not in such a position. If possessed of a superior education, prove it by your exertions to benefit others. Some are great in position as standard-bearers in God's army; prove it by your faith; show what faith will do; go up and clear the forest by your zeal and consecration—the more advantages we claim the more obligations we contract. 2. If cramped for room, why not clear the ground you have? Some are always asking for more scope, from the village to the town, from the town to the city, forgetting that in their own sphere they have not done all they could do. When this is done God will open up a larger sphere. Do thoroughly all that in which you are engaged. The man who looks after the ones and twos God will bless with other larger spheres for usefulness. Greatness does not lie in pretensions but in actions. (*A. G. Brown.*) *Cure for complaining*:—This, then, is the cure for our complaining—the memory of the Lord's promises of help; and then the brave going forth against the causes of the complainings, and thus the curing of them. 1. Apply this cure for complainings to the winning of culture. How often we complain, "in our circumstances, with our limitations, with our business, &c., no chance for culture." And we settle to the newspaper or fill up the chance moments with a hurried reading of the last novel—not the last best; too often the last worst. But the cure for such complainings is, with God's help, to go forth and seize culture. Take up the Chautauqua scheme for reading, for example. Take it up, go through with it, put the energy into doing your work and not into complaining, and you will grow in culture surprisingly. 2. Apply this cure for complainings to the maintaining a consistent Christian profession. Think of the saints in Cæsar's household. By God's help determine to be a saint, whatever your circumstances. 3. Apply this cure for complainings to the duty of becoming Christian. What Canaanites and Perrizzites of objections men are apt to make—e.g., do not understand whole Bible; it is a hard thing to serve God; it is gloomy to be Christian; I am afraid God will not receive me; so many hypocrites among professing Christians; I don't know that I am one of the elect; I have not time; I am not fit; I will meet a good deal of opposition; I don't feel; I am afraid if I do become a Christian I will not hold out; I cannot believe; I am willing to be a secret Christian, &c., illimitably. But stop complainingly conjuring such objections. Go forth in the promised help of Christ to Christ, any way. So at once get cure for your complainings and surely find the forgiveness and peace of Christ. (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) **Thou shalt drive out the Canaanites.**—*Driving out the Canaanites and their iron chariots*:—I. WE MUST DRIVE THEM OUT. Every sin has to be slaughtered. Not a single sin is to be tolerated. 1. They must all be driven out, for every sin is our enemy. Any pretence of friendship with iniquity is mischievous. 2. Sin is our Lord's most cruel enemy. Saved by Jesus, will you not hate sin as He did? Would any person here lay up in his drawer as a treasure the knife with which his father was murdered? Our sins were the daggers that slew the Saviour. Can we bear to think of them? 3. Remember, also, that a man cannot be free from sin if he is the servant of even one sin. Here is a man who has a long chain on his leg—a chain of fifty links. Now, suppose that I come in as a liberator, and take away

forty-nine links, but still leave the iron fastened to the pillar, and his leg in the one link which is within the iron ring, what benefit have I brought him? How much good have I done? The man is still a captive. II. **THEY CAN BE DRIVEN OUT.** I do not say that we can drive them out, but I say that they can be driven out. It will be a great miracle, but let us believe in it; for other great wonders have been wrought. 1. Note first that you and I have been raised from the dead. Is it not so? "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." If a dead man has been raised, then anything can be done with the man who is now made alive. 2. You have also by Divine power been led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as the result of Divine grace within your heart, what is there that you cannot do? If you have been enabled to believe, you can be enabled to be holy. He that led you to exert faith, can lead you, by faith, to overcome any and every iniquity. 3. You have already conquered many sins. He that has helped you so far can surely help you even to the conclusion of the fight. Do not doubt that the almighty power of Divine grace, which has achieved so much, can achieve yet more. Be strong and very courageous, for the Lord of hosts Himself is at your side. 4. Have you not seen other Christians conquer? Oh, let your memory charge you now with brethren and sisters in whom you saw great infirmities and sins at the commencement of their spiritual career; but how they have grown! How they have vanquished inbred sin! What God has done for them He can do for you. III. **THEY SHALL BE DRIVEN OUT.** 1. This is what Christ died for, to save His people, not from some of their sins, but from all their sins. 2. This is what Christ lives for. Christ in heaven is the pattern of what we shall be, and He will not fail to mould us after His own model. We shall one day be perfectly conformed to His image, and then we shall be with Him in glory. Our Lord's honour is bound up with the presentation of all His saints in spotless purity to Himself in the day of His glorious marriage. 3. This is what the Holy Spirit is given for. He is not given to come into our hearts, and comfort us in our sins, but to deliver us from all evil, and to comfort us in Christ Jesus. He quickens, He directs, He helps, He illuminates; He does a thousand things; but, chiefly, He sanctifies us. He comes into the heart to drive out every other power that seeks to have dominion there. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *All sins to be conquered*:—They must all be conquered, every one. Not one single sin must be allowed to occupy the love of our heart and the throne of our nature. There are certain sins that, when we begin to war with them, we very soon overcome. These Israelites, when they were up in the mountains, and in the woods, soon got at the hill-country Canaanites and destroyed them; but down in the plain, where was plenty of room for horses and chariots, the Israelites were puzzled what to do; for some of these Canaanites had chariots of iron, which had scythes fixed to the axles, and when they drove into the ranks of an army, they mowed down the people as a reaping machine cuts down the standing corn. For a while this seems to have staggered the Israelites altogether; it was a terrible business to think about, and fear exaggerated the power of the dreadful chariots. Dread made them powerless, till they plucked up courage, and when they once plucked up courage, they found that these chariots were not nearly so terrible as they were supposed to be. There were ways of managing and mastering them, if Israel would but trust in God, and play the man. When a man is converted by Divine grace, certain sins are readily overcome: they fly away home at once, never to return. Swearing is a kind of Canaanite that is soon settled off—driven out and slain. So it is with many other forms of evil. We get our sword at their throats quickly, and by God's grace we are clean rid of all temptation to return to them. Such sins, though once powerful, are left dead on the field of battle. I know that some of you could bear testimony that your favoured sins became so disgusting to you that you have never had a temptation to wander in that direction; and if a desire towards them has crossed your mind, you have revolted against it, and cast it away from you with indignation. But certain other sins are much tougher to deal with. They mean fight, and some of them seem to have as many lives as a cat. There is no killing them. When you think that you have slain them, they are up and at you again. They may be said to have chariots of iron. 1. These sins are sometimes those which have gained their power—their chariots of iron—through long habit. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" No, he never shall, but the grace of God can work the change. 2. Some sins get their chariots of iron from being congenial to our constitution. Certain brethren and sisters are sadly quick-tempered; and as long as ever they live, they will have to be on their guard against

growing suddenly angry, and speaking unadvisedly with their lips. They are quick and sensitive, and this might not in itself be a serious evil; but when sin wields that quickness and sensitiveness, evil comes of it. How many a sincere child of God has had to go for years groaning, as with broken bones, because of the quickness of his temper! As for these constitutional sins, you must not excuse them. Everything that is of nature—ay, and of your fallen nature when it is at its best—has to be put under the feet of Christ, that grace may reign over every form of evil. 3. Frequently the chariot of iron derives its force from the fact that a certain sin comes rushing upon you on a sudden, and so takes you at a disadvantage. Yet we must not say, because of this, “I cannot help it,” for we ought to be all the more watchful, and live all the nearer to God in prayer. 4. Sometimes these sins get power from the fact that, if we do not yield to them, we may incur ridicule on account of them. I would not, if I could, prevent any of you from being persecuted in your measure. Should not soldiers fight? I would stay the persecution for the sake of the persecutor; but for the sake of you who have to bear it, I would hardly lift a finger to screen you, because the trial is an education of the utmost value. 5. Perhaps one of the things that is worst of all to a Christian is, that certain sins are supposed to be irresistible. It is a popular error, and a very pernicious one. (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER XVIII.

VERS. 1-28. The whole congregation . . . assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle.—*Religion in the new land*:—An event of great importance now occurs; the civil arrangements of the country are in a measure provided for, and it is time to set in order the ecclesiastical establishment. First, a place has to be found as the centre of the religious life; next, the tabernacle has to be erected at that place—and this is to be done in the presence of all the congregation. It is well that a godly man like Joshua is at the head of the nation: a less earnest servant of God might have left this great work unheeded. How often, in the emigrations of men, drawn far from their native land in search of a new home, have arrangements for Divine service been forgotten! In such cases the degeneracy into rough manners, uncouth ways of life, perhaps into profanity, debauchery, and lawlessness, has usually been awfully rapid. On the other hand, when the rule of the old puritan has been followed, “Wherever I have a house, there God shall have an altar”; when the modest spire of the wooden church in the prairie indicates that regard has been had to the gospel precept—“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you”—a touch of heaven is imparted to the rude and primitive settlement; we may believe that the spirit of Christ is not unknown; the angels of virtue and piety are surely hovering round it. The narrative is very brief, and no reason is given why Shiloh was selected as the religious centre of the nation. We should have thought that the preference would have been given to Shechem, a few miles north, in the neighbourhood of Ebal and Gerizim, which had already been consecrated in a sense to God. That Shiloh had been chosen by Divine direction we can hardly doubt, although there may have been reasons of various kinds that commended it to Joshua. Situated about half-way between Bethel and Shechem, in the tribe of Ephraim, it was close to the centre of the country, and, moreover, not difficult of access for the eastern tribes. Here, then, assembled the whole congregation of the children of Israel, to set up the tabernacle, probably with some such rites as David performed when it was transferred from the house of Obed-Edom to Mount Zion. Hitherto it had remained at Gilgal, the headquarters and dépôt of the nation. The “whole congregation” that now assembled does not necessarily mean the whole community, but only selected representatives, not only of the part that had been engaged in warfare, but also of the rest of the nation. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) **How long are ye slack to go to possess the land?**—*Joshua's remonstrance*:—I. IS NOT THE GOODLY PORTION FREELY PROVIDED, AND WAITING YOUR ACCEPTANCE? Hath not the Lord God of your fathers freely given you a title to the country of peace and rest in heaven? May not “an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly”? &c. His hand broke asunder your chains, when ye lay helpless in the land of your spiritual bondage—when Satan was your taskmaster, sin your service, and death

your wages. He paid the full ransom of your deliverance. The same hand which took you forth from the captivity and death of sin has still led you onward, cheered with increasing hope of reposing in the kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ. As your day, so has your strength been. Is there then, in the little circle of perishing enjoyments around you, is there, even among the present spiritual privileges with which Divine love has invested you, anything sufficiently great to satisfy the aspirations of one who looks for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life? II. IS NOT THE ATTAINMENT OF SALVATION THE GREAT BUSINESS OF LIFE, TO WHICH YE SHOULD BE DEVOTED? Your life, in its best and only worthy acceptation, consists not in seeking "what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed," and how ye shall enjoy the present, and be aggrandised for the future; but in holy resolve and aim to seek the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Be your portion of present advantages, whether temporal or spiritual, what it may, let it not absorb your minds, that ye may rest upon it, and seek nothing beyond. Do not live so much beneath your privileges as to be satisfied with the mere shadow of good; while the pure, perfect, unsatisfying, and everlasting reality solicits you in vain. III. HAVE YE NOT LOST TIME ENOUGH ALREADY? If we look inward to the experience of our own hearts—if we recollect the testimony of years past and gone, they will surely speak of long and guilty inattention to the duty of serving God, who hath called us to His kingdom and glory. How many opportunities have ye possessed of walking with God, like Enoch, and of illustrating the holy character of His religion so unequivocally, that men must have taken knowledge of you that you had been with Jesus! What then remains? Redeem the time by an increasing zeal and diligence to do the work of God, and to attain by His grace a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *Slack to possess*:—The weakness of our nature discovers itself, even under the most prosperous and encouraging circumstances. This degrades our conquests and diminishes the glory of our triumphs. Either self-indulgence, indolence, or indifference was the cause why they were slack to go to possess the land. The luxury of new and undisturbed possessions succeeding to the incessant toils and privations of warfare too long, and it may be too immoderately, entwined about their earthly affections, and retained them in the lap of indulgence. A condition like this, so congenial with the fleshly desires of the heart, induced a frame of indolence which was not only indisposed but might render them indifferent to new achievements. How unfavourable to those energies and exertions which require the mortification of self-indulgence as a condition of uninterrupted prosperity! This has often been found attended with more dangerous results than even the most pressing adversity. Who has not needed this reproof again and again? "Why are ye slack to go to possess the land?" Present gratifications have made us indifferent to future interests; and private satisfactions to public duties. Let the Christian remember that he owes much to the interests of others, not only to the present, but even to future generations, as far as concerns the Church of God; and therefore, to live to himself, inclosed within the narrow limits of his own person and concerns, is unworthy the greatness of his character, and far beneath the dignity of his being. Though nothing were wanting to render complete our personal estate or family patrimony, yet let us remember that we have much to achieve for others, for our brethren, and the cause of truth, that require self-denying and self-sacrificing exertions. (*W. Seaton.*)

CHAPTER XIX.

VERS. 1-51. The part of the children of Judah was too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them. —*A too extensive earthly portion*:—A fine lesson for such who, in the amplitude of their earthly portion, have more than themselves or their families in conscience require, when numbers of their brethren, high-born as themselves and heirs to the noblest hopes, have many of them not only a scanty lot, but scarcely the common necessities of life. If the one has too little, surely it may be said, though few are likely to allow it, the other has too much. And why this disparity in the condition of the brethren but for the trial of faith in the one and the display of charity in

the other? What an admonition in so impoverished a world as this, where so many, comparatively speaking, yea, and in cases not a few, literally are houseless and helpless, without means of daily sustenance, to contract their own borders that room may be given to these destitute Simeonites. The first Christians did this to an extent not now required: so powerfully did the love of Christ operate in their hearts, and so little hold had earthly things of their affections when placed in competition with spiritual and heavenly interests, that the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul—and in this too, in practice as well as in sentiment (Acts iv. 34, 35). Without reducing to one common stock, that distribution which should be alike to all, a state of things evidently adapted only to times of persecution, and that under no other circumstances could answer the designs of Providence in a condition of trial common to this life, who is there that thinks he has too much, and is so affected with the little which others have of the same household of faith, that he is cheerfully ready to allow a part in his portion? therein discovering that amiable feature of the Christian character which the apostle has marked as strikingly beautiful, “willing to distribute.” (*W. Seaton.*)

An inheritance to Joshua.—*The leader disinterested*:—As in a shipwreck the captain is the last to leave the doomed vessel, so here the leader of the nation was the last to receive a portion. With rare self-denial he waited till every one else was provided for. Here we have a glimpse of his noble spirit. That there would be much grumbling over the division of the country he no doubt counted inevitable, and that the people would be disposed to come with their complaints to him followed as a matter of course. See how he circumvents them! Whoever might be disposed to go to him complaining of his lot knew the ready answer he would get—“You are not worse off than I am, for as yet I have got none!” Joshua was content to see the fairest inheritance disposed of to others, while as yet none had been allotted to him. He might have asked for an inheritance in the fertile and beautiful vale of Shechem, consecrated by one of the earliest promises to Abraham, near to Jacob's well and his ancestor Joseph's tomb, or under shadow of the two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, where so solemn a transaction had taken place after his people entered the land. He asks for nothing of the kind, but for a spot on one of the highland hills of Ephraim, a place so obscure that no trace of it remains. It is described in Judges ii. 9 as “Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash.” The north side of the mountain does not indicate a spot remarkable either for amenity or fertility. In the days of Jerome his friend Paula is said to have expressed surprise that the distributor of the whole country reserved so wild and mountainous a district for himself. His choice of it was a splendid rebuke to the grumbling of his tribe, to the pride and selfishness of the “great people” who would not be content with a single lot, and wished an additional one to be assigned to them. “Up with you to the mountain,” was Joshua's spirited reply; “cut down the wood, and drive out the Canaanites!” In any case, he set a splendid example of disinterested humility. How nobly contrasted with men like Napoleon, who used his influence so greedily for the enrichment and aggrandisement of every member of his family! Joshua came very near to the spirit of our blessed Lord. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*)

Self the last to be considered:—The servant, though honourable above all, and worthy a double portion, was as the last and least among them, and gave rest to others before he took rest himself. In this he was a striking type of that adorable Redeemer, the captain of the host of the Lord, who, till He had obtained full conquest and possession for His people, sat not down at the right hand of God, in the presence of His triumphant Church. Though Lord of all, yet He became the servant of all, and as an example ever to be studied and copied by His followers, said in expressive condescension and abasement, “Am not I among you as one that serveth?” Oh! that this mind were more evidently in us which was in Christ Jesus, who, in all He sacrificed, suffered, and forewent, ever looked on the things of others, and in His self-emptyings placed His own felicity and glory in the salvation of His people. The lot assigned Joshua was his choice, and within the portion of his own tribe. There was nothing of pre-eminence to distinguish it from the possession of others, except as himself gave note to it, and being the residence of one so exalted in character, so great in achievements. It does not appear the best of the land, yet it possessed one advantage, beyond what it could have had in fertility and extent, being near to Shiloh, the habitation of holiness and seat of mercy. Lot chose Sodom for the pleasantness and fertility of its plain, but Joshua chose Timnath-serah for the

holiness of its vicinity. How few in the settlements of life, whose means afford the advantage of choice, are determined by considerations of piety and the hope of rendering service to God and His people! Generally a residence is sought which promises gratifications most congenial with their earthly wishes, or where they may receive the greatest good to themselves, and not where they may do the greatest good to others. (*W. Seaton, M.A.*)

CHAPTER XX.

VERS. 1-9. Cities of refuge.—*The cities of refuge*.—1. The first thought that naturally occurs to us when we read of these cities concerns the sanctity of human life; or, if we take the material symbol, the preciousness of human blood. God wished to impress on His people that to put an end to a man's life under any circumstances was a serious thing. Man was something higher than the beasts that perish. It is not a very pleasing feature of the Hebrew economy that this regard to the sanctity of human life was limited to members of the Hebrew nation. All outside the Hebrew circle were treated as little better than the beasts that perish. For Canaanites there was nothing but indiscriminate slaughter. Even in the times of King David we find a barbarity in the treatment of enemies that seems to shut out all the sense of brotherhood, and to smother all claim to compassion. We have here a point in which even the Hebrew race were still far behind. They had not come under the influence of that blessed Teacher who taught us to love our enemies. 2. Even as apportioned to the Hebrew people, there was still an uncivilised element in the arrangements connected with these cities of refuge. This lay in the practice of making the *go-el*, or nearest of kin, the avenger of blood. Had the law been perfect, it would have simply handed over the killer to the magistrate, whose duty would have been calmly to investigate the case, and either punish or acquit, according as he should find that the man had committed a crime or had caused a misfortune. It was characteristic of the Hebrew legislation that it adapted itself to the condition of things which it found, and not to an ideal perfection which the people were not capable of at once realising. In the office of the *go-el* there was much that was of wholesome tendency. The feeling was deeply rooted in the Hebrew mind that the nearest of kin was the guardian of his brother's life, and for this reason he was bound to avenge his death; and instead of crossing this feeling, or seeking wholly to uproot it, the object of Moses was to place it under salutary checks, which should prevent it from inflicting gross injustice where no crime had really been committed. 3. The course to be followed by the involuntary manslayer was very minutely prescribed. He was to hurry with all speed to the nearest city of refuge, and stand at the entering of the gate till the elders assembled, and then to declare his cause in their ears. If he failed to establish his innocence, he got no protection; but if he made out his case he was free from the avenger of blood, so long as he remained within the city or its precincts. If, however, he wandered out, he was at the mercy of the avenger. Further, he was to remain in the city till the death of the high priest, it being probable that by that time all keen feeling in reference to this deed would have subsided, and no one would then think that justice had been defrauded when a man with blood on his hands was allowed to go at large. 4. As it was, the involuntary manslayer had thus to undergo a considerable penalty. Having to reside in the city of refuge, he could no longer cultivate his farm or follow his ordinary avocations; he must have found the means of living in some new employment as best he could. His friendships, his whole associations in life, were changed; perhaps he was even separated from his family. To us all this appears a harder line than justice would have prescribed. But, on the one hand, it was a necessary testimony to the strong, though somewhat unreasonable, feeling respecting the awfulness, through whatever cause, of shedding innocent blood. Then, on the other hand, the fact that the involuntary destruction of life was sure, even at the best, to be followed by such consequences, was fitted to make men very careful. In turning an incident like this to account, as bearing on our modern life, we are led to think how much harm we are liable to do to others without intending harm, and how deeply we ought to be affected by this consideration when we discover what we have really done. And where is the man—parent,

teacher, pastor, or friend—that does not become conscious, at some time or other, of having influenced for harm those committed to his care? We taught them, perhaps, to despise some good man whose true worth we have afterwards been led to see. We repressed their zeal when we thought it misdirected, with a force which chilled their enthusiasm and carnalised their hearts. We failed to stimulate them to decision for Christ, and allowed the golden opportunity to pass which might have settled their relation to God all the rest of their life. The great realities of the spiritual life were not brought home to them with the earnestness, the fidelity, the affection that was fitting. “Who can understand his errors?” Who among us but, as he turns some new corner in the path of life, as he reaches some new view-point, as he sees a new flash from heaven reflected on the past—who among us but feels profoundly that all his life has been marred by unsuspected flaws, and almost wishes that he had never been born? Is there no city of refuge for us to fly to, and to escape the condemnation of our hearts? It is here that the blessed Lord presents Himself to us in a most blessed light. “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And let us learn a lesson of charity. Let us learn to be very considerate of mischief done by others either unintentionally or in ignorance. What more inexcusable than the excitement of parents over their children or of masters over their servants when, most undesignedly and not through sheer carelessness, an article of some value is broken or damaged? Let them have their city of refuge for undesigned offences, and never again pursue them or fall on them in the excited spirit of the avenger of blood! So also with regard to opinions. Many who differ from us in religious opinion differ through ignorance. They have inherited their opinions from their parents or their other ancestors. If you are not called to provide for them a city of refuge, cover them at least with the mantle of charity. Believe that their intentions are better than their acts. (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *The cities of refuge*:—I. THE RIGHT TO LIFE. Alone among the nations stood Israel in the value set upon human life. Its sacred book enjoined its worth. Philosophically, such a sacred value upon life would be expected of the people of God. The value of life increases in ratio with the belief in God and immortality. Deny immortality and you have prepared the ground for suicide. They who say, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,” may voluntarily end the life before to-morrow comes. Greece with all her learning was far behind. Aristotle and Plato both advised putting to death the young and sickly among children. Plutarch records having seen many youths whipped to death at the foot of the altar of Diana. Seneca advised the drowning of disabled children—a course that Cicero commended. Heathenism gives but a dark history. It is one of the last lessons learned that each human life is its own master. No one can take it away except for a transcendent reason. II. THE SURRENDER OF LIFE TO WHAT IS GREATER. It is a larger condition to be good than to live wrongly. Better surrender life than do wrong. On the other hand, better be murdered than be a murderer. Better suffer wrong than do wrong. Whether in this late century the removal of capital punishment would increase crime we cannot verify; but the old law of the avenger is not yet stricken from the statutes of civilisation. No refuge in God’s sight for the hating heart. No palliation of deliberate human deeds of wickedness. No city of refuge for a murderer. III. THE MOTIVE MARKS THE CHARACTER. It is not the mere deed that reveals the man. Nor is it the catastrophe that marks the deed. Every one’s motive is greater than all he does. The man who hates his brother is a murderer as truly as he who kills. Not always what one does, but what he would do, is the standard of his character. Take away every outside restraint; leave one alone with himself; and his unhindered wish and motive mark just what he is. The intentional taking away of life makes murder; the unintentional relieves from all crime. Crime, therefore, does not find its way from the hand, but from the heart. Thus does God look on the heart. IV. THE DIVINE FORBEARANCE WITH HUMAN BLUNDERINGS. This is what the city of refuge expressly declares. The stain of the deed of shedding blood rests in the fact that the life was made in the Divine likeness. The greatness of the life was evident in its kinship with God. Death by accident does not take away the terrible sorrow that settles like a pall. The careless taker away of life may go insane in his despair; but the awful agony of the blunderer does not make the loss any the less heavy. It will call out pity even for the careless one; but it will not counter-balance the loss. V. THE CONDITIONS OF REFUGE. Each unfortunate held the keeping of his life in his own hands. The provided city did not alone save the

delinquent from the avenger. Mansions in it were provided for all who should enter by right. Handicraft was taught those who found shelter within its walls. Food and raiment were furnished by kind hands outside the gates in addition to what they themselves should gather or earn for themselves. They had much provided; but the conditions they must themselves fulfil. It was not enough to rest within sight of the city; they must enter in. They must not venture forth; only as they remained could they be safe. We have no cities of refuge now; but God is our refuge. He is the hope of the careless who turn to Him. The conditions we cannot disregard. He gives the opportunities, of which we must take advantage for ourselves. We cannot set aside His condition. VI. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LIFE IN THE CHOICES WE MAKE. In a certain sense the safety of each unfortunate rested solely upon himself. It was no time for theories; it was the time for action; and on that action depended his own life. He held his temporal safety in his own care and keeping. In thousands of ways we are thus making choices that will shape our life and conduct in all future time. We have the power to save ourselves or to destroy. Peter had the opportunity to save his Lord even when he denied Him. Judas could have shielded his Master instead of betraying Him. Each one of us can choose whom to serve. The choice of evil made Peter weep, and made Judas become a suicide. We cannot choose evil and live. If we choose God for our refuge, we shall not die. He is our city. It rests with us to choose what we shall be. (*David O. Mears.*) *Blood-guiltiness removed from the Lord's host; or, the cities of refuge:—*I. A BENEFICENT POLITICAL INSTITUTION. In ancient Greece and Rome there were asylums and shrines where the supposed sanctity of the place sheltered the blood-stained fugitive from righteous retribution; and it is probable that here, as in innumerable other instances, the pagan institution was but an imitation of the Divine. In our own country, too, there were, in former times, similar sanctuaries. But how different the copy from the pattern—the one institution how pernicious, the other how salutary! By the so-called sanctuaries all that was unsanctified was promoted, for here wilful murderers were received, who, after a short period, were permitted to go forth to repeat a like violence with a like impunity. Not thus was it with him who fled to the city of refuge. We have heard of Indian savages who, when one of their people is killed by a hostile tribe, will go out and kill the first member of that tribe whom they may meet. We have heard, too, of those who for years would cherish vindictiveness and deadly hate against some enemy. Quite opposite to any such spirit of retaliation is that which was to stimulate the Goel in his pursuit. The express command of God placed a sword in his hand which he dared not sheathe. As one entrusted with a prisoner of war, so was it, as it were, said to him, "Thy life for his if thou let him go." II. A TYPE OF CHRIST. Each person concerned, each regulation for the direction of the various parties, each circumstance of the case finds its counterpart in the gospel antitype. 1. To begin with the unfortunate homicide himself—he represents the sinner in his guilt and danger, under the wrath of God. 2. Does any one doubt the efficacy of God's way of saving sinners? Would any one fain flee to other refuges? Ah, they are but refuges of lies. 3. Money could procure no remission; nor will riches avail "in the day of the Lord's wrath." 4. Mercy could not be shown unless the prescribed conditions were observed. 5. Up, then, and flee, thou yet unsaved one! Wait not vainly till others bear thee thither perforce. Complain not of thy God as an austere judge because He saith, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"; but bless Him for His clemency in preparing thee a place of safety. 6. This terrible Goel—the avenger of blood—whose fatal purpose no reward, no argument, no entreaty can turn aside, is but an impersonation of the righteous anger of the Lord against the sinner. 7. That we may more fully perceive the appositeness of the illustration which the cities of refuge furnish of the person and work of the Redeemer, let us notice their position in the country—"in the midst," not in the borders, or in the corners of the land (Deut. xix. 2). 8. The very names of the six cities are, to say the least, in keeping with the symbolism of the subject. 9. The cities of refuge were not open to native Israelites only, but "the stranger" and "the sojourner"—in fact, "every one" among them was accepted (Num. xxxv. 15). Thus none is accounted an alien who, owning himself a sinner, flies to Christ. 10. There is a beautiful lesson in the fact that not only the city itself, but the very suburbs, afforded safety. 11. The isolation, the restrictions, and the privations experienced by him who was confined within the city of refuge may be compared to the separation of the Christian from the world and the things of the world; but what, after all, are temporary trials, if the precious life be

spared? 12. We have spoken of the danger of delay in seeking the refuge. Let us earnestly bear in mind the danger of the opposite kind, namely, of afterwards quitting the safe retreat. 13. At the death of the high priest the manslayer was set free. 14. Before the homicide could be received as a permanent inmate of the city of refuge, a trial was appointed. If he was acquitted, he was admitted there; but if condemned as a designing murderer, he was given up to the avenger for summary execution. This condemnation may be read in two ways. It suggests—

1. A blessed contrast. We have been tried, and found guilty. Our sins are of crimson dye. Yet the door of mercy stands still open; nay, more, it is the full admission of our guilt, and not the profession of our innocence, that is the condition of our entrance thereat. 2. A solemn comparison. Though it be so, that for all sin there is a pardon, yet the Scripture speaks of “a sin that is unto death.” The case of a deliberate murderer, in contradistinction to an unwitting manslayer, illustrates that of one whose sins are not the sins of ignorance, but presumptuous sins, namely, who has deliberately and persistently sinned against light and knowledge. From this depth of wickedness, for which no city of refuge is provided, and for which there is no forgiveness, either in this world or the next, the Lord graciously preserve us! (*G. W. Butler, M.A.*)

The cities of refuge.—I. THE APPOINTMENT AND USE OF THESE CITIES. It is very often said by thoughtless and ignorant persons that the laws of the Old Testament were barbarous and cruel. To this two answers might be made: First, that they were a great advance upon any other legislation at the period when they were given, and were full of wise sanitary provisions, and of tender care for human life and welfare; secondly, that the objection urged does not lie against Moses, but against the human race at that stage of its history. We are apt to forget that the laws of Moses were adaptations to an existing and very low order of society, and were designed to be a great training-school, leading children up into manhood. The cities of refuge were a merciful provision in times of lawless vengeance, and the entire legislation in regard to them was founded on an existing and very imperfect condition of society, while it looked towards a perfect state, towards the heavenly Jerusalem.

II. THE REASONS FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF THESE CITIES. 1. All men at that early day recognised the right to kill an assassin; all exercised the right, or refrained from doing so, at their will; but Jehovah gave a positive command to Israel, without alternative. It should be blood for blood; and it certainly rests with the opposers of capital punishment to-day to show when and how this original law was abrogated. How it should be carried out was a matter of secondary consequence; that it should be observed was the first thing. When the law was given, the blood-avenger did what we to-day remand to courts of law. It was a step, surely, beyond an utterly lawless vengeance to appoint one person to carry out the Divine will that life should be forfeited for life. 2. But while this was the general rule, it was not a merciless and blind one; for the law distinguished between voluntary and unintentional homicide. It judged an act by its motives, and thus lifted the whole question of punishment out of the sphere of personal revenge and family spite. Here at the very threshold of civilisation how clearly man is treated as a free moral agent, responsible for his acts, and yet judged by his motives! The materialism of to-day, which endeavours to sweep away this primitive morality, has human nature against it. 3. Then, in a system intended to train a nation into habits of self-restraint and righteousness, it was necessary very early to bring in the lessons of mercy. God had always declared Himself the real avenger of blood. “I will require man’s blood,” He said, when He gave the law for the death of a murderer; “vengeance is Mine: I will repay.” The unintentional act was not to be treated like that of malice aforethought. The accidental homicide had certain rights; and yet the mercy offered him was conditional. It was only a chance. It was not left as a small thing for a human life to be taken, even unintentionally: hence the limitations placed about the right of asylum in the cities of refuge. 4. But this was not all: the law demanded an expiation for the wrong, even when it was done without intent. Still it was a wrong; blood had been shed, and the Divine government never grants forgiveness without atonement. God cannot be tender and forgiving without at the same time showing His holiness and just claims upon the guilty. This principle found expression in a singular way in the cities of refuge, in the provision that, whenever the high priest died, the prisoners of hope should go freely back to their homes. The priest was in some sort a sacrifice for the sins of the people, even in his natural death. Here we find what we might call a constructive expiation. Thus from age to age death was

associated in the public mind with deliverance from punishment, the death of successive high priests setting forth the death of Christ on the Cross.

III. THE CITIES OF REFUGE ARE A TYPE OF CHRIST. Their very names have a typical meaning—Kedesh, “holy”; Shechem, “shoulder”; Hebron, “fellowship”; Bezer, “refuge”; Ramoth, “high”; and Golan, “joy.” (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*)

Christ our city of refuge:—I. There is an analogy BETWEEN OUR SITUATION AND THE SITUATION OF THOSE FOR WHOM THE CITY OF REFUGE WAS DESIGNED. It was not intended for the murderer. The law respecting him was that he should immediately be put to death, however palliating might be the circumstances connected with his crime, and however sacred the place to which he might flee for protection. Even the law respecting the manslayer bore in some points a resemblance to that which referred to the murderer. While provision was made for his safety if he chose to avail himself of it, it was also enjoined that should he be overtaken by the avenger of blood his life was to be the forfeit of his negligence. He had shed the blood of a fellow-man; and should he disregard the means of safety which were furnished to him, no guilt would be incurred, although by him whom he had injured his blood also should be shed. Now, all of us are chargeable with having transgressed the law of God. In one important respect, indeed, the comparison between us and the manslayer does not hold. He deprived his fellow of life without having meditated the deed, and therefore he did not contract moral guilt; for although the motive does not in every case sanctify the deed, it is to the motive that we must look in determining the virtuous or vicious nature of an action. We, however, have sinned against the Divine law voluntarily. We have done it in spite of knowledge, conviction, and obligation. Involved, then, as we are, in this universal charge of guilt, the justice of God is in pursuit of us, and is crying aloud for vengeance. And the condition of those whom it overtakes is utterly hopeless: death is the forfeit which they must pay. Let us guard against the callousness of those who, though they readily enough admit that they are sinners, seem to imagine that no danger is to be apprehended, and soothe themselves with the vague expectation that, since God is good, they shall somehow or other drop into heaven at last, and be taken beyond the reach of all that is painful. Oh! is it not infatuation thus to remain listless and secure, when God’s anger is provoked, and equity demands the execution of the threatening? Would it have been folly in the manslayer to have deluded himself into the notion of his safety, at the very time that his infuriated enemy was in hot pursuit? and is it wise in the sinner, when Divine justice is about to seize him, to remain insensible to the hazard of his situation? But let us not despair. Our sin, it is true, has veiled Jehovah’s face in darkness; but through that darkness a bright beam has broken forth, revealing to us peace and reconciliation.

II. There is an analogy BETWEEN OUR PROSPECTS AND THE PROSPECTS OF THE MANSLAYER UNDER THE LAW. By Joshua six cities of refuge were appointed, three on either side of Jordan, that the distance might not be too great which the manslayer required to travel. Now, in Christ Jesus we have a city of refuge to which we are encouraged to repair for protection from the justice which is in pursuit of us. This refuge God Himself has provided; so that He whom we have injured has also devised and revealed to us the method by which our salvation may be effected. “Deliver,” He said, “from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.” Nor is this divinely-provided deliverance difficult of being reached. Christ is ever near to the sinner, and no tiresome pilgrimage requires to be performed before He can be found. All obstructions have been removed out of the way which leads to His Cross, and everything has been done to facilitate our flight to its blessed shelter.

The cities of refuge:—I. The persons for whom the cities of refuge were provided were in CIRCUMSTANCES OF IMMINENT DANGER. 1. The danger of man arises from sin and transgression against the authority of that law which God revealed for the personal rule and obedience of man, it being an essential arrangement in the Divine government that the infraction of the law should expose to the infliction of punishment. 2. The peril of man which thus arises from sin affects and involves his soul, which is pursued by justice as the avenger, and is exposed to the infliction of a future state of torment, the nature and intensity of which it is beyond the possibility of any finite mind to conceive, and the duration of which is restricted by no limits, but is coeval with eternity itself. 3. The peril of man thus arising from transgression and affecting and involving his soul applies not to a small portion, but extends to every individual of the species. II. The persons for whom these cities of refuge were provided were furnished with AMPLE DIRECTIONS AND FACILITIES TO REACH THEM. 1. The clearness with which the offices of the Lord Jesus Christ, in

their adaptation to the condition of man, are revealed. 2. The nature of the method by which in their saving application and benefit the Saviour's offices are to be applied. III. The persons for whom cities of refuge were provided became on reaching them ASSURED OF INVIOLEABLE SECURITY. 1. The grounds of this security; it arises from sources which render it unassailable and perfect. There is the faithfulness of the promise of the Father, which God has repeatedly addressed to His people; there is the efficacy of the mediation of the Son; and there is the pledge of the influences of the Holy Spirit. 2. The blessings involved in this security. And here we have not so much a comparison as a contrast. He who fled for refuge, after he had become a homicide, to the appointed asylum in the cities of Israel, became by necessity the subject of much privation. He was secure, but that was all, inasmuch, it is evident, that he was deprived of home, of kindred, of freedom, and of all those tender and endearing associations which are entwined around the heart of the exile, and the memory of which causes him to pine away, and oftentimes to die. But in obtaining, by the mediation and work of Christ, security from the perils of the wrath to come, we find that the scene of our security is the scene of privilege, of liberty, and of joy. IV. If the persons for whom the cities of refuge were provided removed or were found away from them they were JUSTLY LEFT TO PERISH. There is a Saviour, but only one; an atonement, but only one; a way to heaven, but only one; and when once we have admitted the great fact with regard to the reason of the Saviour's incarnation and sacrifice on the Cross and His ascension into heaven, we are by necessity brought to the conclusion and shut up to the confirmed belief of this truth, that "neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name," &c. (*James Parsons.*) *Cities of refuge*:—I. NOTICE A FEW POINTS IN WHICH THERE IS NO CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THESE CITIES PROVIDED FOR THE MANSLAYER AND THE PROTECTION WHICH THE GOSPEL PROVIDES FOR THE SINNER. 1. The cities of refuge afforded only a temporary protection for the body. The gospel, on the contrary, is a protection for the whole man, and for the whole man for ever. 2. The cities afforded protection only to the unfortunate, whereas the refuge of the gospel is for the guilty. 3. The protection which the cities afforded involved the sacrificing of certain privileges; that of the gospel ensures every privilege. 4. Those who enjoyed the protection of the cities would desire to return to their former scenes; not so with those who enjoy the protection of the gospel. II. NOTICE SOME OF THE MORE ILLUSTRATIVE FEATURES OF RESEMBLANCE. 1. The cities of refuge were of Divine appointment; so is the protection offered in the gospel. 2. The cities of refuge were provisions against imminent danger; so is the gospel. 3. The cities of refuge were arranged so as to be available for all the manslayers in the country; so is the gospel provided for all sinners. (1) Capacity enough to secure all. (2) Within reach of all. (3) Pointed out to all. 4. The cities of refuge were the exclusive asylums for such cases; so is the gospel the only way of salvation. 5. The cities of refuge were only serviceable to those who by suitable effort reached them. (1) Individual effort. (2) Immediate effort. (3) Strenuous effort. (4) Persevering effort. (*Homilist.*) *The cities of refuge*:—I. Let us, then, look at THE PEOPLE WHO DWELT IN THEM. Who were they? They were not exclusively rich people, nor were they exclusively poor. Poverty or wealth was no title to a residence there. Nor were they even educated people, or illiterate people. Some other plea than these must be urged in order to get an entrance there. They were guilty people. Upon their hands must be the mark of their foul sin. They must be avowed man-slayers, or else the gates were closed against them, and admission refused. I think I hear the Pharisee reply something like this: "I am a religious man—a respectable man. This is a religious city established by God, kept by His priests—the peculiar care of Jehovah. There is a certain fitness between that city and myself. I mean to enter there, because I think it is a good thing to dwell in such a place." But they speak to him and say, "Sir, you have made a mistake. Let us ask you one question—Have you ever done any harm?" He looks at them, amazed at the question. "Done any harm? No, sirs, mine has been a blameless life. Taken the life of another? Why, I would not hurt a fly." "Then, sir," they say to him, "this city cannot be your dwelling-place. It, with all its privileges, is for the man-slayer." Ah, sinner, now I know why you are not saved. You are not guilty: you do not believe it. But let me point out to you another mark of these people who dwell in the cities. They were something more than guilty: they were conscious of their danger. They had found out that they had slain a man. They knew the penalty of the law: they believed it. They did not dare to doubt it, and they fled for their very lives. Sinner, would to God that we could get you to flee for your life! Oh,

sinner, to-night you see it not, but there behind you is the keen, two-edged sword of that law that you have broken—that law that you have defied. It is very near to you. God says, "Fly, fly for thy life to the city of refuge." And you—what are you doing? Why, you do not even hear the voice of God. You have no consciousness of your danger. One other word about these people: they were responsible, absolutely responsible, for their own safety. I think I see that man again. We have watched him, and we have spoken to him; he left us and ran; but we say to each other now, "What is the matter? Our friend has stopped running. Look! He is sitting down by the road-side, and from that wallet behind his back, which we did not see before, he has taken out some bread. He is eating it leisurely, quietly. He must have made a mistake. Surely, the avenger of blood cannot be after him. Surely he cannot be guilty." We go up to him and we say, "Friend, you told us just now that you were flying from the avenger of blood. How is it that you are taking your ease?" "Well," he says, "the fact is I have been thinking over the matter, and I have changed my mind. Quite true, I have done wrong; quite true, I have taken a life; quite true, the avenger of blood is after me. But look here, sir. The logic of the matter is this: if I am to be saved I shall be saved." "What folly! You may be saved if you flee; but, as God liveth, unless you get within its walls you never will be saved." II. LOOK TO SOME REMARKABLE POINTS ABOUT THE CITIES OF REFUGE THEMSELVES. Well, the point that strikes us, and which shows forth Jesus Christ and His willingness and power to save, is this: these cities were all easy of access. God took all the difficulties out of the way. 1. They were all upon the level plain. If you read chapter xx., and take the map, as I have done, and look at the land, you will be struck with this, that not one of them was built upon a mountain. What does it mean? Why, it means that an anxious and fleeing man—fleeing for his life—must have no weary mountain to travel up. There, upon the level plain, is the city whose welcome walls invite him for refuge. You have no hill of experience or of works or deeds to climb up. And then observe another fact about them, proving the ease of access which God had arranged for them. 2. If you were to look at the land of Palestine you would observe that it is divided nearly longitudinally—that is, from north to south—by a river at times broad and wide and deep, and with a mighty current—the river Jordan. Now, we will suppose that God had put the cities of refuge, we will say, on the other side. Here comes a poor man-slayer; he is flying for his life, and he reaches Jordan. There is no bridge; he has no boat; he cannot swim; and yet there within sight of him is the welcome city. "Oh," he says in his bitter despair, "God's promise has brought me so far only to mock me." But no, God arranges otherwise. God said, "Let there be six cities, three on each side of the river; one north, one in the middle, one in the south, on one side; one in the south, one in the middle, one on the north on the other side." What does it mean? Why, it means this, that wherever there could be a poor, guilty man-slayer there was a city of refuge. Oh, "The Word is nigh thee," &c. 3. May I add, too, that the gates were always open. Eighteen hundred years have the gates been open. Man's infidelity and opposition have never closed the gates. 4. Observe, too, about these cities, that they were all well known. That was of the very greatest importance. God ordained that there should be six. Their names were given. I think the mothers of Israel must have taught their little children those six names by heart. It would never do that by and by their child should be in danger, and know not where to escape. We are told by Josephus that where cross-roads met there were always finger-posts established, having these words, "To the city of refuge." And I often think that persons like myself, or even the most distinguished ministers of Christ, cannot save a soul, but they may be finger-posts pointing clearly to Jesus, and saying in life and ministry and deed, "To the city of refuge." Let me point out to you another fact of great importance about these cities—the most important fact of all, without which all other facts would be useless. Within these walls was perfect safety. God had said it: Jehovah's word was staked to it. Perfect safety. God's honour was at stake. Every man who fled inside that city should be saved. (J. T. Barnardo.) *Refuge*:—Life is full of alleviations, shelters, ways of deliverance. So that however gloomy things look at times, the worst never comes to the worst. At the moment when all seems lost the gate of the city of refuge opens before us, and friendly hands are held out to draw us within its sanctuary. I. I want to give some illustrations of this, and, first of all, FROM WHAT WE MAY CALL THE ORDINARY ARRANGEMENTS OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD—the means of refuge which this God-made world provides within itself against the

commoner ills. The daily round seems so trivial, our cares are so petty, the things that we are working for so utterly unworthy of beings laying any claim to greatness, that we should be tempted to forego our claim and settle down in mechanical acceptance of the humdrum and the commonplace if we did not avail ourselves of means of escape into a higher realm of thought and feeling. To some of us the culture of music affords a city of refuge from the drearier side of life. The transformation of Scott's "wandering harper, scorned and poor," under the potent spell of his own music is repeated a thousand times a day.

"In varying cadence, soft or strong,
He swept the sounding chords along:
The present scene, the future lot,
His toils, his wants were all forgot.
Cold diffidence and age's frost,
In the full tide of song were lost."

Others find their city in the contemplation of great pictures. A man, crusted over with the sordidness of his daily task, will get away into a picture gallery. He will sit down tired and uninterested before some great masterpiece, and after a while it will begin to take hold of him. As he sits there, passively yielding to its influence, just letting it lay itself against his spirit, there will gradually steal over him a great restfulness and calm. Presently a deeper life will wake up. He will pass from the passive to the active state. Imagination will become alive; thought will stir; a new world will grow into realness around him—a larger, higher, finer world, not less real, but more real; not foreign to him, but more truly native to him than the world whose dust he has just shaken from his feet. And a greater number, perhaps, find their way of escape by the door of good books than by either music or pictures, or both together. And it is more than a merely temporary refuge. If books are really great, if the art is really elevating, we get something more than a short respite from an unfriendly world. When we go back to it the world is changed. The avenger of blood is no longer there. But there are tenser forms of evil to be saved from than the dull pain of a prosaic and uninspiring existence. There are sharp strokes of misfortune, the sudden loss of health, an overwhelming catastrophe in business, or bereavement. It is marvellous how at such a time people find themselves ringed round with friends. The story of Naomi is the story of the destitute in every age. What could have been more hopeless than the outlook for her? Yet she got through. She found friends among the foreigners; and when after the long years of exile she returned to Bethlehem, she found herself taken to people's hearts. And Ruth the Moabitess was befriended also. There are many who could say with old John Brown of Haddington, "There might be put upon my coffin, 'Here lies one of the cares of Providence, who early wanted both father and mother, and yet never missed them!'" So true is this that of late years we have begun to hear in tones of complaint and foreboding of "the survival of the unfit." The world, it seems, is too kind. There is too much providence. That complaint need not distress us. But it is a confirmation of the Christian view of the world under God's fatherly administration from a somewhat unexpected quarter; and it is none the less valuable for the source from which it comes. God is love, and He will be yet more fully known in the world's palaces of science as a refuge. But we cannot think long on the subject without being sorrowfully conscious that there are other foes of the soul against which the ordinary providence of God offers no defence; and our sorrow is only turned into joy when we recognise that in these cases a still better refuge is provided. "God Himself is our refuge, a very present help in time of trouble." 1. For example, there is sin. It is possible for men to go through life without any distinct perception of sin as an enemy of their happiness. But whenever the conscience is truly awakened, from that moment sin stands forth as the saddest fact in life. It is the one foe that peace cannot dwell with. Other evils we may escape, leaving them still in possession of the outer suburbs, while we retreat into the inner citadel of the soul. But not with sin. For the awfulness of that is that its very seat is in our inmost soul, so that the more deeply we live the more vivid is the fatal consciousness of its presence. And whether you count the burning shame of it, the self-contempt it breeds, the vague but awful terrors which of necessity dwell with it, or the feeling of helplessness which grows upon us as we realise how impossible it is to escape unaided from its power, as soon as its burden presses upon a man it is felt as the heaviest burden of

life, different, not only in degree but in kind, from every other, intolerable, and yet never to be shaken off by any human strength. Here is an avenger for which earth provides no city of refuge. Great books, great pictures give no relief now; they aggravate. Mother Nature with her healing ministries has no balm for this wound. Thank God there is deliverance. The troubled conscience comes to peace in Jesus Christ. 2. Another case in which God alone in His own person can be a refuge for us, is when we are oppressed by the sense of finiteness that comes to us some time or other in our experience of all things earthly. There are times when we seem to see round everything. We have reached the limit of our friends' capacity to satisfy us; music is nothing more to us than a combination, more or less faulty, of sounds that jar upon the nerves. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." And all human goodness is as the morning cloud. "All men are liars," you say in your haste. And if not that, then at least, "I have seen an end of all perfection." Blessed is the man who in that hour knows the way to God. The secret of the Lord is with him, and the water that he drinks of shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. 3. Death and deliverance. And then there is death. There are those who through fear of death are all their life-time subject to bondage. Well, God delivers us from that spectre. When we walk through the valley of that shadow, we fear no evil for He is with us. We who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us find ourselves holding by an anchor that enters into that within the veil. II. NOW, IT WILL BE A GREAT HELP TO US IF WE RECOGNISE IN EVERY LIGHTENING OF THE BURDENS OF LIFE THE SIGN THAT GOD HAS BEEN GOING BEFORE US PREPARING DELIVERANCE. Do not let us shut God out of the alleviations that spring up out of the earth as we pass along. There were six cities of refuge appointed for the Hebrews, and now one and now another of these cities would offer a practicable way of escape from the avenger. And God fulfils Himself in many ways. The doors of hope that seem entirely earth-fashioned and of human provision are equally of God's appointment with that heavenly door by which alone we can find deliverance from the deeper sorrows. Your God-given way of escape is not always along the path of extreme religious fervour. A week of rest at the seaside will do you more spiritual good sometimes than a week of revival services. A hearty shake of the hand from a genial unbeliever will give you a mightier lift than a lecture from a saint. And you are to use the means of escape that lies nearest you, and is most suitable—and see God's gracious provision in it whatever it is that gives you effectual relief. I don't mean that all ministries are of the same order, or intrinsically of equal worth. But then all troubles are not of the same order either. Paul is equally the minister of God when to the gaoler crying, "What must I do to be saved?" he says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"; and to the sailors worn out with long battling with the storm, he recommends, not prayer, but to take food. III. Let me DIRECT YOUR MINDS TO A DUTY WHICH GOD LAID UPON THE ISRAELITES IN RELATION TO THEIR CITIES OF REFUGE. "Thou shalt prepare thee a way and divide the coasts of thy land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither." That is, there shall not only be a city of refuge, but there shall be a road to it. And these roads were to be kept in order. And it came afterwards to be a law that finger-posts should be placed wherever other roads crossed the road to the city of refuge, so that a man in search of it might the more easily find his way. Now the meaning of this in the larger bearing which we are giving it all, is that we should make ourselves familiar beforehand with the means of access to the doors of deliverance which God has provided. We are bidden to have resources. We must know the use of pictures and of great books; we must know the way to Nature's treasure-house, or be able, like Boethius, to solace ourselves amid the disorders of the world by contemplating the Divine order of the stars. In the day of comparative prosperity we are to prepare for adversity. And this is a counsel of tremendous significance when we think of the supreme needs of the soul, those needs which nothing short of God can meet. "Thou shalt prepare thee a way." One of the most pathetic stories in the Old Testament is that which relates how King Saul, who had gone his own time-serving, politician-like way all his life, came at last in his extremity to feel his need of God, and did not know how to come to Him. "Acquaint thyself with Him." "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth"—in the springtime of life, when all is bright and hope-inspiring. Now is the time to make a path for yourself to Him. (C. S. Peckley, M.A.) *The Christian's cities of refuge*:—I. OUR FIRST CITY OF REFUGE IS PRAYER. Whatever trouble comes to us, we can run to prayer for help, as the man of old ran to the city of refuge. II. OUR SECOND CITY OF REFUGE IS THE BIBLE.

When Jesus was tempted three times by the devil in the wilderness to do wrong, every time His heart ran to the Bible as a city of refuge and quoted some precious promise. III. A THIRD CITY OF REFUGE IS SACRED SONG. If our hearts and voices are full of sweet and pure songs about God, and heaven, and doing good, they will keep away a great many wicked thoughts and evil words. IV. THE FOURTH CITY OF REFUGE IS TRUST IN GOD AS OUR FATHER. A child was asked the question, "What is faith?" She answered, "God has spoken, and I believe it." That is a part of what it means to trust in God. V. OUR FIFTH CITY OF REFUGE IS THE HOLY SPIRIT AS OUR GUIDE. VI. THE SIXTH CITY OF REFUGE, THE LAST ONE AND THE MOST PRECIOUS, IS JESUS AS OUR SAVIOUR. (*Christian Age*.) *The number of the cities of refuge*:—These were doubtless sufficient to answer the exigencies that might arise; but why six were appointed, and not seven, the perfect number, we may conceive was the reference they all had to one other, the only perfection of types, the Lord Jesus, and in whom alone security can be found. The perfection of the covenant and of every covenant blessing is found in Him. In whatever trouble, whether in first convictions or after trials, the Christian, as the prophet, with thoughts raised to Christ, may exclaim, "O Lord, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction." (*W. Seaton*.) *The situation of the cities of refuge*:—In the division of land east and west of Jordan which was nearly equal the Lord made equal provision for both, that it might be no disadvantage on which side soever any dwelt who were within the extent of the inheritance. Christ is for general benefit, wherever men live, within the sound of His gospel; so that it matters not where that is, in what part or quarter of the world. How great a mercy to be stationed near this refuge! and how great a sin to neglect or despise its security! (*Ibid.*) *The cities of refuge illustrative of Christ's redeeming work*:—How illustrative of the way of life, the facilities grace has given to sensible and alarmed sinners to flee from the wrath to come! I. In the gospel of Christ is found nothing to impede or discourage an immediate application for salvation, BUT THE WAY IS SET BEFORE MEN UNDER DIRECTIONS SO PLAIN AND OBVIOUS THAT HARDLY ANY ONE CAN ERR, EXCEPT THROUGH WILFUL IGNORANCE AND DETERMINED REBELLION. Faithful ministers are designed to answer the end of directing-posts; they are to stand in byways and corners, to distinguish the right way from the wrong, and thereby, if possible, to prevent any from proceeding to their own destruction. Mercy has placed them on the road to life purposely to remind sinners of their danger, to direct the perplexed, and to admonish the careless. How important is simplicity in a matter that involves in it the concerns of life and death! What if the line of inscription, "To the City of Refuge," had been in any other language than the one generally understood? and what if gospel ministers express themselves in a way that few only can reap the benefit of their instructions? They ruin more than they save, and cannot avoid a fearful charge in the day when every work will be brought into judgment. II. Next, consider THE REQUIREMENTS MADE OF THE MAN WHO HAD OCCASION TO AVAIL HIMSELF OF THE PROVISION APPOINTED; and as if having witnessed the act of slaughter, follow him to the gates of the city. His first and obvious duty, and that to which necessity compelled, was to leave the dead and run for his life, to rise from his bleeding neighbour and betake himself, with all possible haste, to the nearest refuge. This was to be voluntary, for no one could compel him. Another requirement was that he who had set out should make all possible haste till he had got within the walls of the city; for security was not in the way, but at the end; not while escaping, but when refuted. And what shall be said of them who, professing to flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in Christ, think neither of danger nor security, but are taken up, as their chief concern, with the pleasure and pursuits of the world? III. THE INTERNAL CONSTITUTION OF THESE CITIES, like the way to them, and the requisitions made of those for whose benefit they were instituted, INSTRUCTS US IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF MANY EVANGELICAL TRUTHS. Let us enter for examination, or rather consider ourselves as needing the security they give. Refuge was not allowed till after judicial investigation. They were no asylum for murderers, but for those guilty of manslaughter only. In this the legal refuge came short of that the gospel sets before us: it was wisely and necessarily so; for no typical institutions could be ordained contrary to public justice and security, or that would have perpetually endangered the life and peace of society. Herein the pre-eminence of the gospel appears, and the infinite merit of Christ's blood, which has efficacy to atone for the worst of crimes. The government under which these cities were placed must not be forgotten; they were given to the Levites, and though distinct from those they were to inhabit, yet they were numbered among them. This denoted an appointment of mercy, namely, that all the privi-

leges peculiar to them, the security, residence, and provision there afforded, were all the fruit of priestly merits, and under the regulation of sacerdotal dominion. The streams of mercy from Christ flow to sinners through the prevalence of His atoning sacrifice and the exercise of His availing intercession. Again, safety was nowhere but within the city—not only was the manslayer required to flee to it, but to remain there the life of the high priest. Expressive appointment! Who out of Christ can be safe? One cannot but remark the deficiency of the type, as to the liberty as well as security which every believer obtains through Christ. As long as the high priest lived the slayer of blood was deprived of liberty beyond the bounds of the city. With all the mercy there provided, it must have been no little inconvenience to have been compelled so suddenly to give up connections, occupations, inheritance, and family for so uncertain a period. Nevertheless we are left to admire the wisdom of the Divine procedure, in that regard to the ends of public justice and social right, ever observed in even those institutions which were principally designed to set forth the unbounded grace of Christ. While the life of the high priest typified the security of Christ, the death of the high priest was to express the redemption of the forfeited possession. “After the death of the high priest, the slayer shall return to the land of his possession.” His life was a blessing that protected the slayer from the avenger, but his death unmistakably greater, for that secured liberty with life. The death of Christ has not only availed to deliver us from all the penalties of a broken covenant, but to interest us in all the positive blessings of the new; not only to save from all the sorrows of guilt, but to restore to us all the joys of innocence. (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER XXI.

VERS. 1-45. Unto the Levites . . . these cities.—Ministers liberally treated:—The liberality both of God and of His people to the ministers of God is here very marvellous, in giving forty-eight cities to this one tribe of Levi, which was the least of all the tribes, yet have they the most cities given to them (vers. 4, 10, 41), because it was the Lord’s pleasure to have this tribe provided for in an honourable manner, seeing He Himself took upon Him to be their portion and made choice of them for His peculiar service; therefore did He deal thus bountifully with His ministers, partly to put honour upon those whom He foresaw many would be prone to despise, and partly that by this liberality they, being freed from worldly distractions, might more entirely devote themselves to God’s service and to the instruction of souls. (*C. Ness.*) **Ministers wisely located:—**God provided for the residence of His ministers in most ample extent and number, and in a way suited to the spiritual instruction and benefit of the nation. In temple service they were round about the habitation of His holiness; and yet, in their ministerial instructions, dispersed over the whole land. How exact a fulfilment of dying Jacob’s prediction, and that even though mercy changed the curse into a blessing: “I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.” What an important appointment! and how adapted to the communication and diffusion of Divine truth for their lips, as the messengers of the Lord of hosts, were to keep knowledge, and at their mouth the people were to seek the law! It is no common privilege, under the more exalted and distinguished dispensation of the gospel, that the ministers of salvation are not removed into a corner, but that as servants of the most high God they have their stations assigned them, as may best promote the increase and instruction of the Church. These are the stars which He holds in His right hand, and which, great in wisdom and power, He numbers and calls by their names. What holy and heavenly light and influence are they ordained to impart in their several spheres! Without them the Christian Church would soon be involved in the most degrading and destructive ignorance, and overwhelmed with the miseries of corruption and error. Who that admits the importance of their services would not yield room to them as being equally a privilege as a duty. Their residence is to be esteemed a mercy, and no intrusion. Thus it has appeared that the Lord has ever paid special regard to His ministers, and as here enjoined upon His people, in obligation the most reasonable, to provide them habitations as well as support. (*W. Seaton.*) **There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken.—Divine faithfulness:—I. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN ACCOMPLISHING HIS ENGAGEMENTS**

TOWARD THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL. II. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO HIS CHURCH COLLECTIVELY in subsequent engagements. III. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN HIS ENGAGEMENTS TO INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS. I believe there is no person experiencing the power of religion who has not had an increasing evidence of the faithfulness of God in verifying His promises on which He has caused him to hope. He has found—notwithstanding the dark appearances of Divine providence—he has found that sort of satisfaction which he was taught to expect from the exercise of faith and confidence in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him. He has found, in seasons of pain and difficulty, that kind of assistance on which he was taught to rely. The faithfulness of God in performing His promises at present must, however, be in a great degree obscured by the darkness of our present state; for everything is in perpetual motion. No one can understand the nature of a beautiful building in the rubbish, or, while it is actually rising, in the midst of the complicated instruments used in its erection, but we must wait till it is finished before we can form a just estimate of its beauty. And with respect to that great hope of which the possession of Canaan was but a shadow and figure—the possession of the heavenly inheritance—in a very short time every real believer will be able to put his seal to the truth of the Divine promise. Let us rejoice that we have a covenant of God, and a covenant ordered in all things and sure, which is all our salvation and all our desire. And first, by way of improvement, let us observe the propriety of remembering the way in which the Lord God hath led us. If we consider the trials and sorrows of the present life as a part of that holy dispensation, in that proportion shall we be disposed to glorify God. If we trace the hand of man in these events, this may produce inquietude; but if we could extend our view to the furthest limit, all this would frequently be matter of gratitude, and we should be enabled to give thanks to God in everything. Let us look forward to that state in which we shall have His kindness fully displayed. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *The triumphant record of God's faithfulness*:—Verses 43-45 are the trophy reared on the battlefield, like the lion of Marathon, which the Greeks set on its sacred soil. But the only name inscribed on this monument is Jehovah's. Other memorials of victories have borne the pompous titles of commanders who arrogated the glory to themselves; but the Bible knows of only one conqueror, and that is God. "The help that is done on earth; He doeth it all Himself." The military genius and heroic constancy of Joshua, the eagerness for perilous honour that flamed, undimmed by age, in Caleb, the daring and strong arms of many a humbler private in the ranks, have their due recognition and reward; but when the history that tells of these comes to sum up the whole, and to put the "philosophy" of the conquest into a sentence, it has only one name to speak as cause of Israel's victory. That is the true point of view from which to look at the history of the world and of the Church in the world. The difference between the "miraculous" conquest of Canaan and the "ordinary" facts of history is not that God did the one and men do the other; both are equally, though in different methods, His acts. In the field of human affairs, as in the realm of nature, God is immanent, though in the former His working is complicated by the mysterious power of man's will to set itself in antagonism to His; while yet, in manner insoluble to us, His will is supreme. The very powers which are arrayed against Him are His gift, and the issue which they finally subserve is His appointment. It does not need that we should be able to pierce to the bottom of the bottomless in order to attain and hold fast by the great conviction that there is no power but of God, and that from Him are all things and to Him are all things. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *The Divine fidelity acknowledged*:—We may note, too, in these verses, the threefold repetition of the one thought, of God's punctual and perfect fulfilment of His word. He "gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give"; "He gave them rest . . . according to all that He swore"; "there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken." It is the joy of thankful hearts to compare the promise with the reality, to lay the one upon the other, as it were, and to declare how precisely their outlines correspond. The finished building is exactly according to the plans drawn long before. God gives us the power of checking His work, and we are unworthy to receive His gifts if we do not take delight in marking and proclaiming how completely He has fulfilled His contract. It is no small part of Christian duty, and a still greater part of Christian blessedness, to do this. Many a fulfilment passes unnoticed, and many a joy, which might be sacred and sweet as a token of love from His own hand, remains common and unhallowed, because we fail to see that it is a fulfilled promise. The eye that is trained to watch for God's being as good as His word

will never have long to wait for proofs that He is. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." And to such an one faith will become easier, being sustained by experience; and a present thus manifestly studded with indications of God's faithfulness will merge into a future still fuller of these. For it does not need that we should wait for the end of the war to have many a token that His every word is true. The struggling soldier can say, "No good thing has failed of all that the Lord has spoken." We look, indeed, for completer fulfilment when the fighting is done; but there are brooks by the way for the warriors in the thick of the fight, of which they drink, and, refreshed, lift up the head. We need not postpone this glad acknowledgment till we can look back and down from the land of peace on the completed campaign, but may rear this trophy on many a field, whilst still we look for another conflict to-morrow. (*Ibid.*) *The Supreme Worker*:—We read that on a pyramid in Egypt the name and sounding titles of the king in whose reign it was erected were blazoned on the plaster facing, but beneath that transitory inscription the name of the architect was hewn, imperishable, in the granite, and stood out when the plaster dropped away. So, when all the short-lived records which ascribe the events of the Church's progress to her great men have perished, the one name of the true Builder will shine out, and to the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. Let us not rely on our own skill, courage, talents, orthodoxy, or methods, nor try to build tabernacles for the witnessing servants beside the central one for the supreme Lord, but ever seek to deepen our conviction that Christ, and Christ only, gives all their powers to all, and that to Him, and Him only, is all victory to be ascribed. It is an elementary and simple truth; but if we really lived in its power we should go into the battle with more confidence, and come out of it with less self-gratulation. (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER XXII.

VERS. 1-34. Ye have not left your brethren.—Helping one another:—I. THESE TRIBES HELPED THEIR BRETHREN TO THEIR OWN INCONVENIENCE AND POSITIVE DETRIMENT. A narrow-minded, selfish race would have recognised no claim for any service which could not be repaid dollar for dollar. What fine excuses could have been made for the non-performance of this duty if they had been in the excuse-making mood! How prominently that threadbare proverb, "Charity begins at home"—a proverb often outrageously perverted—might have figured in their conversation! We have our own children and our own houses to look after; our crops must be planted and harvested; our homes must be established in this new land; the wandering tribes of our enemies may at any time swoop down upon our vineyards and gardens. Small and selfish souls always reason in this way, whether they live in Palestine or America, in the fifteenth century before Christ or the nineteenth after Christ. Such reasoning and such living inevitably lead to national and individual bankruptcy in all the generous and noble qualities which make a nation great. Let us remember also that it is not what we can spare as well as not which helps our brother. It is not the cast-off coat which we should never wear, the superfluous dollar whose gift we should never feel, that blesses the world; it is the gift that carries part of ourselves with it that helps to regenerate mankind. The Reubenites and Gadites gave themselves, their sturdiest men, their bravest warriors, not merely a quota of drafted hirelings. There is no other brotherly kindness worth the name; a dollar bill given without the personal interest of the one who sends it is but a piece of printed paper; a dollar bill sent with love and prayer, a bill that represents the yearning of some heart to do good, may be—yea, it always is—the winged messenger of God, carrying a blessing to him to whom it goes and leaving a larger one with him who sends it. **II. THESE HEROIC ISRAELITES HELPED THEIR BRETHREN PERSISTENTLY AND PATIENTLY.** Seven long years passed before all their battles were fought and they were at liberty to return to their wives and their children. In our deeds of benevolence and charity the tendency is to leave the work half-done because of discouragement at the slowness of results. "Ye did run well, who did hinder you?" might be the epitaph on the tombstone of many abandoned schemes of philanthropy. If the world could be converted in a

year, there would be many enthusiastic missionaries among those who now chiefly find fault with the slowness of missionary operations, because the Lord chooses to make use of centuries in bringing about the triumph of His cause. The reason for this seeming slowness of God's hosts is not far to seek. There is more virtue in the fight than in the victory. There are souls to be enlarged, there are sympathies to be quickened, there are lives to be inspired with zeal for God and truth and fellow-men. All this is accomplished by the struggle and not by the ease and the possession of the goodly land that follows the struggle. III. **THEIR HOME-COMING AFTER THE SEVEN YEARS OF CONFLICT.** There is another home-coming to which every true heart aspires, and the conditions of honourable discharge and of welcome to that home are typified in our lesson. What is heaven except the final gathering-place for those who have helped their brethren for Christ's sake? (*F. E. Clark.*) *Helping others*:—The law for us is the same as for these warriors. In the family, the city, the nation, the Church, and the world, union with others binds us to help them in their conflicts, and that especially if we are blessed with secure possessions, while they have to struggle for theirs. We are tempted to selfish lives of indulgence in our quiet peace, and sometimes think it hard that we should be expected to buckle on our armour and leave our leisurely repose because our brethren ask the help of our arms. If we did as Reuben and Gad did, would there be so many rich men who never stir a finger to relieve poverty, so many Christians whose religion is much more selfish than beneficent? Would so many souls be left to toil without help, to struggle without allies, to weep without comforters, to wander in the dark without a guide? All God's gifts in providence and in the gospel are given that we may have somewhat wherewith to bless our less happy brethren. "The service of man" is not the substitute for, but the expression of, Christianity. Are we not kept here, on this side Jordan, away for a time from our inheritance, for the very same reason that these men were separated from theirs—that we may strike some strokes for God and our fellows in the great war? Dives, who lolls on his soft cushions, and has less pity for Lazarus than the dogs have, is Cain come to life again; and every Christian is either his brother's keeper or his murderer. Would that the Church of to-day, with infinitely deeper and sacred ties knitting it to suffering, struggling humanity, had a tithe of the willing relinquishment of legitimate possessions and patient participation in the long campaign for God which kept these rude soldiers faithful to their flag and forgetful of home and ease till their general gave them their discharge. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Standing by our brethren*:—A ship arrived at San Francisco recently which had been two hundred and ninety-six days from New Castle, Australia. She had been in great peril in a storm at sea and had had long delays. One night when she was in great danger the captain asked the captain of another ship to stand by through the night, and he did so at great risk to his own vessel and his own life, but finally was the cause of the salvation of the imperilled vessel. As soon as he was safe in harbour the captain of the ship that had been threatened with wreck gave his first attention to showing appreciation of the other captain's assistance, and sent him a gold watch, and went before the council of the city of Sydney and told the story of his heroism. On learning of it the Sydney authorities presented to the noble captain a medal bearing his name on one side, and on the other the simple inscription, "The man that did stand by." In the midst of the campaign for righteousness that is going on in our modern life the noblest ambition for a Christian man is to share the fate of righteousness; to be no more popular than Jesus Christ would be, if He stood in his place, and sought as of old to make it easy for men to do right and hard for them to do wrong. Rather than anything else the Christian man should prize having Christ look down upon him and say: "The man that did stand by." (*Louis A. Banks, D.D.*) **Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law.**—*The commander's parting charge*:—They were about to depart for a life of comparative separation from the mass of the nation. Their remoteness and their occupations drew them away from the current of the national life, and gave them a kind of quasi-independence. They would necessarily be less directly under Joshua's control than the other tribes were. He sends them away with one commandment, the imperative stringency of which is expressed by the accumulation of expressions in ver. 5. They are to give diligent heed to the law of Moses. Their obedience is to be based on love to God, who is their God no less than the God of the other tribes. It is to be comprehensive—walking in all His ways; it is to be resolute—cleaving to Him; it is to be whole-hearted and whole-souled service, that will be the true bond between the separated

parts of the whole. Independence so limited will be harmless; and, however wide apart the paths may lie, Israel will be one. In like manner the bond that knits all divisions of God's people together, however different their modes of life and thought, however unlike their homes and their work, is the similarity of relation to God. They are one in a common faith, a common love, a common obedience. Wider waters than Jordan part them. Graver differences of tasks and outlooks than separated these two sections of Israel part them. But all are one who love and obey the one Lord. The closer we cleave to Him, the nearer we shall be to all His tribes. (*American Sunday School Times.*)

Universal obligation.—All the great duties of a Christian life are no more incumbent upon Christians than upon other men; for men are bound to be and to do right on the religious scale of rectitude not because they are Christians, but because they are men. Religious obligations took hold of us when we were born. They waited for us as the air did. They have their sources back of volition, back of consciousness, just as attraction has. Though a man declares himself an atheist it in no way alters his obligations. Right and wrong do not spring from the nature of the Church. Obligation lies deeper than that. It is as much the worldling's duty to love God and obey His laws as the Christian's. (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Obedience unmeasured.—When the truth of our sincerity requires to be weighed out in drachms and scruples, and runs so sparingly as from an exhausted vessel—when the state of the conscience must be ascertained by a theological barometer, the health of the soul must be in a very feeble and crazy condition. (*H. G. Salter.*)

Sincere obedience.—If conscience be enlightened, and faithful in the trial, a man cannot deliberately deceive himself: he must know whether his resolutions and endeavours be to obey all the will of God; or, whether, like an intermitting pulse, that sometimes beats regularly, and then falters, he is zealous in some duties, and cold, or careless in others? Saul would offer sacrifice, but not obey the Divine command to destroy all the Amalekites: for his partiality and hypocrisy he was rejected of God. 'Tis not the authority of the lawgiver, but other motives that sway those who observe some commands, and are regardless of others. A servant that readily goes to a fair or a feast, when sent by his master, and neglects other duties, does not his master's command from obedience, but his own choice. Sincere obedience is to the royalty of the Divine law, and is commensurate to its purity and extent. (*Ibid.*)

What trespass is this that ye have committed?—*The memorial altar.*—1. Notice the proper jealousy of the elders. When the chiefs of the tribes of Israel heard of this altar they arose in great alarm and went down to their brethren, the two and a half tribes, to demand an explanation. Their jealousy was hasty, it was ignorant and uncharitable, but it was not unnatural. It arose, indeed, from a misunderstanding. They imagined that the eastern men were wishful to do the exact opposite of that which was in their hearts; they took the altar to be a sign and a means of division, whereas it was intended to be a symbol and an influence for unity. Such misunderstandings often and naturally arise. Men look at what others are doing; they do not stay to inquire, they assume they know all about it; they read in what they see their own notions, and hence they come to unwise and uncharitable opinions. It is surely necessary that Christian men, in judging each other's work, should cultivate a spirit of candour, should be anxious to be clear in judgment, should assume the better motive until the worse is proved; and should remember that, within the limits of what is right, there is room for wide difference of taste, even where there is equal loyalty for the truth and equal anxiety for its maintenance.

2. Now notice the anxiety of the fathers. They were very anxious to have a symbol of unity. They themselves, who had borne a part in every conflict, could never forget the battle or the victory; but to their children those memories might become dim, and might even become to be thought mere myths, and so they desired a symbol, the existence of which could only be accounted for by the fact symbolised, and the sight of which, exciting curiosity and comment, should keep the glorious facts alive amongst them. And they were surely right. Symbols and monuments are useful, the human mind requires them, and men in all ages and lands have provided them: erected on the sites of great battles, as Waterloo and Quebec; to commemorate great discoveries, such as chloroform; or great inventions, such as the steam engine; they have been executed to keep green the memory of great men. The busy world is only too apt to forget its benefactors and to lose trace of the events which have been mightiest in moulding its fortunes, so the instinct of men has led them to keep alive precious memories by monumental symbols. And the principle has been recognised by God Himself,

and has been embodied in the institutions of the Church. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a symbol, a memorial observance in which we do show forth the Lord's death till He comes. By its frequent observance the Church recalls to the mind of its members and the attention of the thoughtless world the supreme fact of human history. And surely never were becoming memorials of great and noble events more necessary than in our own time! These are days of rush and hurry unexampled. Events succeed each other so rapidly that one impression overlays, and perhaps effaces, its predecessors. Anything that will help us to keep in mind great deeds done for God and man, and their influence on subsequent events, will preserve the rich treasure of our spiritual heritage. 3. But, again, those fathers were anxious for a link with the past. They were unwilling that the continuity of their history should be broken. They, and their children after them, would be impoverished if the memories of the past should be lost. Some of them might be memories of shame, but even therein were precious lessons of warning; and many of them were memories of triumph invaluable for the inspirations to duty and to enterprise which they conveyed. Those old heroes were unwilling that the past with its lessons should fade away and disappear, and they were right. How much we owe to the past, though we are often unconscious of the debt! Our position, our mental quality, the balance of our faculties, our peculiar character, have come to us through the mingling of many strains and the influence of a thousand varying circumstances. Our mental conceptions arise out of the heritage of ideas which we find before us when we come into the world, possessed by all minds as a common endowment and embodied in a multitude of forms, literary, mechanical, social, religious. What magnificent possessions the past hands on to us! 4. And, especially, these people were anxious for their children; they were anxious that their share in the toils and risks of the campaigns of Israel should not be forgotten. They were fearful lest their children should lose their part in the original heritage of the covenant. Many causes would favour this: distance, which made it impossible for them to attend the great national festivals; difference of habits occasioned by the different surroundings of their life; the influence of neighbouring idolatry; intermarriage with the tribes hard by—all these things would make it only too likely that, after one or two generations, their children would fall away from the faith of Israel. If by the sight of this great altar overlooking the Jordan they could be reminded of God's claim upon them and God's covenant with them and God's dealing with their fathers, perhaps they might be preserved from the apostasy which would otherwise ruin them. Who does not sympathise with this anxiety of the fathers of the ancient days which has always been a marked characteristic of truly godly men, that they have been anxious for their children's salvation? "Oh, that Ishmael might live before Thee!" is a prayer which has often found echo in the hearts of men. Love itself becomes more true and tender when, with all the other passions, it is sanctified by the indwelling Spirit. Then, too, the successes or failures of life become properly discriminated. Men who see the invisible estimate the more correctly the things temporal and the things eternal. And the chief solicitude for their children comes to be, not that they should be rich or fashionable, but that they should be good. (*T. R. Stephenson, D.D.*) *The altar of testimony*:—Suppose we call the Israelites who built the altar the Eastern Church, and those who found fault with them the Western Church. We shall hope to get instruction from both. From the builders of the altar of testimony we shall ask you to learn a lesson in Christian doctrine; from their brethren of the west, who found fault with them, a lesson in Christian practice. I. Now the story of the altar on the banks of the Jordan appears to me REMARKABLE AS A PERFECT ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT MAY BE CALLED A GREAT SPIRITUAL AMBIGUITY, COMMON (IN FACT, UNIVERSAL) THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH OF THE MODERNS. It certainly is something above and beyond a mere theological refinement when we discuss one with another the right province of duty and work in the system of Christianity. It enters into every judgment we form of other men's Christianity or our own. The hard-toiling Christian, is he a Pharisee or not? The idle and the useless Christian, is he a humble believer in the sacrifice of Christ? Here, then, it is that the Reubenites will come in and render us a valuable service as teachers of sound doctrine. "We dwell," said they, "in the near neighbourhood of idolatrous tribes. There is nothing now—there will be less when we are dead and gone—to mark us out from the heathen and to rank us with the chosen of the Lord." And therefore up went the altar—a memorial, a lasting memorial, in the style of it, or the inscription it bore, that the builders were they who had come up out of Egypt, and belonged to the seed of Abraham according to the promise. And is it not for this

very same purpose that we Christians are commanded to "let your light so shine before men"? The offerings of the silver and the gold, the building of churches, the visiting of the widow and the fatherless, the carrying of the gospel to foreign climes, the reclaiming of untaught and neglected childhood from misery and guilt—there are lesser motives for doing these things, but the chief motive is that we may adorn the doctrines we profess, that men may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, and that all the world may discover that ours is no barren or unprofitable faith. Or perhaps, like the Reubenites, our motives may stretch out into other generations. We may build, with our money, and our toils, and our example, and our lives, that our children and our children's children may say of our memory, "Behold the pattern of the altar of the Lord, which our fathers made." But now, mark you. It was an altar that the Church east of the Jordan built up for their memorial. Were the Reubenites wrong in rearing their memorial in the form of an altar? It came out, "Not at all." It was not designed for a victim: no sacrifice, in the proper Shiloh sense of sacrifice, was ever to be offered up from it. "Behold the pattern of the altar of the Lord." That was all they intended by the erection. They would tell the heathen, and their children would tell the children of the heathen, that the Jordan made no difference between them and the seed of Abraham on the other side. They must build something. What shall it be? Why, let it be a model, a copy, of the altar that is at Shiloh. What more fitting? What more pregnant with meaning? It reminds them whilst they live of the one solitary spot where the blood must be shed for the remission of sin; it will prove to friends and enemies, when they themselves are no more, that they too were blessed in faithful Abraham. The altar was a tribute, not a rival, to the tabernacle that dwelt in Shiloh. Oh, beautiful picture this of what a Christian's good works are, and what a Christian's good works are not. They are a memorial, a demonstration. They must take some form. What form shall they have? What? Why the form of patterns, copies, models of the sacrifice of Christ. To be trusted in? To be looked to for salvation? To supplant the offering on the Cross? Nay, indeed, not so. But to do homage to that Cross by imitation, to remind us of it while we live, and to point our descendants to it when we are gone.

II. Learn, then, from the warm-hearted Israelites on the east of the Jordan THAT A GOOD MAN'S TOILS ARE NOT THE GOOD MAN'S ATONEMENT, BUT THAT THEY MAY BE REARED, AND MUST BE REARED, IN THE SHAPE AND ON THE MODEL OF CHRIST'S ATONEMENT—AN ALTAR, but an altar of witness or testimony, reminding both yourselves and your neighbours of the one sacrifice for sin which, though none can ever repeat, all are commanded to copy. But now it seems hardly possible to make the Reubenites and the Gadites our only teachers in this story. They may render a lesson upon Christian doctrine, but certainly their brethren across the water match them with a lesson on Christian practice. Just think for a moment of the spirit and manner wherein, from the days of the apostles, the Church has carried on the innumerable controversies that split up the Catholic Church into parties. Grace and good works. What a happy thing it would have been for every one but the booksellers if the champions on both sides had only had the charity and good sense to do what the men of Western Israel did towards the men of Eastern Israel three thousand years ago. They condescended first to find out whether, in point of fact, there was any heresy to fight against. "Strike," then, in your controversies, but "hear" first; and when you "strike," let it be only with the strong argument, and never with the frenzy of the persecutor. Remember the words of Bishop Taylor: "Either the disagreeing person is in error, or he is not. In both cases to persecute is extremely imprudent. If he be right, then we do open violence to God and to God's truth; if he be wrong, what stupidity it is to give to error the glory of martyrdom. Besides which, there is always a jealousy and a suspicion that persecutors have no arguments, and that the hangman is their best reasoner." No, no, we will not hastily "bear false witness against our neighbour," but we will speak one to another, and judge other men's servants no longer; and may the very God of peace and love give to all of us to build up everywhere humble models and copies of His great work for our salvation, and help us to do all that we do in the spirit of charity. (*H. Christopherson.*)

The purity and unity of the Church:—I. THE STATE OF MIND WHICH THE ERECTION OF THIS ALTAR EXCITED IN THE OTHER TRIBES. 1. Zeal for the honour of God. 2. Fear lest they should incur the Divine displeasure. II. THE REAL DESIGN FOR WHICH THE ALTAR WAS ERECTED. 1. It was a memorial that they were one people. 2. It was a memorial that they had one God and one religion.

Lessons: 1. These Israelites, by setting up this altar, show their love to the service

and worship of God. Had they not valued their privileges, it would not have occurred to them to provide against the possibility of losing them : that which we value we endeavour to keep. 2. They show their love to their brethren. Had they not felt a regard for them, they would not have sought means to preserve the knowledge of their common relation to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They who sincerely love God will love their brethren, and love will secure unity ; but not at the expense of purity. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *A supposed wrong explained* :—

1. How little reliance can be placed upon hearsay ! It is always so difficult to give a true report of what has happened, that to draw inferences from, and institute action upon mere rumour, is a dangerous course. A fact is not necessarily the truth, because it may be but part of the truth. Part of the truth is often the most dangerous, subtle, and wicked lie. A fact is after all but the expression of a motive ; so that to grasp the bearing of a fact the motive must be first of all understood. Consequently, hearsay must always be an unsafe, and often a mischievous guide.

2. Notice how a religious symbol, employed with the most innocent design and for a praiseworthy end, was interpreted as a signal of idolatry and rebellion. At the present day, what excites the worst passions so powerfully, and that, too, in the name of religion, as some devout act or pious sign, of which the meaning is not quite clear to the uninitiated, or which prejudice associates with heresy or superstition. 3. If all would follow the example of the Israelites, and, before going to war, as it were, to right a supposed wrong, would first seek an explanation, how often the wrong would be found to have no existence, and how clear of discord the atmosphere of the world would become ! 4. Never assume the guilt of those whom you suspect. It creates a prejudice in one's own mind, which it is hard to overcome. It makes one's own manner severe and condemnatory, instead of being conciliatory and impartial. The effect upon the opposite party is to create an attitude of resentment, to excite irritation, to give a sense of injury, to predispose to a perpetuation of the quarrel, instead of seeking to remove it. 5. The eastern tribes behaved with exemplary self-control. They were the grossly injured party. Yet, smarting as they were under the sense of injustice, they did not resent the indignity. You hear no reproaches or recriminations. They simply state their innocence and disclose their real motives. 6. Phinehas and the people blessed God that war was averted. Are we not sometimes disappointed when we find there is no cause for quarrel ? (*T. W. M. Lund, M.A.*)

Misunderstanding :—1. Prepossessions and misunderstandings are too often the occasion of great divisions in the world, and of such as, if not prevented, draw after them very pernicious and fatal consequences. 2. There ought to be the speediest and most effectual care taken for preventing the ill-consequences of such misunderstandings, and to take up the case before it comes to the utmost extremity. 3. The most proper method for preventing such misunderstandings, and for composing differences arising from such misunderstandings, is examination and inquiry into the cause with deliberation and meekness, that they may see where the difference lies, and take the best course for the composing of it. 4. It is a comfortable evidence of God's presence with a people to bless, defend, and prosper them when mistakes are removed, differences happily composed, and they are at union and peace among themselves. (*John Williams, D.D.*)

Misconstruction :—Thus quarrels among brethren oft arise from mere mistakes, as betwixt Cyril and Theodore, who excommunicated one another for heresy, &c., yet afterwards coming to a better understanding of each other's meaning, and finding they both held the same truth, they were cordially reconciled. We must justly wonder at the over-hasty jealousy of the ten tribes against their brethren, whose faithfulness and valour for God and His people they had so long experience of in the Seven Years' War ; yet now to find fault, when themselves were foully faulty of a rash censure, having only Allegata's, or matters alleged, but no Probata's, or things proved ; but alas ! how oft doth inconsiderate zeal transport even religious men to uncharitable censures. Would to God all such differences upon mistakes in our day may be as happily ended as this was here, then God is among us (ver. 31), perceivingly ; but dissension drives God from us, and will let in dissolution among us if we avoid not all giving offence carelessly and all taking offence causelessly. Oh, that the Lord would take away that morosity and malignity of a censorious spirit from us, and give to us more meekness of wisdom (Jas. iii. 13). The Reubenites, &c., here were really to be commended not only for their care in building this altar for the spiritual good of their posterity (lest they should forsake the sincere service of the true God in their following generations), but also for their meekness when thus foully calumniated. They did not bristle and set up the crest in a way of scornful defiance, but they

calmly sought to give due satisfaction to their offended brethren; and the ten tribes were verily more blameworthy for misconstruing their religious meanings and doings upon such slender grounds as a bare report (without any solid proof), misrepresenting the matter to them. Yet herein were they truly praiseworthy, not only that they were so blessedly blown up with a zeal for God's glory, in preparing war against idolatry, yea, even in one half of the tribe of Manasseh against the other half beyond Jordan, when the purity of their religion came in competition with brotherly affection, like Levi in that heroic act of Divine justice (Exod. xxxii. 26-29), would not spare their own brethren (Deut. xxxiii. 9), but also, and more especially, that the ten tribes first sent Phinehas, so famous for his heroic act against Zimri and Cozbi, whereby God's wrath was appeased (Num. xxv. 8-11; Psa. cvi. 30), to compromise the controversy, which he happily effected without any imbruing their hands in one another's blood. Sure I am we want such a Phinehas in our day to put an happy end to our unhappy differences. (*C. Ness.*)

Ver. 20. Achan . . . perished not alone in his iniquity.—*Achan and his punishment*.—Where could I allege Scripture so wonderful to show the mystery of God's justice, lest we speak unadvisedly with our lips: "Why art Thou so wrath with the sheep of Thy pasture?" Strike once upon this rock of justice, and I dare promise a fountain will issue out from thence of fear and reverence not to provoke the Lord by sins and trespasses; for if He threaten, shall He seem as one that mocks? First, We must put the cause foremost, the cause of all the wrath that follows, and that both general: it is iniquity, and with an instance his iniquity. The subject, Achan, but not alone; the affliction, that he perished. Now let not any man make it a fallacy to deceive his own soul. Doth not the cause deserve severe arraignment? Then blaspheme not as the wicked do: "He seeketh an occasion to punish." Sin in its essence is confederate with death and punishment. Thus much for the cause in general. But what offence his iniquity did give, the sin of Achan will ask a peculiar and a larger trial. You are deceived if you think it was but larceny or greedy pilfering. But heinous was the fact of Achan, first in scandal, that an Israelite, preserved so long in the wilderness, one that fought the Lord's battles, and came always home with victory, that he should be the first that trespassed among the Canaanites, the heathen that would blaspheme the living God. Secondly, In disobedience: that Joshua, his noble general, made the head of all the tribes by God's appointment, and Moses' good liking, and Eleazar's unction, could not command to be obeyed. Thirdly, In faithless covetousness. That since manna did fall no more from heaven about their tents, the Lord did heed His people no longer, every man must catch what come to his hands, so Achan took the accursed, &c. Here is scandal to them that were without; within themselves contempt of the Lord and His servant Joshua, in his own heart an inordinate desire to grow rich and sumptuous. Now turn to the punishment of this man. Behold Achan, the son of Zerah, that man perished not alone in his iniquity. Achan that had outlived the corruption of his young years, and was grown in age able to go to warfare, to have many children, to know how to steal from God, and dissemble with Joshua, doth his hoary head go down with peace into the grave? Like the web of Penelope, all that hath been wrought in the year may be unravelled out in a night. Secondly, He that was spared among all the dangers of the wilderness is consumed in the city; he that could escape the pilgrimage of forty years is doomed to die in Canaan; he that was not devoured in the fire of Taberah is burnt in the valley of Achor. As Aristotle speaks of Homer's poetry, when he set up walls for Troy in one book, and plucked them down in another. They that walk in the night preserve the flame of their torch or candle from winds and casualties abroad, which notwithstanding they put out when they return to their home. So Achan that walked over the sea, when the bridge was under water, and lived among scorpions, and was not consumed in the sedition of Dathan, nor slain in the battles of Moab, yet the vessel is not cast away in the ocean sea, but in the haven, and his light is put out at home in the long-expected Canaan. Note this, thirdly, in Achan's person, mischief did light upon him, not in the hunger and thirst of the wilderness, not in his poverty, but having compiled much riches together, enough to purchase a good fee-simple in Canaan if the Lord had not given him his portion. Men think themselves nowadays past the law and penalties of death, when they have sinned so much that they are grown wealthy in iniquity; because, if need be, they can buy the favour of the judge. But this man, when he was furnished to live sumptuously, then he is out off, that, as Solomon says, the remembrance of death may be bitter to that man,

who thought it pleasant to live. This was St. Austin's rule when he was old and had learnt the world: "I fear no hurt from the world when it goes against me, and casts a froward look upon my fortunes, but my danger is near at hand, when it smiles and flatters me, as if all were happy." The sponges that swell with liquors are most likely to be pressed and emptied. Now recollect these three qualities of Achan, who was more likely to prosper than a soldier in the flower of his age, a joyful man at his journey's end in the land of his peace, a wealthy man in the plenty of his riches. Take it to thought, all you that have the world tied unto you with a threefold cord of health and peace and prosperity, which men dream as if it could not be broken; for it broke like tow among the sparks. I have many theorems to propound unto you, but all shall end in this doctrine, that excepting the first Adam, the root of our corrupt nature, and excepting the second Adam, who, being without spot or sin, gave Himself to the death of the Cross for the sins of all the world, these two excepted, every man dies for his own iniquity. First, I do presume that you will consent unto me that the heart of man is only evil continually, and that we may call it, as Theodorus did revile Tiberius, mud tempered with pollution. Then, it is confessed, that the wages of sin is death. Give me your credit but to one thing more. You are bound to answer to as painful and severe a death as God's vengeance shall inflict upon you. Observe these points, then. First, If the disobedience of one sinner is enough to consume many persons, Lord whither will a multitude of iniquity send one man headlong? Sufficient are our evil days wherein we have walked too much before after the vanity of our mind. Secondly, As the greatest unity of the triumphant Church above doth consist in the glory which they enjoy together in the sight of God, so our unity of the militant Church below is to suffer and die together. It is that which must combine the souls of Christians. Thirdly, Shall not this make me as careful to prevent every man's sins as mine own? Shall I not offer myself to be my brother's keeper? Like watchmen that compass the city in the night, not only for the safety of their own house, but lest any mansion take fire about them. Thus is the brief sum of the second part of my text, man perished in iniquity. Secondly, That man Achan, a branch of the olive tree, even Israel which God had planted. But an evil branch is evil though the stock were a cedar of Libanus. Is it any glory for the dead branches to boast they were vine branches, and not heythorn, since they are cut off and cast away? Lastly, He fell down like the tower of Siloam, and brained all that were about him. I have but one short part to dispatch, his execution, that man perished, &c. To search much into Achan's punishment were not the way to be more learned, but more tormented. Briefly thus, Every man in the rank of a subject lives under the authority of three commanders—1. Under the conscience of his own heart. 2. Under the laws of his king. 3. Under the commandments of God. And if we displease either God or the king, or our own conscience, vengeance meets us on every side. Conscience hath a worm in store, nay, a cockatrice to sting us; the magistrate bears a sword to divide us; but especially it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. In an evil conscience we die unto all joy and comfort; in our trespass against the laws of man we die unto men; in breaking the statutes of God we die unto heaven: surely he deserved not to die but one death that offended three. Some, perchance, will go a thought further, and pronounce a fearful sentence that this man was wiped for ever out of the book of the living. Nothing should make me mistrustful and doubt of his salvation but his too late repentance. Is this a time to leave off sin when we must leave off life and can sin no more? Do you then come to play the huxters for mercy, as if the market were cheapest at the latter end of the day? (*Bp. Hacket.*) *Achan's sin, and Achan's end*:—I. THE PERPETRATION OF SIN. Iniquity is the common characteristic of all mankind: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." But there is before us a reference to one particular act of sin, which, while proceeding from the depraved heart possessed by the perpetrator in common with others, appears to us in prominent and isolated distinction of enormity. 1. The iniquity of Achan was heinous, on account of its intrinsic nature. It was an act of covetousness. He was beguiled by a greedy and unprincipled desire after the attainment and preservation of wealth. 2. The iniquity of Achan was perpetrated against the Divine command, distinctly expressed and amply known. 3. The iniquity of Achan was heinous on account of its attendant dissimulation and attempted concealment. II. THE INFLICTION OF PUNISHMENT. The punishment of the transgressor himself: "That man perished in his iniquity." The terms of our text appear to justify the implication, that his iniquity was not repented of, and

that therefore it was not cleansed or forgiven; he confessed, but he was not contrite; and the whole spirit of the narrative must be regarded as justifying the view which now is expressed. So that you perceive the death of his body was the sign of the ruin of his soul. And it is true with regard to every impenitent sinner, in every age of the world, who dies in iniquity, that thus he must "perish." "They shall utterly perish in their own corruption." They die "the second death."

2. Observe the punishment of the transgressor, in relation to the interests of others. "That man perished not alone in his iniquity." Men by their iniquity often associate themselves with the ruin of the souls of their fellow-men. It is probable that no person can long continue in a state of alienation from God without exerting (although he attempts it not) some baneful influence on the character and the interests of others; and there are, we have reason to fear, numerous instances in which men by bad example, or even by direct efforts for that purpose, make others "partakers of their evil deeds" and lead them down to hell. How horrible, how thrice horrible, to lead others into the prison! to lash around others the fetters! to administer to others the poison! to enwrap others in the flame! Deeds at which hell itself may wonder and fiend may point with amazement to his fellow-fiend—"That man 'perished not alone in his iniquity'; there is the seducer, and there are his victims—all victims now!" Lessons—1. There ought to be anxious application for the pardon of our transgressions perpetrated in past times. 2. There ought to be the determined repudiation and avoidance of sin for the time to come. 3. There ought to be diligent endeavour to bring our fellow-men to salvation. Some are "not alone in their iniquity"; it must be our ambition not to be alone in our salvation. (*James Parsons.*)

The history of Achan improved:—I. THE NATURE OF THE INIQUITY WHICH HE COMMITTED. He transgressed the plain command of God, and thus sinned against Him. He no doubt sinned also against his own soul, against his family, and against his people. But no notice is taken of this. What is dwelt upon is, that he sinned against the Lord. His iniquity was a transgression of the command and law and covenant of his God. It implied the basest ingratitude for the mercies he had received, as well as a secret disbelief of the Divine omniscience, power, holiness, righteousness, and truth. Was this sin peculiar to Achan? Are there not many others who are virtually guilty of the same thing? Are there not many who apply to their own use what has been dedicated to God? Are there not many who retain in their own possession gold and silver which they ought to consecrate to Him? Are there not many who rob Him of the time which He has set apart for His immediate worship and service? Are there not many who by no entreaty can be prevailed upon to glorify Him in their body, and in their spirit, which are His? What incited Achan to commit sacrilege, and thus to sin against God, was avarice—an inordinate desire of money, an eagerness of gain. And are there not many who, under the influence of the same sordid spirit, act like him, and thus sin against God and their own souls? "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth." II. *THE WAY IN WHICH THE INIQUITY OF ACHAN WAS BROUGHT TO LIGHT.*

1. The Lord hates and abhors sin. It is an enemy within the camp which is sure to betray us into the hands of those that are without, and ultimately make us their prey. 2. The Lord sees our sins, however secretly they may be committed. 3. God is able to bring our sins to light even now, and that He frequently does bring them, to our utter confusion. By such visitations in time the Lord warns us of what we are to expect in eternity. III. *THE CONFESSION WHICH ACHAN MADE OF HIS INIQUITY.* Had Achan made this confession sooner, there would have been room to hope that he truly repented of his iniquity; but as he deferred his acknowledgment of his guilt till the lot actually pointed him out, there is reason to fear that it proceeded at last from no real change of heart; that, in fact, it was constrained and not voluntary. 1. How he was led to commit his iniquity. Mark here the way in which men are frequently led to sin against God. The temptation makes its insidious approach by means of the eyes, or one of the other senses; then there arises in the heart an evil desire for the thing seen; and desire, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin. It is necessary, therefore, that we should make a covenant with our eyes, that we should watch against temptation, that we should guard against the first approaches of iniquity, that we should stop every avenue by which sin can enter. 2. How full of fear and disquietude is the life of a sinner. Achan, having taken the accursed thing, hid it in the earth in the midst of his tent. Why? Because he was afraid some one would see it; and in this fear he must have lived day after day, until his iniquity was brought to light. Such always is sin, every

sin, and especially the sin of theft or sacrilego. It deludes those who are under its dominion. It promises them much, but pays them little but wretchedness and misery. It fills them with fears and anxieties, and often causes them to flee when no man pursueth. IV. THE PUNISHMENT WHICH FOLLOWED THE INIQUITY OF ACHAN. 1. As to Achan himself, condign punishment speedily overtook him: "He perished in his iniquity." He suffered death as the due reward of his crime. And such is the wages which every sinner is sure to receive unless he obtains deliverance through the death of Christ, who died that we might live. 2. Others also suffered for the iniquity of Achan: "That man perished not alone in his iniquity." Who, then, perished besides him? Many had perished before him, and perished too for his iniquity, namely, the thirty-and-six men who were smitten by the men of Ai. It is also probable that all his family were put to death with him for the same sin. Such were the dreadful consequences occasioned by the iniquity of this man. And is not sin, even in our own day, frequently followed by similar consequences? How often do we see children suffering for the sins of their parents and parents for the sins of their children? How often do we see thieves and murderers, adulterers, drunkards, and such like, involving their wives and families, and perhaps other relations also, in poverty and disgrace, in troubles and anxieties, in wretchedness and misery, if not in still more awful calamities? How often, also, has one order of society to bear the ill consequences arising from the misconduct of another? Lessons: 1. How wonderful is the patience of God towards the world we live in. In the conduct of Achan we may see, as in a glass, what is the conduct of hundreds and thousands who are now living on the earth. How astonishing, then, is the patience of God! How wonderful that He should still bear with us, that He should still give us space for repentance, that He should still be unwilling that we should perish! Oh, let us not despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering! 2. The patience of God, however great and wonderful, will not last for ever. (*D. Rees.*) *Fellowship in Achan's fall*:—If indeed, says Dr. South, a man could be wicked and a villain to himself alone, the mischief would be so much the more tolerable. But the case, as he goes on to show, is much otherwise; the guilt of the crime lights upon one, but the example of it sways a multitude; especially if the criminal be of any note or eminence in the world. "For the fall of such an one by any temptation (be it never so plausible) is like that of a principal stone or stately pillar, tumbling from a lofty edifice into the deep mire of the street; it does not only plunge and sink into the black dirt itself, but also dashes or bespatters all that are about it or near it when it falls." Well may the note of exclamation follow: how strange, yet how inevitable, the tie which may link our uneventful life with the stormy passions of numbers far away! More wonderful than even the Atlantic cable is declared to be that unknown fibre, along which, from other men's sins, responsibility may thrill even to our departed souls: "a chain whose links are formed perhaps of idle words, of forgotten looks, of phrases of double meaning, of bad advice, of cynical sentiment hardly seriously meant; yet carried on through life after life, through soul after soul, till the little seed of evil sown by you has developed into some deed of guilt at which you shudder, but from participation in responsibility for which you cannot clear yourself." Every sin, we are in fine reminded, may waken its echo; every sin is reduplicated and reiterated in other souls and lives. A distinguished French preacher has a striking discourse on what he entitles the solidarity of evil; and he, too, dilates upon the mysterious links which connect together persons and acts that appear to have nothing in common—suggesting melancholy examples of the contagion of guilt and its consequences, of the expansive power of corruption and its almost boundless results. Very forcibly Mr. Isaac Taylor warns us that in almost every event of life the remote consequences vastly outweigh the proximate in actual amount of importance; and he undertakes to show, on principles even of mathematical calculation, that each individual of the human family holds in his hand the centre lines of an interminable webwork, on which are sustained the fortunes of multitudes of his successors; the implicated consequences, if summed together, making up therefore a weight of human weal or woe that is reflected back with an incalculable momentum upon the lot of each. The practical conclusion is that every one is bound to remember that the personal sufferings or peculiar vicissitudes or toils through which he is called to pass are to be estimated and explained only in an immeasurably small proportion if his single welfare is regarded, while their "full price and value are not to be computed unless the drops of the morning dew could be numbered." (*F. Jacox, B.A.*)

Ver. 22. **The Lord God of gods, He knoweth.**—*God knows* :—It is a great satisfaction when we feel that there is one Being who knows everything. After some great perplexity, some dark hour, or some mysterious visitation, when there seemed to be no clue to an event, no interpretation arching it, and not a spark of illumination about it, it is a blessed relief, both to mind and soul, when we feel that somebody can understand it, can thoroughly sift it, and will in good time bring out its illuminated side, and reveal the spiritual diamonds so long concealed in darkness, sorrow, and grief. God knows—what? The uses of things—why the world was made, why we were made, the meaning of the events that greet us, what lessons they convey, what benedictions they unfold, what promises they hold out, and how much culture we shall gain by them. Can anything be more cheering than this fact, and is there anything strange about it? Strange that the Maker should be familiar with what He has made, wonderful that the Architect should understand all about His building, peculiar that the Creator of the world should comprehend what He has produced? How is it in everyday affairs? Would it not be wonderful if Mozart and Beethoven did not understand their own music, stood apart from it as strangers, and were unable to comprehend the science of its melody? or if Powers stood before one of his statues dumb as an idiot, and unable to give an account of how it was shaped into its wondrous beauty? or if Rubens stared at one of his own pictures with a vacant gaze, and with a total inability to trace out the preparatory steps that led to its execution? Then is it not very natural that the Great Musician of earth and heaven should be able to explain all the grand chorus of the ages, that the Holy Sculptor of all time should be able to describe every particular of His work, or that the Great Painter of both worlds should, with a keen wisdom, delight in His own magnificent paintings? I come now to my second proposition, that grows out of the first—we do not know. Here we find two parties in the Church. One says, "We do not know anything, and never can know anything," and the other says, "We do know something, but that something will not amount to much until God reveals more knowledge." I confess, I do not think that, in order to exalt God, we must utterly extinguish ourselves. If I say that a human being is utterly incapable of ever being enlightened, has no power, and is bound irrevocably to sin, with no chance to escape, you may very properly ask me, "Who could have made such a being as that?" But, because we can do something—aye, many things—and because we are something—aye, much—it does not follow that we can do everything or that we are self-sufficient. No, never. God made us, and therefore we are not failures; and let us not for a moment suppose that God has made a mistake in our creation, but, because we are made, we are dependent, frail, and we must often and always look to our Creator for aid and blessing. We are engirdled by mysteries. Yet is it not something that we can, by the grace of God, think, talk, write, walk, live? and can we speak meanly of one who can do all these things? Forbid it, Father! Make us humble, but do not let us be ungrateful. As we look at history and at historical results, it becomes very evident that all through the past ages there has been a providential plan. If we made ourselves Romans, Grecians, or Hebrews, and if we threw ourselves back thousands of years, we should hardly understand that some of our greatest trials were to prove such a vast benediction to after-ages. We could hardly believe that our decay would prove to others life, and that every pang we suffered, both as nations and as individuals, was in accordance with the great, glorious, and holy scheme of Providence. What would be called in ancient days subjugation, invasion, and a despotism, has since proved emancipation, while the baptism of blood then offered has resulted in the salvation of the future. Time explains a great many things that we do not understand to-day; and events always prove that He who rules the heavens and the earth is never bewildered, nor mistaken, nor vanquished. Let each one of us take our own personal experience and trace it back, and see what we wanted to do and where we wanted to go when God would not let us do it, and when God held us back, and when God seemed to be working against us, and how does the retrospect look with our present experience? Did not God know best? and has not everything come out right, and was it not well for us that years ago a restraining hand was placed upon our pleasures, appetites, and desires? And is it not better that we were turned aside from the road that we desired to travel? I think one of the bewitching attractions of biography rests in the fact that we often detect what appear to be very slight and trivial matters, changing the whole course of a person's life. Washington gave up going into the navy in order to please his

mother; and thus a hero was secured for America and a splendid monument of goodness and greatness for all the world. Franklin started on a journey to Philadelphia as a mere pauper, and went under false promises to London; and thus a philosopher was educated for all time. The eyesight of a Prescott was suddenly eclipsed, but out of that darkness an historian was born, whose sweet rhetoric will always prove a fascination and a culture. Yes, the slightest incidents that we call disappointments are often the turning-points in our experience, and prove the very moment when Heaven interposes, and shapes us for ends more consistent with the will of God. (*Caleb D. Bradley.*)

CHAPTER XXIII.

Vers. 1-16. I am old and stricken in age: and ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done.—*Old age:*—As in the snowy realms of the Alps lovely flowers open their cheerful petals to the sky, so, notwithstanding the weight of years and cares, many a sweet flower of hope, and trust, and love, and disinterested friendship, and faith may continue to blossom in the aged heart, and to send out an attractive fragrance for the happiness of others. *Jehovah the champion of Israel:*—The last two chapters of Joshua are very like each other. Each professes to be a report of the aged leader's farewell meeting with the heads of the people. In our judgment, both reports bear on the same occasion; and if so, all that needs to be said as to their origin is, that the author of the book, having obtained two reports from trustworthy sources, did not adopt the plan of weaving them into one, but gave them separately, just as he had received them. The circumstance is a proof of the trustworthiness of the narrative; had the writer put on record merely what Joshua might be supposed to have said, he would not have adopted this twofold form of narrative. What was the burden of Joshua's address? You have it in the words—"The Lord your God is He that fighteth for you"; therefore "cleave unto the Lord your God." You owe everything to the Lord; therefore render to Him all His due. God is expressly set forth as the champion of Israel, fighting for him against the Canaanites, and driving them out. He is here the God of battles; and the terrible desolation that followed the track of Israel is here ascribed to the championship of the Most High. There are some expositors who explain these sayings in a general sense. There are great laws of conquest, they say, roughly sanctioned by Providence, whereby one race advances upon another. Nations enervated through luxury and idleness are usually supplanted by more vigorous races. We cannot vindicate all the rule of the British in India; greed, insolence, and lust have left behind them many a stain. Still, the result on the whole has been for good. The English have a higher conception of human life than the Hindus. They have a higher sense of order, of justice, of family life, of national well-being. There is a vigour about them that will not tolerate the policy of drifting; that cannot stand still or lie still and see everything going wrong; that strives to remedy injustice, to reform abuse, to correct what is vicious and disorderly, and foster organisation and progress. In these respects British rule has been a benefit to India. There may have been deeds of oppression and wrong that curdle the blood, or habits of self-indulgence may have been practised at the expense of the natives that shock our sense of humanity, as if the inferior race could have no rights against the superior; but these are but the eddies or by-play of a great beneficent current, and in the summing up of the long account they hold but an insignificant place. When you survey the grand result; when you see a great continent like India peaceable and orderly that used to be distracted on every side by domestic warfare; when you see justice carefully administered, life and property protected, education and civilisation advanced, to say nothing of the spirit of Christianity introduced, you are unable to resist the conclusion that the influence of its new masters has been a gain to India, and therefore that the British rule has had the sanction of Heaven. Now, in this case, as in the conquest of India by Britain, a process went on which was a great benefit on a large scale. It was not designed to be of benefit to the original inhabitants, as was the British occupation of India, for they were a doomed race, as we shall immediately see. But the settlement of the people of Israel in Canaan was designed and was fitted to be a great benefit to the world. Explain it as we may, Israel had higher

ideas of life than the other nations, richer gifts of head and heart, more capacity of governing, and a far purer religious sentiment. On the principle that a race like this must necessarily prevail over such tribes as had occupied Palestine before, the conquest of Joshua might well be said to have Divine approval. God might truly be said to go forth with the armies of Israel, and to scatter their enemies as smoke is scattered by the wind. But this was not all. There was already a judicial sentence against the seven nations of which Israel was appointed to be the executioner. Loathsome vice consecrated by the seal of religion; unnatural lust, turning human beings into worse than beasts; natural affection converted into an instrument of the most horrid cruelty—could any practices show more powerfully the hopeless degradation of these nations in a moral and religious sense, or their ripeness for judgment? Israel was the appointed executioner of God's justice against them, and in order that Israel might fulfil that function, God went before him in his battles and delivered his enemies into his hands. And what Israel did in this way was done under a solemn sense that he was inflicting Divine retribution. We cannot suppose that the people uniformly acted with the moderation and self-restraint becoming God's executioners. No doubt there were many instances of unwarrantable and inhuman violence. To charge these on God is not fair. They were the spots and stains that ever indicate the hand of man, even when doing the work of God. If it be said that the language of the historian seems sometimes to ascribe to God what really arose from the passions of the people, it is to be observed that we are not told in what form the Lord communicated His commands. No doubt the Hebrews were disposed to claim Divine authority for what they did to the very fullest extent. There may have been times when they imagined that they were fulfilling the requirements of God, when they were only giving effect to feelings of their own. And generally they may have been prone to suppose that modes of slaughter that seemed to them quite proper were well pleasing in the sight of God. For God often accomplishes His holy purposes by leaving His instruments to act in their own way. But we have wandered from Joshua, and the assembly of Israel. What we have been trying is to show the soundness of Joshua's fundamental position—that God fought for Israel. The same thing might be shown by a negative process. If God had not been actively and supernaturally with Israel, Israel could never have become what he was. Moses and his bevy of slaves, Joshua and his army of shepherds—what could have made such soldiers of these men if the Lord had not fought on their side? The getting possession of Canaan, as Joshua reminded the people, was a threefold process: God fighting for them had subdued their enemies; Joshua had divided the land; and now God was prepared to expel the remaining people, but only through their instrumentality. Emphasis is laid on "expelling" and "driving out" (ver. 5), from which we gather that further massacre was not to take place, but that the remainder of the Canaanites must seek settlements elsewhere. A sufficient retribution had fallen on them for their sins, in the virtual destruction of their people and the loss of their country; the miserable remnant might have a chance of escape, in some ill-filled country where they would never rise to influence and where terror would restrain them from their former wickedness. Joshua was very emphatic in forbidding intermarriage and friendly social intercourse with Canaanites. He knew that between the realm of holiness and the realm of sin there is a kind of neutral territory, which belongs strictly to neither, but which slopes towards the realm of sin, and in point of fact most commonly furnishes recruits not a few to the army of evil. Alas, how true is this still! Marriages between believers and unbelievers; friendly social fellowship, on equal terms, between the Church and the world; partnership in business between the godly and the ungodly—who does not know the usual result? In a few solitary cases, it may be, the child of the world is brought into the kingdom; but in how many instances do we find the buds of Christian promise nipped, and lukewarmness and backsliding, if not apostasy, coming in their room! (W. G. Blaikie, D.D.)

Ver. 4. *I have divided unto you by lot these nations.*—*Joshua the colonist:*—Great colonists as we are, and greater as, with the growth of our wealth and therefore of our population, we are likely to be, it may prove instructive and also interesting to look at Joshua in the character of a colonist—the leader of the largest band that ever left their old in search of a new home. I remark, then, that the colonisation of Canaan under Joshua was conducted in an orderly manner, on a large scale, and in a way eminently favourable to the happiness of the emigrants and the interests of virtue and religion. It presents us with a model we would do

well to copy. The children of Israel entered Canaan to be settled within allotted borders; by families and by tribes. In their case emigration was thus less a change of persons than a change, and a happy change, of place. No broad seas rolled between the severed members of the same family; there were no bitter partings of parents and the children they feared never more to see: nor did the emigrants, with sad faces and swimming eyes, stand crowded on the ship's stern to watch the blue mountains of their dear native land as they sank beneath the wave. A still more important lesson than that taught by the orderly, just, humane, and happy arrangements of this Hebrew colony is taught us by the care Joshua took of its religious interests. These, the greatest, yet considered apparently the least, of all interests, are sadly neglected in many of our foreign stations; and I have often wondered to see with what little reluctance Christian parents could send their children away to lands where more lost their religion than made their fortune. Whatever we do with our religion, the Hebrews did not leave the ark of God behind them. Regarding it as at once their glory and defence, they followed it into the bed of Jordan, and, passing the flood on foot, bore it with them into the adopted land. Wherever they pitched their tents, they set up the altar and tabernacle of their God. Priests and teachers formed part of their train; and making ample provision for the regular ministration of word and ordinance, they laid in holy and pious institutions the foundations of their future commonwealth. Such are some of the points in which Joshua is to be admired, and imitated, as a model colonist. Alas! while neglecting his example in things worthy of imitation, we have followed it but too closely in the one thing where it affords us no precedent to follow. I refer to the fire and sword he carried into the land of Canaan, and his extermination of its original inhabitants. We have too faithfully followed him in this—with no warrant, human or Divine, to do so. In his bloodiest work Joshua was acting under commission. His orders were clear, however terrible they read. God undertakes the whole responsibility. And be it observed that the children of Israel were blamed not because they did, but because they did not, exterminate the Canaanites—slaying them with the sword or driving them out of the land. The duty was painful and stern; but they lived to find, as God had warned them would happen to them, and as happens to us when we spare the sins of which these heathen were the type, that mercy to the Canaanites was cruelty to themselves. But, admitting that the responsibility is shifted from Joshua to God, how, it may be asked, are the sufferings of the Canaanites, their expulsion and bloody extermination from the land, to be reconciled with the character of God, as just and good and righteous? This is like many other of His acts. On attempting to scrutinise them, mystery meets us on the threshold. No wonder!—when we feel constrained to exclaim over a flake of snow, the spore of a fern, the leaf of a tree, the change of a base grub into a winged and painted butterfly, “Who can by searching find out God? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is higher than heaven, what can we do? deeper than hell, what can we know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.” Dark as the judgment on Canaan seems, a little consideration will show that it is no greater, nor so great, a mystery as many others in the providence of God. The land of Canaan was His—“The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.” And I ask in turn, is the Sovereign Proprietor of all to be denied the right that ordinary proprietors claim—the right to remove one set of tenants and replace them by another? Besides, the inhabitants of Canaan were not only, so to speak, “tenants at will,” but tenants of the worst description. Let it be remarked also, that the Canaanites not only deserved, but chose their fate. The fame of what God had done for the tribes of Israel had preceded their arrival in the land of Canaan. Thus its guilty tenants were early warned; got “notice to quit”; might be considered as summoned out. They refused to go. They chose the chances of resistance rather than quiet removal; and so—for be it observed that the Israelites in the first instance were only ordered to cast them out—they brought destruction on themselves: with their own hands pulling down the house that buried them and their children in its ruins. But the children? the unoffending infants? There is a mystery, I admit, an awful mystery in their destruction; but no new or greater mystery here than meets us everywhere else. The mystery of offspring who suffer through their parent's sins is repeated daily in our own streets. It does not alter the case one whit to say that children who die of disease, for instance, die by the laws of nature, while those in Canaan were put to death by the command of God. This is a distinction without a difference; for what are the laws of nature but the ordinances and will of God? Nor is the cloud which here surrounds God's

throne, dark as it seems, without a silver lining. The sword of the Hebrew opens to the babes of Canaan a happy escape from misery and sin—a sharp but short passage to a better and purer world. Thus, and otherwise, we can justify the sternest deeds of which Joshua has been accused. He held a commission from God to enter Canaan and cast out its guilty inhabitants, and, like a woodman who enters the forest axe in hand, to cut them down if they clung like trees to its soil. His conduct admits of the fullest vindication; and though it did not, we should be the last to accuse him. Ours are not the hands to cast a stone at Joshua. A more painful and shameful history than the history of some at least of our colonies was never written. Talk of the extermination of the Canaanites! Where are the Indian tribes our settlers found roaming, in plumed and painted freedom, the forests of the new world? Not more fatal to the Canaanites the irruption of the Hebrews than our arrival in almost every colony to its native population! We have seized their lands; and in a way less honourable, and even merciful, than the swords of Israel, have given them in return nothing but a grave. Professed followers of Him who came not to destroy but to save the world, we have entered the territories of the heathen with fire and sword, and adding murder to robbery, have spoiled the unoffending natives of their lives as well as of their lands. Had we any commission to exterminate? Divine as Joshua's, our commission was as opposite to his as opposing poles to each other. These are its blessed terms, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Can our country and its Churches read that without a blush of shame and a sense of guilt? Let us repent the errors of the past. Not so much to aggrandise our island, as to Christianise the world by our colonies, is the noble enterprise to which Providence calls us. "Go ye in to possess the land"—these, if I may say so, were the marching orders under which Joshua and Israel entered Canaan; and however unable they appeared, in point of numbers and ordinary resources, to cope with those who held the soil, and were prepared to fight like men that had their homes and hearths, their wives and children, to defend, yet then, as still, the measure of man's ability is God's command. Since it is so, what a noble career and rapid conquest were before the children of Israel! Sweeping over Canaan like a resistless flood, they might have carried all before them. What difficulties could prove too great for those who had God to aid them? What need had they of bridge or boats, before whose feet the waters of Jordan fled? of engines of war whose shout, borne on the air, smote the ramparts of Jericho to the ground with an earthquake's reeling shock? of allies, who had Heaven on their side, to hurl down death from the skies on their panic-stricken enemies? How could they lose the fruits of victory over the retreat of whose foes night refused to throw her mantle, while the sun held the sky, nor sunk in darkness till their bloody work was done? (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*)

Ver. 6. Be ye therefore very courageous.—*On Christian courage*:—In the first place, in your relation with your fellow-creatures, in your intercourse with the world, it requires much courage and resolution to be sturdily upright and just. When your interest, your feelings, your wants, nay, even your future independence, are on one side, and the plain dictates of duty and religion on the other, then it is that you must "be very courageous"; and not turn aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left. Here is the trial: to prefer the praise of God and the approval of the conscience, with loss, with disgrace or derision, and even poverty for life, to the mean and dishonest acquirement of every worldly good. Courage is requisite even in doing good. Our good actions may cost us much trouble and even expense, much opposition, much vexation, and much misrepresentation; for our good may not only be evil spoken of, but it may be to ourselves a positive evil in a worldly and temporal point of view. On some occasions we may have to encounter the resistance of the indolent and the selfish; the thwarting malignity of envy, that will never either co-operate or commend; the sneers of the niggardly, who revenge an extorted charity by slandering the man that shamed them to it; and the unkind constructions of the worldly, who never attribute disinterested motives to a prominence in well-doing. On other occasions, we may be induced to benefit others, even against their will; to succour the worthless and ungrateful; to weary ourselves in long, and perhaps for the time fruitless, attempts to soften the obstinate, persuade the wilful, reform the profligate. In all these cases we want also a bold and patient decision of character. Again, it requires courage to forgive injuries and endure wrongs, as well as, on the other hand, to ask for forgiveness and to make

reparation. Yet the Christian must do both when necessary. Courage is required, again, in maintaining truth and sincerity. I do not mean by this merely avoiding flagrant falsehood and equivocation; but acquiring habits of open and frank avowal of our minds, except where we may give needless pain or offence. No deference to rank or circumstances, no indolent aversion to differ from others, no ill-timed timidity, or desire to ingratiate, must prevent our bold and determined reprobation of what is decidedly wrong, however glossed by fine language or supported by sophistry and cunning. Courage is very necessary also in setting a good example. We are "neither to love the praise of men more than the praise of God," nor to "follow a multitude to do evil." The real Christian may want resolution to maintain a Christian example; he may shrink from singularity; he may fear a laugh, an obnoxious name, or misrepresentation; he may think it too precise and severe to protest and strive against received customs and opinions, though plainly at variance with the Word of God; or, lastly, he may distrust his own steadfastness and perseverance. Yet all he wants is courage—courage, not to go about setting the whole world right, not to put on a garb of austerity and intolerance that does not belong to him or his religion; not to declare war against practices and amusements which sweeten the busy occupations of life and are decidedly innocent; but to be "steadfast and immovable" in the plain, straightforward course of Christian duties of every kind. Again, courage is most requisite in striving against all the inward corruption of our fallen nature. In the first place, the Christian has to contend with wicked thoughts and tendencies, or inclinations. When allowed to grow to maturity they become headstrong passions, lusts, and appetites, whose power is generally in proportion to the time they have been indulged. At that fearful period, the courage required is, as it were, that of plucking out an eye, or cutting off a limb! for habit has by that time made the indulgence quite necessary to the sinner's happiness, and even comfortable existence. Courage is again necessary, under this head, in getting the better of our natural selfishness. Pride and vanity and pretension are also vices that need no common courage and resolution to master them. They are, however, most unchristian tempers, and must be subdued. But, lastly, it is in perfecting holiness in the heart—by purity, vigilance, discipline, and perseverance—that the Christian warrior has most need of courage and resolution. His enemies are so strong and numerous, and the fort he holds so easily surprised and taken, that he has need of "the whole armour of God," that he may "have victory, and triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh." (*A. B. Evans, D.D.*)

To keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses.—*The supreme excellence of Holy Scripture*.—I. THE BOOK COMMENDED: "All that is written in the book of the law of Moses." 1. Observe it was to the written law alone that Joshua directed them. 2. From that day to this the will of God has been made known to us in writing. 3. The evidence of the Divine authority of the New Testament is of the same description. 4. Oh, let the written Word of God, infallible truth, be elevated far, far above the writings of men, however excellent.

II. THE EXHORTATION RESPECTING IT: "Be ye therefore very courageous," &c. 1. "Keep it"—treasure it up in your hearts; lodge it in your memories; inscribe it on the tablet of your mind. 2. "Do it." We are not to keep the Holy Scripture as a curiosity in a cabinet; not to hide or bury it, but to practise it. If the Scriptures do not exercise a practical influence over us, they will only increase our condemnation. 3. Observe the universality of the injunction, "All that is written in the book." There is to be no reservation nor exception—no selection of favourite doctrines or of agreeable duties, but "all that is written" is to be read, believed, obeyed! 4. There must be no deviation from the narrow way—"that ye turn not aside therefrom, to the right hand or to the left." This is the chart—be careful to steer by it! This is your map, your guide, your lamp; beware of the smallest deviation! (*Isa. xxx. 21*). 5. "Be ye very courageous to keep and to do all this!" He had said in the previous verse that God would drive out their enemies before them; and now he says, "Be ye very courageous"—but not to fight with sword and spear, but with spiritual weapons—moral courage: be bold for God—much courage is needed: for want of it Peter denied his Lord. "Be not ashamed of Christ"—"confess Him before men." III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF OBEDIENCE OR DISOBEDIENCE TO THIS EXHORTATION MAY BE LEARNED FROM SCRIPTURE AND EXPERIENCE. Wherever God's written Word was known and read and honoured, religion has flourished; and where that Word has been neglected, religion has decayed. (*Dean Close.*)

Turn . . . not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left.—*Obedience*.—1. What motive has the Christian to obedience? Looking to be saved

only through the righteousness of another, what is there to induce him to walk righteously before God Himself? (1) Gratitude, or responsive love. The Christian is plied with reminders of what the Lord hath done for him by Christ to open to him the heavenly Canaan and to give him an inheritance, and his grateful heart responds to the heavenly logic, "Take heed that ye love the Lord," "Serve the Lord in truth with all your heart, for consider how great things He hath done for you." "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (2) Hope. "Ye shall possess their land as the Lord your God hath promised you." Christ is made the author of eternal salvation to them that obey Him; and he that nameth the name of Christ must depart from iniquity. (3) Fear. "When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God ye shall perish quickly from off the good land." And similar are the rules with regard to entering heaven, of which land Canaan was a figure. Disobedience entails exclusion. 2. But what kind of obedience is necessary, or rather what do we learn from our text, will obedience require or call for? (1) Courage. "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do." Many look down upon a Christian as a poor, mean-spirited creature, and only half a man. But he is the highest kind of man. In proportion as he acts up to his principles he is a bold, courageous hero, and may stand up among the bravest and noblest, and suffer not by the comparison. Is it a mark of courage to submit to the operator's knife, and a still higher mark to operate upon oneself? This the obedient servant of God does. He plucks out the right eye, he cuts off the right hand of forbidden indulgence; that is, in obedience to God's will he will give up inclinations which cost him as much as plucking or cutting. Is it a mark of courage to face the cannon's mouth? Aye; but it is a higher mark for beings constituted as we are, naturally proud and sensitive, to brave the mouth which sneers and jeers at piety, so that we are often a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. (2) Completeness. "Be ye very courageous to keep and do all," &c. The moral law of Moses, though no longer it can be so kept as to give us a right to eternal life, is to be our guide and rule in our present life. For the ten commandments expanded contain all the precepts, duties, and dispositions of a servant of God, just as buds contain all the leaves of that flower which opens out into such fulness of detail. And the Christian is to keep and do all. (3) Carefulness. "That ye turn not aside," &c. The path of obedience is generally a middle path, and we must seek to have such views of God's Word, under the teaching of God's Spirit, that our love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that we may approve things that are excellent; or, as it might be rendered, "discriminate things that differ," and ever hear a voice behind us saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." The extreme opposite of wrong is not right. We go safest between extremes. The pendulum swings as far to the right hand as it does to the left, and because some persons go to extremes one way, we are apt to go to extremes the opposite way. Some are all for privilege, others all for duty; but we must turn not aside to the right or left. Thankful for privileges, we must do our duty. (H. C. Mitchinson, M.A.)

Vers. 8, 9. Cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye have done unto this day.—*The necessity of every one's cleaving to God who wishes well to the support of his country.*—I. SIN HAS NATURALLY IN ITSELF A TENDENCY TO THE RUIN OF ANY NATION. We may easily see that when a people grow regardless of the laws of God they want the greatest obligations of obedience to the laws of men. II. SIN MAKES GOD AN ENEMY. God presides with a peculiar providence over societies and communities of men. We may learn from the history of all past ages and the frequent smart of our own that the government of God is ever administered according to the nature of men's actions; that He dispenses His favour to a people, or withdraws it from them, as virtue or vice, religion or impiety, respectively prevail among them. But perhaps it may be said by some who are ready to impute all successes to themselves, "What need we to call in Providence in all difficulties?" Now this, give me leave to prove more particularly, by considering those three main props on which the weight of states and empires may seem to them, who look not far into things and their causes, wholly to rely; that is, worldly providence, or policy in contriving; courage and force in executing great designs; and a wise improvement of both these, by firm and well-grounded confederacies. But alas! in these, barely considered, there can be no safety, because no human foresight can reach those many accidents, the least of which may alter the best-laid counsels; nor any human courage, though never so well seconded, be sure to execute them, since the very execution of them is attended

with so many circumstances as may produce effects quite different from what they proposed. III. THE OBLIGATION, WHICH LIES ON EVERYBODY WHO LOVES HIS COUNTRY TO DO HIS DUTY TO GOD, FROM WHICH SUCH UNIVERSAL VIRTUE AND PIETY WILL RESULT, AS WILL MOST CERTAINLY ENGAGE GOD ON OUR SIDE. 1. That all national favours flow purely from God, I will presume has been sufficiently proved, as being beyond the single or united force of human policy, courage, or the firmest alliances: if so, what is it more than our bounden duty, and justice, to acknowledge unfeignedly the gift to God, who desires no more for the giving it? He is not bettered by our thanksgivings, yet is pleased with the gratitude. 2. We ought to break off the course of those sins which will estrange God from us, and deprive us hereafter of all such extraordinary successes. (*Bp. Trelawney.*) *Religious stability enforced*:—I. THE DUTY THE TEXT RECOMMENDS. Cleaving unto the Lord evidently implies—1. Previous union with Him. 2. Faithful adherence to Him. Our religion must be uniform and constant; we must not only come to the Lord as humble penitents, but also adhere to Him as His indefatigable servants. (1) We should cleave to His name; as the fountain of all goodness, from whom we receive every blessing; and therefore should continue to love, obey, hope, and trust in Him, as the God of our salvation (*Isa. xii. 2; Hab. iii. 18*). (2) We should cleave to His Word; by faithfully reading its contents, imbibing its doctrines, obeying its precepts, and by making it the perpetual subject of our meditation and prayers, and the infallible rule of our faith and conduct (*Psa. cxix. 18, 148; John v. 39; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17*). (3) We should cleave to His ways; by diligently discharging all personal and relative duties, constantly attending all the means of grace, working out our salvation with fear and trembling, and by “walking in all the commandments and ordinances blameless.” (4) We should cleave to Him at all times: in prosperity and adversity, in tribulation and distress, in health and affliction, in life and death; implicitly trusting “in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” II. THE IMPORTANCE THE TEXT INVOLVES. This evidently appears, both from the solemnity of the occasion on which it was delivered, and the fervency of the manner in which it was urged on the tribes of Israel. 1. This duty is reasonable (*John vi. 67–69; Rom. xii. 1, 2*). 2. This duty is honourable. Instability in religion is peculiarly disgraceful (*2 Pet. ii. 20–22*). It is extremely weak and childish, and should be carefully avoided, as displeasing to God, and dishonourable to our holy profession (*Eph. iv. 14*). 3. This duty is profitable. It is only by cleaving unto the Lord that we can maintain personal piety, overcome our enemies, encounter difficulties, rejoice evermore, triumph over death, and “lay hold on eternal life” (*Deut. iv. 3, 4; Psa. lvii. 7; 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8*). 4. This duty is indispensable. Final perseverance is necessary to final salvation. He only that “endures to the end shall be saved” (*1 Cor. xv. 2; Rom. ii. 7; 2 Pet. i. 10, 11*). III. THE MOTIVES TO THIS DUTY. (*Sketches of Four Hundred Sermons.*)

Ver. 11. **Take good heed therefore unto yourselves.**—*The Christian warfare*:—The Christian life is a warfare, and there are several common mistakes made thereupon. For example—1. WHEN IT IS SUPPOSED THAT THE ENEMIES TO BE FOUGHT AGAINST ARE ALL EXTERNAL FOES. This is a very prevalent error. Where conversion is believed to be always a sudden change, and not a matter of growth, there converts are cautioned against dangers that lie without, while left in ignorance of the greater dangers that are still within. There are external foes, but these are not all. There are inward foes, such as—(1) Evil tempers; (2) passionate and ungovernable wills; (3) covetousness; (4) selfishness; (5) pride; (6) anger, &c. II. IT IS ALSO A MISTAKE TO SUPPOSE THAT THE ENEMIES TO BE FOUGHT AGAINST ARE CHIEFLY EXTERNAL ONES. With all his warnings against surrounding foes, Joshua was most emphatic in his exhortation to watchfulness over one's own heart, “Take good heed therefore unto yourselves.” In this sense a man's enemies are they of his own house. The greatest temptations arise from that inner tendency to corruption, but for which the outward influences would be well-nigh powerless. Many a man has been his own tempter (*Jas. i. 14*). III. IT IS A GREAT CHRISTIAN DUTY, THEREFORE, FOR EVERY MAN TO BRING HIS OWN HEART INTO SUBJECTION. 1. This cannot be done except by the exercise of constant watchfulness. 2. Self-cultivation also is necessary. When will men learn that religion is no dreamy sentimentalism, but a stern and living reality? “The grace of God in the heart of man is a tender plant in a strange, unkindly soil, and, therefore, cannot well prosper and grow without much care and pains, and that of a skilful hand.”

Let us, then, "take heed to ourselves." Let us keep the fortress of our own heart. Let us do battle with the foes of our own household. Thus shall we be "more than conquerors"; for "he that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city." (*Frederic Wagstaff.*) *Self-consideration*.—We can have no aspirations unless we know what we lack, and we cannot properly cultivate our spiritual life unless we recognise the symptoms of its vitality or decay. A gardener would be failing in his duty if he did not notice the withering of a flower, which was only wanting more room in which to spread its roots. A mother would be justly blamed if she was too absorbed in making her child's dress for a coming party to notice the pale face and heavy eyes which foretold an illness demanding instant attention. Far heavier is the responsibility resting on us to consider our own condition. (*A. Rowland, B.A.*) *Self-judgment*.—No sane man fails to form some opinion of himself. We cannot help knowing, for example, whether our temper is quick or dull, whether our imagination is vivid or torpid, any more than we can be ignorant of the fact that we are tall or short. But we ought not to leave this self-judgment to transient feelings, or to spasmodic revelations—but should try to shape it by sober thought. Some people tell us that it is best not to think of ourselves at all, but to absorb ourselves in daily duty, leaving ourselves simply in God's hands, so far as religious life is concerned. No doubt this is partly true: and we must not forget that self-introspection has its dangers as well as its uses. It would, for example, be quite possible to subject our motives to such close and constant scrutiny as to take away all momentum from life: but no sensible man would be so particular about dust on the engine, as to neglect keeping up steam. (*Ibid.*) *That ye love the Lord*.—*Take heed to love God*.—1. Because if you do not love God, your obedience will be worthless. 2. Because if you do love Him, obedience will be easy. 3. Because there are so many things that compete for your love. 4. Because if you love God, you will love only good things, and those in a proper measure. 5. Because if you love God, you will love what God loves, and especially His Son Jesus Christ. (*The Hive.*) *God demands our love*.—I. IT IS FOR THIS VERY END THAT NATIONAL MERCIES ARE BESTOWED. II. WE ARE IN DANGER OF PERVERTING HIS GOODNESS TO A VERY DIFFERENT PURPOSE. The caution given in the text plainly implies this, and the subsequent history of the Jewish nation as plainly proves that the caution was necessary. III. To love the Lord our God is not only the return He expects for His benefits, but THE RETURN HE DEMANDS. It is not only just and reasonable in its own nature, but it is likewise absolutely necessary on our part—nay, it is the one thing needful, the withholding of which shall unavoidably be attended with the most fatal consequences. (*R. Walker.*)

Ver. 14. And behold this day I am going the way of all the earth.—*Death common to all*.—Death is so dim-sighted and so blundering-footed that he staggers across Arminster tapestry as though it were a bare floor, and sees no difference between the fluttering rags of a tatterdemalion and a conqueror's gonfalon. Side by side we must all come down. No first class, second class, or third class in death or the grave. Death goes into the house at Gad's Hill, and he says, "I want that novelist." Death goes into Windsor Castle, and he says, "I want Victoria's consort." Death goes into Ford's Theatre, at Washington, and says, "I want that President." Death goes on the Zulu battlefield, and says, "I want that French Prince Imperial." Death goes into the marble palace at Madrid, and says "Give me Queen Mercedes." Death goes into the almshouse, and says, "Give me that pauper." Death comes to the Tay Bridge, and says, "Discharge into my cold bosom all those passengers." (*T. De Witt Talmage.*) *Premonitions of death*.—The first symptom of approaching death with some, is the strong presentiment that they are about to die. Oganian, the mathematician, while in apparent health, rejected pupils from the feeling that he was on the eve of resting from his labours; and he expired soon after of an apoplectic stroke. Fletcher, the divine, had a dream which shadowed out his impending dissolution, and believing it to be the merciful warning of Heaven, he sent for a sculptor and ordered his tomb. "Begin your work forthwith," he said at parting; "there is no time to lose." And unless the artist had obeyed the admonition, death would have proved the quicker workman of the two. Mozart wrote his Requiem under the conviction that the monument he was raising to his genius would, by the power of association, prove a universal monument to his remains. When life was fleeting very fast, he called for the score, and musing over it, said, "Did I not

tell you truly that it was for myself that I composed this death chant?" **Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord . . . spake.**—*Joshua's dying testimony to the faithfulness of God.*—I. DEATH IS A WAY. It leads the believer from the means and streams of religious ordinances to the fountain-head of living waters; from the society of earthly, and at best imperfect connections, to the company of triumphant saints, &c. II. Death is a way THAT ALL MUST GO. Some journeys may be deferred and postponed a week, a month, a year, and perhaps be wholly declined. But this cannot be put off or avoided. III. Death is a way WHICH WE MAY SOON BE REQUIRED TO TAKE. (*Isaac Bachus, D.D.*) *Joshua's last confession.*—With Joshua as with Simeon, at eventide it was light, the hues of a golden sunset coloured with the tints of the rainbow, which St. John beheld before the throne. The words that I have read to you contain a retrospect and a prospect. He looks behind for them; he looks forward for himself. 1. We, too, have a retrospect like his, and we too have a prospect. Let us look back at life, each from our own standing-point, each colouring with the hues of his own experience the common outline. Begin at the beginning, and look back at childhood. I do not think childhood the happiest time of life, and therefore I will not say it is. And yet in the spring of our life, though it had its biting winds and its cold nights, lest our characters should bud too fast and in an atmosphere too genial we should grow unequally and develop too rapidly, there were gleams of bright sunshine, showers dropping with fruitfulness, in which our minds expanded and our souls grew. Some of us it may be were brought to the feet of Jesus, to hear His Word. As children we knew the Holy Scriptures, and our infant lips were tutored in prayer. But manhood is the time of man's glory, when we partake of the full joys of home life, when opinions mature and cultivation grows, and experience mellows, and noble duties open out before us, and grow into the full liberty of the sons of God, and by faith we overcome the wicked one. Oh, how full manhood may be of pure and generous happiness, if lived unto God, if we will but look up to Him as a reconciled Father, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost follow the Lamb whithersoever He went on earth! Sorrow there must be, but there is strength to bear it; losses, but there is time to redeem them; sin, but the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin; imperfectness, but then we are complete in Him. And then, as to old age, in one view of it that is the best of all. The aged man, if he is a Christian, is nearly at home. His activities may be diminished, but his wisdom is augmented. If not strong in action, he is great in counsel. He looks back over a past of unbroken, unvarying love, and his song is, "Surely, goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life; I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Oh, I pray you, wherever in life you be, whatever in life you have, gather up your mercies and count them; see how the Lord's faithfulness has given you every one of the good things that He has promised to His people. Where you wandered, it was through your own wilfulness, and He brought you back. When you fell He lifted you up. When you wept your tears came to you with a message from God. You may indeed be forgetting Him; that I know not, but this I do know, that He has been love to you, trying to embrace you with the arms of His mercy, willing to draw you with the cords of love. 2. There is also a prospect. "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth." "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." My brethren, this way is a universal way, and a sorrowful way, and a cloudy way. (*Bp. Thorold.*) *Joshua intimating his own departure, and the favour of God toward Israel.*—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH JOSHUA HERE REPRESENTS HIMSELF AS PLACED. Time has gathered death's memorials on that form; and warned, perhaps, by some communication from the world invisible, or feeling, it may be, in the pain, the weakness, or the gathering wrinkles, that his closing hour is near, he thus addresses the multitude around: "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth." What was dying Joshua but just the representative of dying man? and what is Joshua dead but an instance, from the midst of ten thousand times ten thousand of the human form, erect and strong, and animated once, consigned to mournful silence, and the human spirit vanished from the scenes of enterprise and life, where it thought so loftily or toiled so zealously of old? And if we commit ourselves to the pages of recorded history, and find them full throughout with the alternations of life and death, or mark the common course of society and providence around us, how many an illustration may be found of what to us is specially momentous in the idea afforded by the words, "the way of all the earth"! II. THE APPEAL WHICH JOSHUA MAKES TO THE PEOPLE HE ADDRESSES. 1. Joshua's appeal may suggest the idea of a pious and active old

age. To earlier years and robuster vigour may belong the more stirring and laborious forms of Christian enterprise and zeal; but age has the same principles of duty to regard, and the same animating motives to cherish in the heart. In the apparent proximity of death it has a consideration in some degree peculiar, to urge it on to zealous and devoted services for God; and, oh! how powerfully ought that consideration and many a motive else to animate the minds of those who, "old and stricken in age," are ready, like Joshua, to say, "I am going the way of all the earth"! If you have given your more vigorous years to sin, why should you delay with contrite and devout heart to give the close of your continuance here to Christ, and piety, and God? And if you have, in some degree, like Joshua, given your earlier life to the cause of righteousness, oh! have you not found, in your experience of its dignity, and blessedness, and worth, a motive strong to keep you steadfast to the end? 2. Not only is the appeal of Joshua in the text representative of a pious and zealous old age, but it expresses an important fact presented by the providence of God: "Ye know," says he, "in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed," &c. Of all men Christian believers perhaps will be the readiest to perceive, and the most willing to acknowledge, the absolute faithfulness and the gracious liberality of God; and how can they but know that, sad as the outward condition of God's chosen may sometimes be, and sadder still as may be the general aspect of the earth, to neither can the Almighty's pledge be broken, to neither can His promise fail? (*Alex. S. Patterson.*) *A man dying*:—I. A man dying IN PHILOSOPHIC CALMNESS: "I am going the way of all the earth." 1. It is not a strange road. All that have ever been, have gone through it; and all that ever will be, must. 2. It is not an avoidable road. To complain is useless. II. A man dying FULLY SATISFIED WITH GOD: "Not one thing hath failed," &c. 1. That God had promised "good things." 2. That all the "good things" promised had come. III. A man dying WITH SPIRITUAL INTEREST IN SURVIVORS: "Ye know," &c. He wished his contemporaries and survivors to cherish confidence in God when he was gone. (*Homilist.*) *The solicitude and testimony of a dying man*:—I. THE SOLICITUDE OF A NOBLE VETERAN. Joshua was solicitous that the Israelites (1) should continue in love to God (ver. 11); (2) should be separated from the world (vers. 7, 12, 13); (3) should be courageous in the ways of righteousness (ver. 6). II. THE TESTIMONY OF AN AGED PILGRIM: "And behold this," &c. We learn here (1) That the faithfulness of God may be relied on. (2) That the faithfulness of God extends to all His children. (3) That the faithfulness of God is to His believing ones a conscious realisation. III. THE CALMNESS OF A DYING SAINT. What a peaceful, glowing sunset! (*W. Fry.*) *Joshua's retrospect*:—There are certain occasions in life when it is irresistibly natural to look back. After climbing a difficult ascent, or concluding a tedious negotiation, or even winding up a long and troublesome letter, we like to take a final view of the whole. Joshua had now arrived at the culminating point of his mission. I. THE largeness of GOD'S PROMISES. To bring Israel out of the prison-land of Egypt, through the death-land of the wilderness, into triumphant possession of the fortress-land of Canaan, was what God undertook. If some great leader had undertaken, some years back, to emancipate the negroes of the Southern States of America, to conduct them over the broad Atlantic, and make them owners and masters of military and imperial France, he would scarcely have promised any more, allowing for the difference of the times. All God's promises are "exceeding great and precious." II. THE STEADINESS OF GOD'S PURPOSES. Just when the promise appeared utterly forgotten, its final fulfilment was being planned. Just when the good seed appeared altogether perished, the labourers who were to gather in the harvest were being engaged. The rest of the history to which Joshua looked back furnished other instances of like kind. III. THE COMPLETENESS OF GOD'S WORK. God had wrought all that He had promised. I apply the subject to the earnest expectations of the humble believer in Christ. You too are looking forward to the end of your wanderings, to the enjoyment of absolute rest, to perfection of spiritual condition, to the subjugation of every enemy, in a word, to complete conformity to your Lord. Be assured that the time is approaching when you shall look back in triumph upon all. (*Homilist.*) *The last words of Joshua*:—You can hardly overdraw the character of the patriarch warrior who is about to surrender his command. He is one of the rare men of either economy of whom inspiration, always faithful, has preserved no record of blemish. And if you ask wherein lay the main charm of his character, we find it in the fact that he himself is so much concealed behind the grandeur of his own exploits. That is the highest order of excellence—to be self-

concealed by the glory of events whereof we are the authors. "I have sent for you," said a great man of modern days, from his death-bed to a youth who stood beside him, "that you may see how a Christian can die." Let us see how a "servant of the Lord" can die who only saw the day of Christ from a distance. We might dwell, for a warrant in favour of repetition, on the fact that Joshua spends his last breath in telling something to the children of Israel which he himself admits they know already "in all their hearts and in all their souls." Old-fashioned doctrines never look so new, never so precious, as when seen from the edge of the grave. But what absorbs the interest of this spectacle is not so much the triteness of the discussion as the motive that moved to its delivery. If Joshua does not say, he implies, that because the chills of death are at the very moment creeping round his heart and the tongue will not serve him much longer, on that very account he stirs them up to remembrance that "the Lord has not been slack concerning His promise." Oh, surely, this is something new in the treatment of an old doctrine! The last faculties of the mind before it ceases to act and move amongst the living, turned upon the character and the honour of the great God, and that not so much towards the man himself, but towards the other men addressed. That a human being should be so able to forget himself, if not in the very struggles, in the nearest prospect, of mortality, as to busy himself entirely with the credit and the character of his Creator, that he should gather around him the thousands who will survive him, for nothing but to wring from them the acknowledgment that God is true—oh! you may fairly enough conclude that the speaker is not far off the world where God will be all in all. There is no test of a man's chief good like death. The miser will ask for his old strong-box to be placed beside him on the bed that he may see the last of the deity he has worshipped whilst he lived. The husband will turn his latest, fondest look, amongst all bystanders, towards the one sad face that belongs to her who has weathered with him so many a storm, and proved her love through evil and through good report. The statesman wanders in his last delirium on the future of the country, the helm of whose affairs he is quitting for ever. The scholar, too, seems reluctant to die till that one great work, the study of years, has received its finishing touch; and the mechanician, or the chemist, or the astronomer, is startled by the grim summons from the busy calculation, or the tiresome experiment, or the sweeping survey of the stars. And if each of these were to leave a witness from the death-bed, that witness would turn for a topic to the favourite and the darling of the life that is leaving him. Joshua does the same. "What will they think of my God when I am gathered to the grave? I know Him, but do they? They do; but will they remember what they know? Will they serve my God as if they recollected that He has never failed them? It is not certain hearts that know forget: souls that have learned love their own lessons. Therefore will I make this work, the honour of Jehovah, at least as perfect as I can make it by hallowing in its behalf the faltering of the dying lip and the clouding of the dying brain." "I must," says the dying hero, "spend the last sands in the glass in putting the glory of the Divine administration beyond all reach of reproach. Are my warriors and myself at one upon the doctrine that the whole of an inheritance promised is as good, to faith, as the whole of it conferred? Are we going to part agreed that Palestine is already as truly the property of the sons of Abraham as Timnath-Serah, in Mount Ephraim, belongs to me?" And so the good man could not rest in his grave till he had exchanged with his brethren in arms a new vow of allegiance to Him who has not, even in our day, with absolutely literal truth, accomplished the fulness of what is here taken as done. Here is faith for you! The captain of the army will not die till he has overleapt centuries by a faith of his own, and carried all his squadrons with him in the leap. One of our great warriors ordered his ships into action with the shout of "Victory, or Westminster Abbey!" But what should we have thought had the cry been "Victory and Westminster Abbey!" Joshua foresaw that his own death, and the death of whole generations of soldiers, would make no difference to the conquest of Canaan. Millenniums are shorter than moments to "him that believeth." This then was Joshua's judgment of the right business for a dying day. Beautiful ministry for last moments, to strengthen bystanders in their trust upon God's word. It was to Israel almost as if a spectre spoke. You contract heavy responsibilities—you who stand, from time to time, in the chambers of dying believers. Next to hearing voices from heaven comes the hearing of voices from those who are just stepping from earth. Books are nothing to the last whispers—even the last smiles—of warriors laying down their swords, and of pilgrims sinking into rest. I pray that we

may all die leaving some witness to the faithfulness of Christ. (*H. Christopherson.*) *Joshua's farewell charge*:—Notice, first, that in parting he says nothing of himself. He recalls to their minds only the source of all the power that was theirs in the past, and all the power that could be theirs in the future. His one thought in leaving them is to remind them of the character of God. That should ever be the thought of the pastor who is parting with his people—that he should say nothing of himself, or what he has done, or what, known only to himself and God perhaps, he has utterly failed to do, but that he should be exceeding anxious and exceeding jealous as to the character of God. The question which he seems to ask himself as he is about to leave them is not, “What will the people think about me when I am gone from them?” but, “What will this people think about God? Will they serve Him as if they really believed in their heart and in their soul that God can never fail them? Will they feel that they may, and that they must, because of all that they know of God in the past, trust Him absolutely and utterly for the future?” It is just possible he imagined that they might not, and so his endeavour is in parting to make this great truth of the absolute fidelity of God, which must be the foundation of all true religion, as strong in them as it could be. It is easy to say, of course, that God is true and faithful; but is there a man or woman here to-day who believes that every promise that God, in His written Word, or in revelation to their inmost and deepest spiritual nature, has made is actually fulfilled? What a changed world it would be if every baptized man and woman believed in their heart and soul, as a child believes the assurance of his father, that not one promise of God has ever failed! Joshua called them to witness that day that not one single promise that God had made them had failed; and yet there were the tribes that He had promised to drive out still occupying many places in the land; there was the Star unrisen yet that had been promised to come out of Jacob; there was the sceptre as yet unwielded by Israel; there were many things, if you read the history literally, that God had promised, and that, as far as mere human eye could see, were not accomplished; nay, the approach of their fulfilment was not discernible. And, nevertheless, he called on these men, who longed for these things, to whom these things had been promised and had not yet come, he calls them to bear witness that day that not one promise of the Lord their God had failed them. To his heart of faith and to his eye of faith, because God hath promised them, they were come to pass already; and he could not part from his people without endeavouring to make them as deeply persuaded of that truth as he was himself. And that, amid all the flux of time, that, amid all the great social, political, and economic changes that have swept over the world, that is the one foundation-truth still for nations and for men. In our national life it is the truth we mostly need. In our national life forces are being developed to-day into activity, of which none can at present forecast the issue. Beneath the smooth surface of our modern life fires are seething which reveal themselves now and again, as it were, in tongues of lurid flame that leap through the thin film of our civilisation. Now amid all this how can we look with anything like manly confidence to the remote, or even to the immediate, future? We must sink, as it seems to me, into despair, if we can only think of the schemes of rival politicians, or the impotence of social nostrums, or if we can only hear, as words of hope, the flabby platitudes of the feeble philanthropist. Our confidence and our hope must be based upon faith in the faithfulness of God, in Him as the eternal I Am, who sitteth above the water-floods, be the earth never so unquiet. Our cardinal faith must be that the Lord, who was God in all history, is God in history still, that He holds in His hands to-day all the strength and all the weakness of the nation and of man. He is not the God of the dead but of the living; and, if we will learn the lesson which He will be teaching us somehow, by prosperity or by disaster, even now, as we look around us on all the portents of the time, we may do so in the absolute confidence and in the faith and hope which we ought to possess as we say: “No one good thing which the Lord our God hath promised has ever failed us.” (*Canon T. T. Shore.*) *What made Joshua the man he was?*—Joshua, when he spoke these words, was one of God's grand old friends. He and Caleb were the oldest men in that company. He tells them his experience of life. It is worth while to ask what made old Joshua the man he was. It was his character. If I met a man on the Manchester Exchange, and he told me he was building a new mill, fitting it up with the newest machinery, and that he would shortly turn out the finest yarn in the country, well, I would say to him: “You've got your work cut out, but we shall see.” So I walk round that way, and look at the new mill, with its fine machinery; see the manager—one

who knows his business—and I say, “That’s all right.” Then I walk down to the mill gate to see what kind of raw material comes in. If the raw material is inferior, then the fine mill, with its machines, all goes for nothing—it won’t do. The yarn won’t wear. Now, make a man up of poor material, and he’ll not wear. What character has a man; what is he made of? That is a great question. There are two things about Joshua’s character to be noticed. I. JOSHUA BECAME THE MAN HE WAS BECAUSE HE KEPT COMPANY WITH ONE OLDER AND BETTER THAN HIMSELF. He was Moses’ servant. Watching Moses and hearing his words moulded Joshua’s character. My advice to young people is to keep company with folks older and better than yourselves. Why does God let people live to a long age, if not to give the younger generation their experience? Don’t leave home in a hurry. If father and mother are people that pray, don’t hurry to leave them. It is the same with old books: those used to be bound in sheepskin; nothing to look at outside, but all inside. Nowadays they put it all outside, and the bookbinder does what the author should have done. It is a responsibility which older people should consider, that they ought to live so as to attract the young. This is one of the wants of the age. Live so that your young people may say when they go out into life, “I leave my best friends behind.” I never had such a fine compliment paid me before as I had from my boy the other day. It was in class, and when I came to my son Charlie, he said: “Well, father, I am only getting my eyes opened to see what a privilege mine has been to live with such people as you and mother are.” I wouldn’t give that away for £20,000. II. JOSHUA BECAME THE MAN HE WAS BECAUSE HE HAD THE COURAGE OF HIS CONVICTIONS. There were twelve of them sent to spy Canaan, ten of them said, “It’s no use. The country is good enough, but it is full of giants.” “Yes, we shall go up,” said Joshua and Caleb. Joshua was willing to be out-voted. It was ten to two, but the ten had their coffins made before the two. Have the courage to vote for the right. One man and God makes a strong party. Joshua’s experience was that God had been as good as His word. There are no crises but what God can surmount them. Go and ask George Müller. A man thought that he would give a thankoffering for his life being spared to fifty years. He intended to give £50, and he thought he would send the Bristol Orphanage £10. He was so haunted by this thought that he could not wait for his birthday, but got an envelope and despatched a cheque for £10. He got the usual receipt, and there was no more of it until the yearly report of the Orphanage appeared. He thought he would just turn up the date and see if his money were there. There at the very date he saw George Müller’s words, “No money and no bread to-day, but cheque has arrived for £10.” Friends, believe in a prayer-hearing God. Don’t be afraid to leave your case in His hands if you are doing right. Some of these days you will have to say with Joshua, “I go the way of all the earth.” You will have to give up going to business and to lie in bed. Everything is growing dim, and the loved voices seem miles away. Will some of those loved ones, writing to the son in Australia, have to say, “Father’s last words were these: ‘Not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord spake’”? (*T. Champness.*) *An elevation that explains the whole of life*:—The traveller who has reached the highest attainable summit of the Andes, and stands in the pure and cloudless atmosphere around them, can expatiate over a wide and almost boundless horizon; while another who remains in the valley below, amidst the haze of mist and vapour, must be satisfied with a comparatively poor and trifling view of the magnificence and beauty that surround him. It is thus with the Christian militant, in the warfare of his earthly state, and after his release to join the armies of the blessed in the rest of God. Here dimness and obscurity may in part intercept or much distort the prospect of Divine mercy, and all the rich consolations of a Saviour’s love. But when his liberated soul shall attain the felicities of heaven, he will stand upon an elevation commanding the boundless extent of Divine operation in the walk and world of providence and grace. His eye will be strengthened to behold, and his comprehension will be enlarged to understand them with knowledge, love, and wonder, increasing throughout eternity. No cloud will be seen throughout the universe of blessedness to intercept his vision. Every dispensation by which the Saviour visited and helped him, however misunderstood in the days of earthly darkness and ignorance, will then be fully explained, every difficulty solved, and every apparent contradiction harmonised for ever. (*R. P. Buddicom, M.A.*) *The promise of God has its season*:—As the herbs and flowers which sleep all winter in their roots underground, when the time of spring approacheth presently start forth of their beds, where they had lain so long unperceived, thus will the

promise in its season do. He delays who passeth the time appointed; but he only stays that waits for the appointed time, and then comes. Every promise is dated, but with a mysterious character; and for want of skill in God's chronology we are prone to think that God forgets us, when indeed we forget ourselves in being so bold to set God a time of our own, and in being angry that He comes not just then to us. *Confidence in God's faithfulness*.—Your boy comes to you and asks you to buy him a fishing-rod, and he says, "I saw one to-day in a window, which was just what I want. Can't I go down now and buy it?" And you say, "No, not to-day, wait a little." A week passes, and the lad begins to say to himself, "I wonder if father has forgotten all about it?" Then you put into his hands a better rod than he has ever seen before, and the boy is overwhelmed with surprise and pleasure. And yet the main thing in all this is not that your son received what he wanted, but the gift won, through delay, has given him a new view of his father's wisdom, and a new confidence in his affection, which makes him say, "Hereafter, when I want anything of this kind, I will leave it all to father." And so the main thing that a man gains, when God at last answers his prayer, is not the gift, but the clearer consciousness that God is better than His gifts, that he has all in God. (R. Vincent.)

CHAPTER XXIV.

VERS. 1-33. Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem.—*Joshua's last farewell*.—I. GOD'S THREEFOLD MERCIES. 1. Israel's enlargement (vers. 2-4). 2. Israel's exodus (vers. 5-7). 3. Israel's entrance into Canaan (vers. 8-12). II. JOSHUA'S THREEFOLD APPEAL. 1. He exhorts them to fear and serve this great and this good God. 2. To manifest in yet clearer light that the service of God is a reasonable service, and to show the utter folly of idolatry, Joshua, in the gravest irony, upholds the alternative for the adoption of the people, and mocks the apostasy, the latent germs of which he knew too well were in the hearts of the great assembly before him. 3. Then, having, both with tender love and with withering scorn, set forth the two alternatives, he declares his own resolute decision in words which should be the motto for every ruler, and for every householder. This is the true order of the growth of piety. First, individual consecration; then follows family control; and then the third stage in the gradation—namely, public influence—will not be lacking. III. ISRAEL'S THREEFOLD COVENANT. IV. A THREEFOLD AFFIDAVIT TO ISRAEL'S COVENANT. 1. The first is the memory of the transaction in the minds of the people themselves. 2. Joshua himself, moreover, puts the whole matter into writing, even as we have it here before us in this last chapter. 3. But there is another testimony that shall witness against Israel if they apostatise—"a great stone," which he places beneath the oak in Shechem, "that was by the sanctuary of the Lord." V. A THREEFOLD SEAL TO GOD'S PROMISES. The Book closes with the mention of three burials. In the peaceful graves of three of God's saints we seem to see three seals to the truth of God's Word. These holy men once served Him among strange nations, but now their bones are laid within the borders of the promised land. (G. W. Butler, M.A.) *Joshua's last appeal*.—It was at Shechem that Joshua's last meeting with the people took place. There was much to recommend that place. It lay a few miles to the north-west of Shiloh, and was not only distinguished as Abraham's first resting-place in the country, and the scene of the earliest of the promises given in it to him; but likewise as the place where, between Mount Ebal and Gerizim, the blessings and curses of the law had been read out soon after Joshua entered the land, and the solemn assent of the people given to them. And whereas it is said (ver. 26) that the great stone set up as a witness was "by the sanctuary of the Lord," this stone may have been placed at Shiloh after the meeting, because there it would be more fully in the observation of the people as they came up to the annual festivals (1 Sam. i. 7, 9). 1. In the record of Joshua's speech contained in the twenty-fourth chapter, he begins by rehearsing the history of the nation. He has an excellent reason for beginning with the revered name of Abraham, because Abraham had been conspicuous for that very grace, loyalty to Jehovah, which he is bent on impressing on them. We mark in this rehearsal the well-known features of the national history, as they were always represented; the frank recognition of the supernatural, with no indication

of myth or legend, with nothing of the mist or glamour in which the legend is commonly enveloped. And, seeing that God hath done all this for them, the inference was that He was entitled to their heartiest loyalty and obedience. Never was a good man more in earnest, or more thoroughly persuaded that all that made for a nation's welfare was involved in the course which he pressed upon them. 2. But Joshua did not urge this merely on the strength of his own conviction. He must enlist their reason on his side; and for this cause he now called on them deliberately to weigh the claims of other gods and the advantages of other modes of worship, and choose that which must be pronounced the best. There were four claimants to be considered—(1) Jehovah; (2) the Chaldean gods worshipped by their ancestors; (3) the gods of the Egyptians; and (4) the gods of the Amorites among whom they dwelt. Make your choice between these, said Joshua, if you are dissatisfied with Jehovah. But could there be any reasonable choice between these gods and Jehovah? It is often useful, when we hesitate as to a course, to set down the various reasons for and against—it may be the reasons of our judgment against the reasons of our feelings; for often this course enables us to see how utterly the one outweighs the other. May it not be useful for us to do as Joshua urged Israel to do? 3. But Joshua is fully prepared to add example to precept. Whatever you do in this matter, my mind is made up, my course is clear—"as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." He was happy in being able to associate his house with himself as sharing his convictions and his purpose. He owed this, in all likelihood, to his own firm and intrepid attitude throughout his life. His house saw how consistently and constantly he recognised the supreme claims of Jehovah. Not less clearly did they see how constantly he experienced the blessedness of his choice. 4. Convinced by his arguments, moved by his eloquence, and carried along by the magnetism of his example, the people respond with enthusiasm. But Joshua knew something of their fickle temper. He may have called to mind the extraordinary enthusiasm of their fathers when the tabernacle was in preparation; the singular readiness with which they had contributed their most valued treasures, and the grievous change they underwent after the return of the spies. Even an enthusiastic burst like this is not to be trusted. He must go deeper; he must try to induce them to think more earnestly of the matter, and not trust to the feeling of the moment. 5. Hence he draws a somewhat dark picture of Jehovah's character. He dwells on those attributes which are least agreeable to the natural man—His holiness, His jealousy, and His inexorable opposition to sin. "Ye cannot serve the Lord," said Joshua; "take care how you undertake what is beyond your strength." Perhaps he wished to impress on them the need of Divine strength for so difficult a duty. Certainly he did not change their purpose, but only drew from them a more resolute expression. 6. And now Joshua comes to a point which had doubtless been in his mind all the time, but which he had been waiting for a favourable opportunity to bring forward. He had pledged the people to an absolute and unreserved service of God, and now he demands a practical proof of their sincerity. He knows quite well that they have "strange gods" among them. Minor forms of idolatry, minor recognitions of the gods of the Chaldeans and the Egyptians and the Amorites, were prevalent even yet. What a weed sin is, and how it is for ever reappearing! And reappearing among ourselves too, in a different variety, but essentially the same. For what honest and earnest heart does not feel that there are idols and images among ourselves that interfere with God's claims and God's glory as much as the teraphim and the earrings of the Israelites did? 7. And now comes the closing and the clinching transaction of this meeting at Shechem. Joshua enters into a formal covenant with the people. When Joshua got the people bound by a transaction of this sort, he seemed to obtain a new guarantee for their fidelity; a new barrier was erected against their lapsing into idolatry. And yet it was but a temporary barrier against a flood which seemed ever to be gathering strength unseen, and preparing for another fierce discharge of its disastrous waters. 8. At the least, this meeting secured for Joshua a peaceful sunset, and enabled him to sing his "Nunc dimittis." The evil which he dreaded most was not at work as the current of life ebbed away from him; it was his great privilege to look round him and see his people faithful to their God. It does not appear that Joshua had any very comprehensive or far-reaching aims with reference to the moral training and development of the people. His idea of religion seems to have been a very simple loyalty to Jehovah, in opposition to the perversions of idolatry. For his absolute and supreme loyalty to his Lord he is entitled to our highest reverence. This loyalty is a rare virtue, in the sublime

proportions in which it appeared in him. The very rareness, the eccentricity of the character, secures a respectful homage. And yet who can deny that it is the true representation of what every man should be who says, "I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth"? (*W. G. Blaikie, D.D.*) *Dying charges*:—The world long remembers Jonathan Edwards's dying charge to his family: "Trust in God, and you have nothing to fear"; or the English Samuel Johnson's exhortation to his physician, "Doctor, believe a dying man: nothing but salvation by Christ can comfort you when you come to lie here"; or a departing President, like Jackson, saying, "Religion is a great reality: the Bible is true." These and a thousand other instances testify that a thoughtful man going the way of all the earth is pretty certain to have his thoughts fixed on the place to which he is going and the preparation he and those around him may need for that journey. (*W. E. Knox, D.D.*)

Ver. 4. I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir.—*Certain singular subjects*:—I. HISTORY AND THE HAND OF GOD IN IT. See: "I gave"; and then again, "I gave." It is not merely that Esau and Jacob were born of Isaac and Rebekah, but the Lord says, "I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau." How plainly doth this declare that the hand of God is in human history! At first sight history seems a great tangle, a confusion; but on looking at it more closely we perceive that it is only in appearance a maze, but in fact a marvellous piece of arrangement, exhibiting perfect precision and never-failing accuracy. 1. We see the hand of God in history very strikingly in the raising up of remarkable men at certain special periods. "I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau": children are the gift of God. This is true not only of Isaac but of all mortal men. God gave to a worthy couple, George Washington; to another pair, John Howard; and to a third, George Whitefield. Each of these, in his own special way, was a Divine gift to men. Children are born with different talents and varied capacities, but all about them which will make them blessings is the gift of God. 2. So also is the hand of God distinctly to be seen in all great events. If Esau captures Mount Seir, then the setting up of the Edomite dominion, bad as it may have been, is from another point of view a matter in which God's purpose and design are to be noted, for He says: "I gave Esau mount Seir." In everything that happens, be it small or great, the Lord is present, and His will is done. It is so in all the plottings and manœuvres of kings and princes and senates, in the stirrings of public opinion, in the marchings of armies, and in all that transpires among mortal men. Though the iniquity of man is seen abundantly, yet the overruling power of God is never absent. 3. To us the hand of God is very visible in our own case. Look at the hand of God that gave to you and to me such parents as we have: I mean those of us who have the great delight of having descended from Christian men and women. Had we anything to do with that? And yet the greatest part of a man's future depends upon the parents of whom he is born. Is not the hand of God in it? 4. And do we not see the hand of God, again, in our children? Bring these gifts of God to God, and say, "Here, Lord, are the children which Thou hast given me. O Lord, let Thy name be named on them, and let Thy grace be glorified in them." 5. Observe, further, that the Lord's hand is in all the prosperity which He gives to any. He says, "I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it." It is by God's allotment that temporal things fall as they do: even the ungodly have their portion in this life by Divine grant. 6. And, once more, God's hand is to be seen in the place in which we live. If Esau lives in Mount Seir, it is because God appoints him to be there; and if Israel goes down to Egypt, it is for the selfsame reason. If you and I remove from one place to another, it is sweet to see the cloud moving before us, and to know that the Lord directs our way. II. BIRTH AND ITS DISAPPOINTMENTS. "I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau," twin children born of godly parents. In that birth there was joy, but sorrow came by it as well as joy. Children are certain cares and doubtful comforts. They may bring to their parents such sorrow that they may be inclined to think the barren happier than the fruitful. Hence it is well for us to leave our hopes of posterity with God; and if we reckon that in a childless house we have missed a great joy, we ought also to reckon that we have missed a mint of trouble by the same fact. III. WORLDLINGS AND THEIR POSSESSIONS. Why does God so often give possessions to ungodly men? Why do they flourish? Why do they have their portion in this life? Is it not, first, because God thinks little of these things, and therefore gives them to those of whom He thinks little? "Why," said Luther in his day, "the whole Turkish

empire is but a basket of husks that God gives to the hogs, and therefore He hands it over to the unbelievers." Something infinitely better is reserved for the Lord's own family. The rich blessing of true grace He reserves for His children and heirs. Do you wish that ungodly men should have less? For my part, I am reconciled to their present prosperity, for it is all they ever will have. Poor souls, let them have as much of it as they may here; they have nothing hereafter. Let those have the treasures of this present evil world who have nothing else. Never quarrel with the Lord for saying, "I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it." Besides, these comforts may lead them to reflect upon God's bounty to them; and at any rate they ought to move them to repentance. IV. THE CHOSEN OF GOD AND THEIR TRIALS. Esau reigns, but Israel serves; Esau set his nest on high, but Israel crouched by the reeds of the river. The worldling would read the Scripture as if it said, "As many as I love, I caress and pamper"; but the Lord speaketh not so; His word is, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten"; "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." To carnal reason this seems strange; faith alone can explain it. 1. Israel and his children went down into Egypt, first, for their preservation. Sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions. The salt and bitterness of sorrow often preserves men from the gall and bitterness of sin. 2. They went down into Egypt, next, for their improvement. God often thrusts His people into adversity that He may improve them, arouse them, instruct them, and ennoble them. See to it, that the Lord's design be fulfilled in you to the full. May the fire and the file, the crucible and the flame, work in you a clearance of dross and rust, and make you pure and bright. 3. They also went down into Egypt for their education. The chosen seed needed teaching; they were getting to be rustic, not to say barbarous, in their manners; acquirements and knowledge were scant among them. They must go down into the seat of ancient learning to acquire arts and sciences and civilisation. For future usefulness it is well that we bear present sorrow, and like Jacob go down into Egypt. 4. And they went down to Egypt, again, that God might display His great power in them. It is worth while to go down into Egypt to come out of it with a high hand and an outstretched arm. Oh, the glory of the Lord in His redeemed! Oh, the lofty destiny of the tried people of God! Oh, the sublimity of their lives even now! There is God in them; there is God about them. "Jacob and his children went down into Egypt." That is where the story ends, according to my text; but you know the story does not end there after all; for out of Jacob and his children came the Star, the Sceptre, and the Throne. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 12. Not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.—*Not with sword or bow*:—A very necessary reminder, applicable to both the hour of conflict and victory. Both seasons have their own dangers. There is no final conflict or victory in this life; only when death has finished our course should we be hopeless or exultant. Each contest is but a single event of a series, and the one, though leading to others, does not of necessity determine the character of them all. Defeat to-day does not mean defeat to-morrow, any more than success to-day means the same in the next encounter with the hidden powers of darkness. No man is safe on this side the grave. So for each, for all, these words may be for encouragement and direction. The cause of failure may be discovered, and the remedy be pointed out, or the way which shall lead to entire possession of the fulness of God's blessedness may be known, as each and all shall remember that "it is not by thy sword or thy bow." I. LIFE'S CONFLICT MUST BE MET BY HUMAN EFFORT AND ENERGY. The promise of the land as an inheritance to the people of Israel is most distinct. Everywhere God said He would give it. Was there not some reason, then, in the expectation that they should have the land without any very special trouble? Is there so much to be wondered at in the disappointment of the spies when they saw they had to fight? One would have thought that the people would have walked in at one side while the inhabitants walked out at the other. God could have done it without the intervention of human effort at all. But this is not the point. What God did, as we learn from the history of this period, was, He used the sword and the bow of the people to secure to them the promise He had given to their fathers. And though no such stipulation is anywhere directly stated, yet universally we find that the human effort and skill are needful to the attainment of the gift of God. And it is just so with all that has to do with God. He has endowed us with certain powers which He calls upon us to exercise. When, then, on the one hand we sit down quietly and say, "God has promised and will perform—there is

nothing for me to do," or when we refuse to do anything because of our great weakness, or when we fail to call upon our powers of mind and heart to rise against the inroads of our spiritual enemies, or quietly submit when we are taken captive in the snares of the devil, we are just putting ourselves outside the pale of the directions which God has given us. So, too, when we ask God to work for us, and make supplication to Him to remove trouble or give us light and peace, if we say, "God can and will work," and we do nothing ourselves, then we are forgetting this part of God's ways. It is not by longing, wishing, desiring, however ardent, that God fulfils His loving purposes towards us; but by prayer, girding up our minds, and resolute, undaunted courage, that we must meet our foe—"with thy sword and with thy bow." But what is the energy and activity here indicated? You will observe that God has not endowed man with any natural modes of offence or defence. The smallest insect is apparently better equipped for the dangers of its life than we are. But God has given man a stronger force than all. Will—moral force—the power of doing—are his; so that though unarmed he is more fully equipped against the multifarious dangers of his way. Nothing can assault him, but he can adopt such means as shall protect—such measures as shall totally defeat the foe. He has the sword and the bow. Moral dangers must be met by moral means, *e.g.*, conscience must be kept clear, its voice must be listened to, and when heard the will must without hesitation obey. Spiritual blessings must be obtained by spiritual effort. God has promised them, He will give; but you must overcome the obstacles. Will you have the promise? then adopt the means needful. If you would scale the mountains, you look for a guide, and take provisions, and put on suitable dress. "Put on the whole armour of God." Just as the poor shipwrecked one lays hold of the floating spar for very life, so you must lay hold of God, and laying hold of Him, do what He tells you. Cannot! No such word ought to be used. "I can, I will!" these are your sword and bow, and if you would extract blessing out of everything it must be by their use, and only thus will you gain the end you desire. But then it must be "thy" sword and "thy" bow. There is a speciality here. It is the act of the individual, the perseverance of the man. II. **LIFE'S CONFLICT IS NOT WON BY THE HUMAN EFFORT AND ENERGY.** The greatest effort cannot obtain the victory; the most stupendous energy cannot save from defeat. It is one thing to meet the foe, it is another thing to win the day. And so our text tells us that it is not by thy sword nor by thy bow. You must fight, but God gives the victory. It is not won by your fighting, but by God's aid. It is not secured by your prowess, but by God's strength. It is all God, not you. (*H. W. Butcher.*)

Ver. 13. **And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour.**—*The inheritance of the past*:—The substance of these closing words of the old Hebrew chief amounted to this: they had had vastly more done for them than they had done or could have done for themselves. They were not the sole nor the chief architects of their own fortunes. At this stage in the fortunes of their national life the prescient eye of Joshua saw the resulting perils from the disposition among them to forget their past history and to magnify the personal element in their present gains and security. There is but one step between the temper of boastfulness and the decadence and demoralisation of a nation's life. Modesty, simplicity, self-knowledge, and a devout recognition of its profound indebtedness to the past—these are among the prime elements of national wealth and prosperity. And Joshua's was that warning voice whose authority and experience and disinterested patriotism, as with all similar men in all countries and times, served as the organ of the national conscience. It served to remind them that a nation is not the growth of a day, that the highest blessings of life are unattainable by our own unaided efforts, that manifold are the forces which are working in the world to produce the life of each one of us, and that it is as inaccurate as it is ungrateful and boastful to impute to ourselves the chief or the largest share in the production of all the good of life that we enjoy. "I have given you a land for which ye did not labour." To every age and period, as it reviews its successes and takes stock of its gains and advances, may be addressed these words of Joshua, with deep truth and significance. The conditions of life amid which we live to-day constitute veritably the promised land of the many generations of English and Scottish life that have preceded us. In whatever way we turn we have much to make us grateful for our progress, and to inspire us with a deep sense of that providence whose guiding spirit is a fact as real and sacred of British history as

ever it was of Hebrew history. In regard to the political and social troubles of the present—and they are both many and serious—and in regard to the conditions of our human life to-day, whose frequent difficulty and harshness sometimes makes us fretful and discontented, I do not know anything which better tends to smooth out these wrinkles of impatient discontent, and to inspire us with a feeling of our large and solid improvement in life, than to take up, for example, the history of our own country, say some three or four centuries ago, and fixing your reading and your attention mainly upon the social condition of the people; upon the state of our commerce and all the peaceful arts; upon the measure of personal freedom in matters of State or of religion which was then possessed; upon the character of the public health and the amount of disease and the averages of mortality in all ranks; upon the degree of comfort which people had in their dwelling-houses; upon the general level of morality and decency which the habits of society evinced—to contrast all this with what requires no special course of reading, the public and private life of society to-day in our land, its means of intelligence, its measure of liberty, and all the other distinguishing qualities of our civilisation to-day. Civilisation, in which word is comprehended art and science and religion, and refinement of manner and speech, and the increase of material comfort, and the spread of intelligence, and all things which beautify or sanctify our human life and character, is no mere production of some one age or country to which now and then some little measure of improvement is added at irregular and incalculable intervals, but is the long, unbroken movement of ascensional life going right back in its origins, into the dim, impenetrable beginnings of human life and society. What is the utmost that we to-day have done or can do set against the mighty sum of the world's historical and prehistorical life! We find the sense of enormous indebtedness in regard, for example, to our religious possessions. The text reminds us of how that thousands of years ago an Eastern people were feeling their way to religious truths and ideas which, passing subsequently through the higher medium and expression of Christianity, absolutely rule a vast part of the world's life to-day. We are debtors both to the barbarian and the Greek, to the Gentile and to the Jew. In regard to the more restricted life of our own country and nation, we are the sum and product of a large variety and infusion of forces. And in the social order of our life there are few of us who need to be reminded of how much that controls our lives to-day dates back to the far and almost-forgotten past. Our constitutional liberties have been things of slow accretion. And again, in the shape and character of our strictly personal life it is no less true that we have entered upon possessions for which we did not labour. There is one inheritance at least which is every man's birthright, the accumulated experience of his race and ancestry. The life, the conduct, the temper, the traditions of our ancestry live in us. When we speak of a man as coming from a good stock or a bad stock the phrase is significant of how considerable is that element of character and tendency for which we did not labour. We are not altogether the children of a day. We have taken a good many centuries in making. Let me urge upon you the duty which these considerations bring before us of maintaining an intelligent sympathy with the past, as an essential condition of rightly understanding and controlling the present. It is by liberally using the vast stores of accumulated experience that we have inherited; it is by tracking our social troubles to their roots in antecedent conditions; it is by following the line of dogmatic and Church history to the periods of germination and birth, that we shall be the most effectively armed to meet the difficulties and to discharge the duties which every generation has, in God's name, to manfully overcome or fulfil. Let us not shrink from them. Again, these considerations suggest to us the virtue and grace of humility. "I have given you a land for which ye did not labour." "We are not our own," wrote the apostle; "we have been bought with a price." We are ourselves but the last link in the interminable procession of the human race. The true lesson of history and of religion is to make us feel how slight and insignificant is our best work in comparison with the mighty whole. It is to inspire us with the salutary and humbling feeling that our life is being guided by an infinite power and wisdom, who can dispense with any one of us, but who is indispensable to us. And once more: these considerations should guide us in our duties as regards that unknown future which is ever lying in front of us. What we shall be is being determined by what we are to-day. What the national life will be a century hence is, in no small measure, dependent upon the quality and policy of the national life to-day. Labour, then, in modest, self-forgetting devotion to the will of God and His

abiding truths, so that the future of the world's life may be happier and wiser and purer for our lives. Labour as men who, by the most absolute of necessities, will have to give an account of their stewardship of life. Finally, take stock of your own lives, of all that you have passed through, of all the blessings that have crowned your days, of the perils from which you have escaped, of the temptations you have resisted, of the vast stores of life in which you have found your noblest nutriment; and say how much of it originated in your own independent resources and volitions, and how much of it came from sources far above and beyond any power of yours. (*J. Vickers.*)

Vers. 14-29. **Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him.**—*The last days of Joshua*:—I. **THE REASONABLENESS OF SERVING GOD** (vers. 14, 15). To serve God, to obey Him, to love Him, to submit heart and life to His control, is only a seemingly and adequate acknowledgment of claims felt to be just. God's character, His mercy, His grace in the gospel, His promises of pardon, the gift of eternal life through His Son, create an obligation which, if it be disregarded, makes our attitude towards God not only sinful, but unreasonable. It is inconsistent with all in us that is true and noble and manly. This is the paradox of sin: it makes one conscious of placing an inferior good above the superior, of seeking for dross and refusing the gold, of plucking a bauble and rejecting the crown. II. **THE STATE OF MIND REQUIRED FOR THE SERVICE OF GOD** (vers. 19, 20.) The service of God must be born of something more than impulse. It must be the result of choice; it must be the determined purpose of the whole being to enter and continue in a life of obedience. To every one God is saying, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Many desire to be Christians, they wish they were the servants of God, but they are unwilling to "choose" to become such. If for a time they set their faces heavenward, they soon turn back. When they sink in the Slough of Despond, they struggle to be free on the side nearest the City of Destruction. Such need to remember that, when the service of God is entered, the will is to be unalterably set towards Him. III. **THE RIGHT ATTITUDE FOR THOSE WHO PROPOSE TO SERVE GOD.** "Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God," &c. Joshua well understood the benefit arising from such a formal enactment. 1. It would be a test of the strength of their purpose. Often the way to disclose the feebleness of one's Christian aims is to bring them to the test of an open declaration—to ask, "Are you willing that others should know, that all should know, that you commit yourself unqualifiedly to be the Lord's?" 2. It would be helpful by bringing to their aid the motive of consistency. Most men desire to act in harmony with their past record. IV. **THE VALUE OF A SINGLE LIFE DEVOTED TO THE SERVICE OF GOD.** Joshua's days are now ended. His work is done, and he is ready for his reward. Few men have lived so worthily. Men are needed everywhere of like decision, and who are ready to thus openly declare for God. Will you be one? (*Sermons by the Monday Club.*) *Joshua, and his zeal for the service of the Lord*:—This was a great event, and we ought to know the secret of its causes. It was, we see, this old man Joshua's burning, quenchless zeal for the service of the Lord, kindled full five and sixty years before. It led to results worthy to rank with the revival under Ezra, with the Pentecost at Jerusalem and at Cæsarea, with the conversion of Roman emperors and British islanders to Christianity, with the Reformation and the triumphs of Wesley and Whitfield. I. **ZEAL FOR THE SERVICE OF GOD IS BORN OF VIEWS WHICH ARE TAKEN OF GOD.** This plainly was the case with Joshua; this was the case with the people also, and universally this must be true. We are asked to view God as creation presents Him (Psa. xix.). This has, at least, the merit of being poetry of the highest school; it is a thousand pities if it is not true. Oh, does not this vast fabric suggest a God? Perhaps not; but we have got the suggestion somehow, and to our anxious inquiries of her all nature seems to give back a ready affirmative response. We are asked to view God as He is presented to us in the phenomena of mind. One observes that these mental phenomena taper away downwards to the tiniest forms of sentient life. One feels that somehow it must and does, in a corresponding manner, expand in its upward way, and when we have reached the loftiest heights of the finite we seem to come in sight of the lowest rays of light from the throne of the Infinite mind. Then if the Lord our God is one Lord, there will be a concentration of thought on Him; our love will be undivided, rising to suitable proportions to its Infinite object. We are asked to see God in His providence. This is a name we give to a constantly-observed work resulting from an unseen Presence. We notice the perpetual

operation of certain great forces in nature, which say nothing so distinctly as they say that they are only the expressions of an all-comprehending and sufficient Power behind them. Can we connect this governing power with that all-pervading mind, and with the creating power of which we have spoken? Yes, I am sure of it. There are unattached threads in all. They evidently find their complements in one another. Then if this is the "God of my life, throughout my days my grateful powers shall sound His praise, my song shall wake with opening light, and cheer the dark and silent night." But all these are summed up and expressed by the Incarnation. You are asked to view God in Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son hath declared Him." It is when we view God thus that our zeal for His service will rise and abound; will flow forth and overflow. "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small, love so amazing, so Divine," demands a house of prayer, a noble service, Christian toil, more than we can give, or think to give. II. ZEAL FOR GOD'S SERVICE IS NOURISHED BY THE VIEWS WHICH WE CHERISH CONCERNING THE CHARACTER OF THAT SERVICE. Our experience and our observation are faithful witnesses hereto. Joshua presents a severe but accurate view of God's holiness, and then urges a service that shall perfectly accord with it—a service that was pure, and sincere, and true, and grateful. "Serve the Lord," said he, "in sincerity and truth." "It must," he meant to say, "be service of the heart rather than of the hands." A service which demands the heart nourishes the zeal born of right conceptions of Jehovah. This is living bread, this is water of life. Our God searcheth the heart, but we are not afraid, we are the more confident. The sacrifices He desires are the broken heart, the contrite spirit (Isa. lvi. 1-5). But outwardly and visibly it must be pure, as inwardly it was sincere and true. The oldest forms of God's service were wealthy in sacrifice, and prayers, and Divine blessing. David, the Homer, the Virgil, the Milton of the Hebrews, enriched that service by adding psalmody and music. Later times added the stated reading of the Scriptures, and later still we have the sacraments and the proclamation of the gospel. Of our Christian ritual, then, we boldly say that it supplies us with the green pastures and still waters of God's Word. It has the spread table of heaven's bounties, if not dainties. It anoints the devout worshipper with a holy oil, and gives him an overflowing cup. It is the expression of the goodness and mercy which follow every step of the pilgrim, making him glad to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. III. JOSHUA'S ENTHUSIASM WAS PERFECTED BY HIS CONVICTION OF THE INFLUENCE WHICH THE WORSHIP OF GOD EXERTS ON MEN. To tell the history of its influence on individuals is to tell the story of every worthy instance of personal piety. You may seek for them and you will find them among all ranks and kindreds. You may scan the calendar of your own history, and its red-letter days are those you have spent in the service of God. To tell its influence on families would be to write the history of the best of earth's households and homes from tent to palace. To these God has kept covenant and showed mercy to the fourth generation. What a heritage of mercy! Let us in our families see to it that the legacy never runs out. Let the men of the fourth generation in this descent remember what they ought to do. But how shall we tell its historic influence on the nation? It has supplied the place of navies; invincible armadas have been scattered as forest leaves before it. It has been better than armies, than revenue, than police. (G. Woolnough.)

In sincerity and in truth.—*Marks of being sincerely religious:*—Sincerity is the disposition of soul which alone can recommend us to God, and incline Him to look with an eye of mercy upon the errors and frailties of our conduct. I. If we would know whether we serve God in sincerity, LET US LOOK WITH AN ATTENTIVE EYE INTO OUR HEARTS, in order to trace the true springs or principles of our actions. II. Another evidence of our serving God in sincerity is, WHEN WE ARE AS CAREFUL TO PRESERVE A GOOD CONSCIENCE AS TO SAVE APPEARANCES, and act with the same integrity in secret, where God is the sole spectator of our actions, as when they lie open to the view and observation of the world. III. Another evidence of our serving God in sincerity and in truth is, WHEN WE PAY AN EQUAL REGARD TO THE WHOLE LAW, and mean not, by selecting some favourite duties, to compensate for the habitual violation or neglect of others that happen not to fall in with our taste and inclination. IV. Another evidence of our serving God in sincerity is, WHEN WE RESIST AND OVERCOME TEMPTATIONS; for to serve God in those instances only where we are not tempted to disobey is a very defective test of our integrity. The decisive proof is, when we are faithful to our duty in opposition to seducements, and reject every solicitation that offers to corrupt us. V. The last evidence I shall

mention of our serving God in sincerity is, IF, IN CASES WHERE WE ARE DOUBTFUL OF THE OBLIGATION OR LAWFULNESS OF AN ACTION, WE ALWAYS INCLINE TO DO WHAT APPEARS MOST CONFORMABLE TO DUTY, what will best answer the ends of piety, and be most conducive to the honour of religion. (*G. Carr, B.A.*) **Put away the gods which your fathers served.**—*An address to image-worshippers*:—Here is a forcible address to every image-worshipper, and, indeed, every image-possessor: “Put away these gods from you.” What have any who own the Bible for their guide to do with these vain and worthless toys of sin, these devices of Satan, and degrading productions of ignorance, the very perversions of reason, as well as the corruptions of revelation? They are everywhere the contempt and derision of inspired truth. To make them is directly prohibited, and to destroy them explicitly commanded, so that it may be matter of wonder how any can plead for their use, under any plausibility or pretence, as remembrancers only of spiritual and hidden realities. If in the Church of the Old Testament the very mention of idols, or the keeping any representations of them, became so offensive in the Divine eye, what shall be said of any rivalry in the heart in services and worship offered to saints or angels? Supplications and sacrifices, offered even to holy intelligences, must be idolatry in its spirit, equally offensive to God and opposed to His Word as the most degrading rites of the heathen. Oh, what false gods, what spiritual imagery is formed within the chambers of the heart! Who does not need to put them away, and to cleanse himself from the filthiness of flesh and spirit! How easily does carnal affection change the best of things into the worst! There is nothing but, through the corruption of imagination or sinfulness of affection, may become an idol of the heart. Whatever denies to God supremacy of love, and occupies the regards to be paid to spiritual and eternal realities, that is an idol to be put away; and happy are such who can say, “What have I to do any more with idols?” Choice enters into the very nature of true and sincere religion, so that none serve the Lord cheerfully, acceptably, and with profit, whose heart is not itself a willing offering. (*W. Seaton.*)

Ver. 15. Choose you this day whom ye will serve.—*The Christian's choice*:—“Seem evil unto you to serve the Lord!” How can the service of the Lord seem evil to any one who is not either wholly void of understanding or altogether hardened against religious impressions? The service of God is exclusive. It does not admit of interference, or of competition, or of divided homage. It must have the whole man. He requires your whole heart—with all its principles, and dispositions, and sensibilities. And if your heart be thus surrendered to Him, the conduct, which is but a demonstration of its influence and actings, will exhibit, in all its departments and in all its bearings a single regard to His will and glory. Now, apply this test to yourselves. It is no doubt a strict and searching one. But it is scriptural and true. I. **CHOOSE** you whom you will serve—the Lord, or those idols which an evil heart of unbelief has substituted in His place. You may allege that it does not seem evil to you to serve the Lord. And, speculatively, this may be true; but, practically, it is false. You think, you feel, you act, as if it did seem evil unto you to serve the Lord. There is a latent repugnance in your minds to His service. There is a real devotedness to those whom you ought not to serve which is essentially and irreconcilably inconsistent with a real devotedness to Him whom you ought to serve. And the idea that you are submitting to His way, when you are, in fact, their slaves, merely because you reject the atrocious saying, that it is “evil to serve the Lord,” and are not disinclined to do many things included in that service, is all a delusion, which, however long it may last in this land of self-deception and shadows, must inevitably be broken. Now, it is our wish that this delusion, so sad and so fatal, under which you labour, should be broken before the day of retribution comes. You have been “halting between two opinions”; embrace one of them and abide by it. You have been trying to amalgamate two systems: abandon the one, and cleave to the other. II. **“Choose you THIS DAY whom ye will serve.”** Having acknowledged that you have been in error—grievous, perilous error—why should you delay forsaking it? Is not this to belie your own professed convictions? “Choose you this day whom ye will serve”; and instead of hesitating, as if you might still snatch another pleasure before you renounce your connection with the world, account the time past as far more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh. Wonder at the forbearance of God in not making you long since a monument of His righteous anger against the unholy and impenitent. “Choose you this day whom ye will serve”;

because the sooner that you enter on God's service, in its full import, the sooner will you consult the dignity of that rational nature which He has given you, and which you have been hitherto degrading. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve"; because to delay the change which a right choice implies will be the means of rendering it more difficult in the end. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve"; for if you do not embrace the existing opportunity of devoting yourselves wholly and heartily to God, which is your reasonable and bounden service, another opportunity may never be afforded. (*A. Thomson, D.D.*) *Promptitude of choice recommended*.—I. THE ACT OF CHOICE. 1. Our choice should be Divine in its object. We should choose the Lord for our God. 2. Our choice should be rational in its character. Let us wisely consider what we are doing. 3. Our choice should be decisive in its nature. 4. Our choice should be practical in its operations. Having chosen God, serve Him—(1) Totally; (2) uniformly; (3) evidently. II. THE PERIOD OF CHOICE. 1. We should make our choice this day, because of the criminal neglect of which we have been guilty. 2. From a view of the shortness and uncertainty of our time. 3. Because the present is the only time when God has promised the aid of His Spirit. 4. Because the difficulty of choosing will increase in proportion to our neglect of it. III. THE MOTIVES FOR CHOICE. 1. The capacity which we have for choice is a reason for its exercise. God gives nothing in vain. 2. The perilous state in which we are without this choice is another motive. 3. The happiness that results from our choosing God should prompt us to comply with the requisition in the text. He who has chosen God is in a state of safety and tranquillity. (*Sketches of Sermons.*) *Religion voluntary, personal, powerful*.—I. RELIGION IS VOLUNTARY. 1. The choice, however, is not between religion and no religion. Man is a religious being. Religion is as necessary to his soul as breathing is to his body. To be religious is a necessity, but the kind of religion adopted is a matter of choice. In selecting religion, care should be taken to understand fully the merits of each. The antiquity and popularity of a system, though they show that such a system ought to be examined, are in themselves no arguments in favour of its truth. Truth is beautiful though hated and hooted by the majority of men. The diamond glitters however mean the setting. Like the diamond and the star, truth is beautiful everywhere and always. 2. The choice of religion is limited as to time: "Choose you this day." The present time is God's time and ours: "Now is the acceptable time." We know that; but as for to-morrow, as for the future, we know nothing. II. RELIGION IS PERSONAL. He says, "Choose you." It cannot be done by proxy. Every man must come to God himself. III. RELIGION IS POWERFUL. Religion is life; life is example; and example is almost omnipotent. The smallest pebble cast into the quiet pool causes a series of undulations, and the smallest of these leaves its impression, for millions of ages, on the shore; so does the feeblest soul of man, renewed by grace, make a series of moral impressions on the world—impressions whose record will be legible throughout all eternity. (*Evan Lewis, B.A.*) *On choosing the service of God*.—It is an act of choice, of preference, to which you are called; one of the most familiar, every-day acts of the mind. You are called to change masters; to renounce the world as your portion and to choose God as your portion; to submit to His authority and control, and henceforth live, not to yourself, but to Him who died for you and rose again. And this act of choice or preference is of the nature of a supreme, governing purpose of the mind—such a purpose as gives direction to the current of feeling and desire in the soul. 1. Is it not right that you should choose God as your portion and His service as that which should engage your supreme regards? He is in Himself a being of boundless excellence and glory; your creator, preserver, benefactor, and ruler. 2. The duty in question is enjoined by express command of God. 3. This is a duty which perfectly accords with the nature and destiny of the intelligent, immortal mind with which the Creator has endued you. 4. The choice of God, as the being whom you will serve, is the sum and substance of religion; and you ought all to be religious; friends of God and followers of the Saviour. 5. Every man must choose either God or the world as his portion; and according as he chooses the one or the other, so is his character in the sight of God, and his condition in eternity. 6. There is nothing either within or without you which need prevent your choosing the service of God. He who knows perfectly your frame, your intellectual and moral faculties, and all the circumstances of your condition—He, the God who made and upholds you in being, calls you to enter into His service, to choose Him as your Lord and portion. 7. The service of God is the highest glory of your nature, the most perfect freedom

of rational moral beings; the surest and most abundant source of inward comfort and outward prosperity. It exalts those who are devoted to it to an alliance with the purest and noblest beings in the universe, with prophets and apostles, and glorified spirits in heaven; with ministering angels on high, and with God Himself, the supreme good. It sets the soul upon an endless career of improvement in all that is worthy and good, opens before it bright visions of heavenly glory, secures God's presence and favour for its support and guidance while passing through this world; brings Divine comforts into the bosom in the hour of death, and finally exalts to everlasting rewards in heaven. (*J. Hawes, D.D.*) *Our choice*:—

I. Serve the Lord because of HIS GOODNESS. II. Serve the Lord because of HIS WONDROUS MERCY. III. Serve the Lord because of HIS LOVE. Let His love in dying for us cause us to serve the Lord. IV. Serve Him because of HIS PROVIDENCE. V. Serve the Lord also because of HIS SALVATION. (*W. Birch.*) *Serving the Lord*:—I. TRUE RELIGION IS A SERVICE TO THE LORD. How well this was understood under the old dispensation by truly good men! The Lord was set foremost as the aim of all piety, not man. If you are in another's service you do not follow your own wishes, but his; you do not aim to please yourself, but him; your business is to help him and promote his interests. II. THE BEGINNING OF RELIGION IN THE HEART IS WITH THE CHOICE OF THAT SERVICE. Shall Christ have dominion over you or the world? Who has the first right? What says reason? what says conscience? what says the voice of your immortal interests? Thus deliberates the soul in the crises of its history. All persons are to be addressed in this matter as free moral agents. III. TO SOME PERSONS IT SEEMS AN EVIL THING TO CHOOSE THE LORD'S SERVICE. 1. One reason is that which Joshua gives in the lesson: "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God." To choose His service is to renounce sin. This is the secret of many irreligious lives. 2. It seems evil to give up idol-worship. 3. There is a mortification of pride in the choice of God's service which often seems evil. IV. WHETHER IT SEEMS GOOD OR EVIL TO CHOOSE THE LORD'S SERVICE, THERE IS A NECESSITY OF CHOOSING, AND OF CHOOSING NOW. 1. Those Israelites were to weigh the fact that they did that day make some choice. That is the serious dilemma of every awakened soul. You are under the necessity of preferring the service of God or some other. 2. The more important, then, to note that the choice of to-day is likely to be that of to-morrow and all time to come. 3. Last, but not least of all, your choice will have a controlling effect on others. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." What a lesson to all who are in high places! What an example for men of prominence in every community! What an admonition to every father of a family! How wide-reaching is the influence of such persons over the decision of others! (*W. E. Knox, D.D.*) *The only alternative*:—There are few delusions more fatal, and yet more common, than that of persons labouring to negotiate a treaty betwixt the service of sin and the service of holiness, striving to reconcile the claims of Christianity with the claims of the world. In many cases of every-day life, neutrality is not only lawful, but commendable. But it is far otherwise in matters of religion and in the high interests of immortality. Here no reserve can be admitted—no demur or debate sanctioned—no discreet caution allowed. I. THE TWO SIDES OF THE ALTERNATIVE PROPOSED. 1. The first particularised is the tragical or fatal side. If you choose this day to give yourselves up to the thrall of your turbulent passions, and to become the slaves of all ungodliness, then drawn every rising conviction, strangle in the birth all boding apprehensions and all gloomy forecastings of the future. 2. But if you choose an opposite course, if you prefer the service of Jehovah to the service of Satan, the pleasures of holiness to the pleasures of unrighteousness, then stand not for a moment in fatal hesitation, but range yourselves at once under the standard of the Cross and resign yourselves, without reserve and without condition, to the faith and obedience of the gospel, to the love and service of Christ. Let everything bear attestation to the fact that you consider you have a work to execute of great difficulty and of infinite importance, on the issue of which the whole burden of the destinies of endless ages is staked, and therefore you cannot permit your attention to be for a moment diverted away from this one grand and all-absorbing business of your existence, or your faculties to be engrossed by an inferior object. II. THE SPECIAL TIME WHEN THIS OPTION IS TO BE MADE AND THIS DECISION COME TO: "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." In every relation and condition of human life much depends on the cultivation of favourable junctures and the improvement of propitious moments. The greatest revolutions that have taken place, the most splendid victories that have been won, and the most permanent

conquests that have been achieved, have all depended upon a judicious estimate and critical application of time. If it be true what a writer has observed, "that it is possible to live a thousand years in a quarter of an hour," it holds still truer, that a few minutes lost or improved may decide the complexion of our whole destiny for eternity. Seeing, then, that there is equal hazard and criminality in every moment's delay, in a business so critical and so momentous as the restoration of the soul to God's favour and image, and the insurance of its eternal well-being, we would with all earnestness press it upon you as your first, your predominant, and your ultimate interest, to give yourselves to God now, to give yourselves to God wholly, and to give yourselves to God for ever. (*Joseph Somerville.*) *God's service as a choice*:—"Choose." God speaks this word to every man amid the thunders of Sinai and the pleadings of Calvary. 1. Christianity is a religion of reason, intelligence, not of authority and force; it appeals to motives; it sets right and wrong, life and death, before every man's mind and calls upon him to choose between them. 2. The choice is voluntary. No deception is used, and no compulsion of any kind. God never coerced a creature's will, and He never will, even to save him! 3. The choice in all cases is a personal one, in view of motives: "Choose you," &c. Each soul will decide his course and destiny, and will be required to give account of himself at the judgment. 4. Every one is at liberty to decline God's service just the same as he is to enter it; but to refuse is to choose. Not to serve Christ is to serve the devil. 5. Hence the entire responsibility of choosing rests on each individual's mind. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *Reasons for choosing God's service*:—1. Justice and equity imperiously demand this of us. 2. The claims of gratitude join in enforcing it. 3. The mysteries of redemption. 4. Our best interests are necessarily involved in it. (*The Pulpit.*) *Joshua's permission and determination*:—I. First as to the permission. There is no leave given—and this we wish to be well observed—for the renouncing religion altogether, but only of choosing between the true and the false. Joshua does not say, "Choose whether ye will have the Lord or no God"; but, "Whether ye will have the Lord or the gods of the idolators." But we may not suppose that Joshua here distinguishes atheism from idolatry, as though the people might choose idolatry with a less degree of guiltiness than atheism. He only assumes a broad principle, which the experience of mankind has all along verified, namely, that a nation must have some religion, and that they will worship false gods if they do not worship the true. And then observe, in respect of this permission, that it does not argue indifference on the part of Joshua as to the religion which the people might adopt. He leaves them indeed free to make their election; but still he takes the most effectual mode of recommending truth to their acceptance. His declaration as to the religion which he himself would uphold was the giving all his influence to the side of righteousness; and it were not easy to imagine a more dexterous, and at the same time a more powerful, method of bringing the Israelites to vow allegiance to God than thus leaving them their choice, whilst he gave the weight of his own example to the cause which he desired to support. And yet there is more than this to be advanced with regard to the apparent refusal of Joshua to interfere otherwise than by example with the national religion. It would be easy to misrepresent the permission in question—to construe it into an intimation that in matters of religion rulers should leave a people altogether to themselves; but if you consider the circumstances of the Jewish nation when Joshua delivered the address you will perceive that toleration is the only thing enjoined, and not the non-interference of rulers with religion. The Jews were not without an established religion when Joshua bade them choose between truth and error. Their rulers, acting under the immediate direction of God, had woven a system of worship into all the national institutions, and provided, by every possible means, for the instruction of the people in the fear of the Lord. Rulers cannot interfere with conscience, and having established what they know to be the true religion, and determining to uphold it by their example, toleration, and not persecution, is their business. Therefore "choose you this day whom ye will serve"; decide whether ye will be worshippers of Jehovah or idolators with the Amorites. The intrepid leader of Israel's thousands resolved, even if deserted or opposed by his countrymen, that he would remain staunch in his loyalty to Jehovah. He had satisfied himself as to the nature and demands of true religion; and if none had espoused the same side, his purpose was fixed—to stand alone in the championship of truth. This was sublime, because moral heroism; and Joshua was not a thousandth part as glorious when crossing the Jordan as the captain of the Lord's host, or bidding the sun

stand arrested in the firmament as when, contemplating the possibility of national apostasy, with the image before him of the tribes whom he had led on to victory abandoning the God who had fought all their battles, he uttered the permission and the resolve—"Choose you this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." II. Now, we had intended to speak at length on Joshua's determination, as we have done on his permission; but, in handling the one, we have touched on most of the points suggested by the other. The wisdom, for example, of Joshua's choice is demonstrated by the insufficiency of the reasons which were likely to produce a different choice in the Israelites. Neither the antiquity nor the extent of idolatry could justify its adoption; and if, therefore, the ranks of idolators were swelled by accessions from God's professed people, there would be nothing to warrant a change of purpose in Joshua; and it would still be his wisdom, though it would ask great courage to act on the principle that the Lord alone should be worshipped. Hence the wisdom of the determination requires no proof, whilst its boldness may well put us to the blush, when deterred, as we often are, by a frown or a sneer, from avouching ourselves the resolved servants of God. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The evil and danger of fickleness in religion*:—I. AN INTIMATION OF THE DANGER THERE IS THAT A GREAT PART OF THE WORLD MAY GROW WEARY OF RELIGION, EVEN WHILST IT IS TAUGHT IN SIMPLICITY AND TRUTH. II. AN ADMONITION THAT SUCH AS ARE DISPOSED TO THROW OFF THE BONDS OF DUTY TO THEIR MAKER WOULD THINK SERIOUSLY WHAT SORT OF CHANGE THEY ARE ABOUT TO VENTURE UPON, AND HOW THEY HOPE TO BE GAINERS BY IT. III. THE RESOLUTION WHICH PRUDENT MEN WILL MAKE, WHATEVER OTHERS DO, TO CONTINUE IN THE PRACTICE OF IT THEMSELVES, AND PRESERVE A CONSCIENTIOUS REGARD TO IT AMONGST ALL THAT ARE PLACED UNDER THEIR INSPECTION. (*Archbp. Secker.*) *National religion*:—1. It is here supposed that a nation must be of some religion or other. Joshua does not put this to their choice, but takes it for granted. 2. That though religion be a matter of choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in itself nor to a good governor, what religion his people are of. 3. That true religion may have several prejudices and objections against it: "If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord"; intimating that, upon some accounts, and to some persons, it may appear so. 4. That the true religion hath those real advantages on its side, that it may safely be referred to any considerate man's choice. 5. The example of princes and governors hath a very great influence upon the people in matters of religion. (*Archbp. Tillotson.*) *Choose God now—a sermon to children*:—I. CHOOSE. The melancholy majority of men never did choose their course of life, but have been content to take it from circumstances, from accident, from teachers, from outward influences in which they happened to find themselves. And although they may, step by step, have chosen immediate action for immediate results, what a host of people there are that never set clearly before them the definite aim for which they were living. Choose. Standing as you do at the parting of the ways, get a clear notion of what you are aiming at, and do not let yourselves be moulded by mere accident; do not let yourselves be mere children of impulse; do not owe the shape of your lives to the pressure of circumstances; do not let yourselves be ruled by the moment's inclination; do not be like the weeds in the stream, that move only as it flows. Do not be like the jelly-fishes in the sea, that have no locomotion, or next to none, who are borne along helplessly in the current. "Be a hammer, and not an anvil." Choose! Do not let the world shape you. Exercise your will, your reason, your conscience. Formulate your purposes, say to yourselves what you mean to be and to do; and say it strongly, for this world is no place for weaklings; and wishes and inclinations and good intentions are all very well, but they are not enough. Will and choose, and in the name of God choose the right. II. CHOOSE GOD. I mean choose the God that has come near to you in the Saviour that has loved you and lived for you and died for you; and give your hearts up to Him to be cared for, to be blessed, and your spirits to Him to be cleansed, and to be saved; and then, yielding yourselves to Christ, you will have taken God for your portion. Contrast for one moment the objects that are set before you for your love, trust, and service. And opposite: what a rabble of bestial divinities! Surely there need be no question where a man's heart may fold its wings, like a weary dove, and rest for evermore. For not only is there a contrast between the objects, but there is also a contrast between the results. III. CHOOSE GOD NOW. It can never be too soon to do what is right and noble; it can never be too soon to do what is duty and safety. And let me tell you four reasons why I pray you this. First, the peril of delay. It is not likely that many of you will be laid in your graves before this day next year;

it is certain that some of you will. And because no hand can point to the one that will, let us all listen to the beseeching, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Second, because of the rapidly increasing difficulty of making a choice, which is a change. When the clay is on the potter's wheel the lightest touch of the finger can impress it with any form that he desires; when it is taken off and hardened, nothing will change the shape of the vase but smashing it to fragments. Thirdly, because of the loss that you sustain by delay. Why should you be another day without the best blessing that a man can have? Why should you be another day poorer than you need to be? Fourthly, because of the bitter fruits which you are laying up for yourselves by delay, if ever you come to Christ. I would have you "innocent of much transgression." I would have you to "grow up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," that you may never have to look back, in the event of a late return to Him, on a life all given to idols, consumed for self and wasted by sin. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

Moral masterhoods.—I. ALL MEN HAVE SOME MORAL MASTER. The moral monarch of the soul is the object of its supreme regard; the predominant love evermore sways the soul. II. THE MORAL MASTER IS ALWAYS THE OBJECT OF CHOICE. No soul is coerced into the service of any object. III. THE SOONER MEN CHOOSE THEIR MORAL MASTER THE BETTER. 1. Because a wrong moral master will ruin you. 2. Because there is only one right moral Master—the Supreme One. (*Homilist.*) *Religion founded on reason and the right of private judgment*.—I. I observe THAT RELIGION IS A VOLUNTARY THING AND A MATTER OF CHOICE. For mankind are beings endowed with reason and liberty, and this alone makes them capable of religion and virtue. Without these powers they would be upon a level with brute creatures, and it is the right or wrong exercise of them that constitutes the moral good or evil of actions. II. We may infer from the text THAT NO MAN CAN BE OBLIGED TO EMBRACE A RELIGION THAT IS EVIL, i.e., contrary to reason and the moral fitness of things; but, on the contrary, is bound to reject it. If any scheme of religion undermines the perfections of God, which the reason of our minds can demonstrate from certain principles, it cannot be true. Again, that scheme of religion must necessarily be false, and ought to be rejected with detestation, which dissolves or weakens the obligations to universal purity, and tends to licentiousness and vice. And though religion must be a voluntary thing and a matter of choice, it is, however, our duty, in order to the making this choice, to be diligent and impartial in our inquiries. For the great Author of our nature hath endued it with such faculties, as are proper to distinguish betwixt truth and error, and appear to have been given us for this very purpose. There is also a fixed and certain standard of truth in the reason of things which, in all cases of importance and necessary influence upon our happiness, is sufficiently clear and explicit to well-disposed minds. And again, though we may with safety reject a religion that is unreasonable, that patronises vice, and is dishonourable to Almighty God, yet it must be allowed that, in order to our being able to judge whether it deserves that character or no, we must carefully and calmly examine it. III. We should learn, from Joshua's example, TO BE FAITHFUL TO THE CAUSE OF GOD AND THE INTEREST OF RELIGION AND VIRTUE EVEN IN TIMES OF MOST GENERAL CORRUPTION AND DEPRAVITY. Singularity in things indifferent may generally perhaps be an argument of weakness and folly, or of unbecoming stiffness and obstinacy; but men have carried the argument much too far when they have paid so great a compliment to custom as to urge it against the practice of virtue itself. For the obligations of virtue are upon no considerations whatsoever to be dispensed with, much less for a piece of foolish fawning complaisance, and a man of reason would never consent to do a thing that was really dishonourable for the sake of avoiding undeserved reproach. Again, to dare to be singularly good is an argument of great resolution and strength of mind, and of a confirmed and established virtue: for such must that virtue be which repels the contagion of ill-examples, and flags not at reproaches and ill-treatment. IV. I shall conclude all with observing that the design of Joshua, TO USE HIS UTMOST CREDIT AND INFLUENCE WITH HIS MORE IMMEDIATE DEPENDENTS FOR THE SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE OF RELIGION, WAS TRULY NOBLE AND GENEROUS, AND WHAT IT WILL BE HIGHLY FOR THE HONOUR OF EVERY ONE OF US TO IMITATE. (*James Foster.*)

Joshua's proposition and resolution.—First, Joshua took it for granted that a nation must have a religion of one sort or other. His whole address is built upon this principle; and if there had been a middle way between serving the God of Israel and serving other gods, his discourse would have been inconclusive. Some have pretended that a society of atheists might be tolerably good, and regulated by humane motives, by present rewards and punish-

ments, by shame, disgrace, fear, honour, good-nature, reputation, and self-interest. But this cannot be. Take away religion, and you take away with it the influence of conscience and the strongest motives to social duties. Nothing remains on which mutual reliance can be firmly grounded. All will be done in compliance with external power, and every law will be disregarded, when it may be done with secrecy or impunity and with any present pleasure or profit. Religion, then, is a matter of deliberation and choice. Amidst the diversity of opinions and of worship which divide the world, to walk at hazard in the first path that lies before us, and to which birth and education direct us, and to continue boldly in it without any sort of conviction that it is the right way, this is not the behaviour of a rational agent. God will be loved freely and unconstrainedly, and served by choice and preference. He requires a reasonable service, and man being a rational, a free agent, ought to be able to give some account and some reason for his belief and his actions, and to be afraid to compare truth and falsehood, God and an idol, and to examine which deserves the preference, is doing wrong to God and to His truth. A third remark is upon the time when this is to be done. There is an age of life, and there are occasions, when every one should resolve and make his choice. "Choose you this day," says Joshua. To-day, with every person, is the time when his understanding is mature and opportunities offer. In a Christian nation everything invites us to remember our Creator—the voice of conscience, the example of the wise and good, and the public religion. Here is another thing observable in the text. Joshua supposeth that the Israelites might be weary of serving God, and think His laws to be an unsupportable burden. If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, how can it seem evil to any rational creature to serve the true and the living Lord? But consult experience and matter of fact, and you will find that men have often been disgusted at truth, and weary of a reasonable service. Thence the inconstancies, rebellions, idolatries, and apostasies of the Jewish nation. True religion hath its difficulties and its dark side, and in some respects may be disagreeable. False religions have in some respects more allurements, are more easy, and more accommodated to indolent inattention, to carnal and corrupted minds. And yet, notwithstanding these advantages of error, no reasonable person can make it a doubt which ought to be preferred. Religion hath its difficulties relating both to faith and to practice, both to the understanding and to the heart. As to faith, it contains things hard to be received by worldly-minded persons. I observed before that false religions may in many respects be more agreeable than the true one to persons of a carnal and sensual temper. Joshua supposed that the religion of the Chaldeans or of the Canaanites might appear such to the people of Israel, when he said to them, "If you will not serve the Lord, choose whether you will serve the gods of your forefathers or the gods of the nations where you now dwell." Here, then, were two false religions to choose out of. Both might please them by their antiquity; and as to that of the inhabitants of Palestine, the Israelites by adopting it might make themselves acceptable to their neighbours. And both these religions, though they might have different objects of worship or different names for their gods, agreed in this, that they taught the worship of many deities and the use of images, and such ceremonies as amused the senses, and required no integrity and purity of heart. If you consider all the more remarkable false religions that have been or are in the world, and all the corrupted systems of true religion, you shall find that they recommend themselves by one or other of these four privileges and characters—either antiquity or extent or ceremonious pomp, or an accommodation to the follies and vices of men. "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." If the doctrines of revealed religion concerning the perfections and the providence of God and the doctrines of revealed religion taught us in the gospel have in them some obscurity and difficulty, it is no more than might justly be expected from the sublime subject. All atheistical and idolatrous systems are, beyond comparison, harder to be admitted by a reasonable man. The moral part of religion is conformable to our nature; and if it be contrary to our depraved inclinations, that is our own fault. Religion hath motives to induce us, examples to direct us, assistances for our infirmities, and helps in time of distress; and if God be a holy and a jealous God, He is also a God of mercy, who forgives and receives the penitent. The boasted advantages and prerogatives of false religions are false and unsound at the bottom. Having considered the wisdom of Joshua's choice, let us consider his person. He was the prince of God's people, and, like Moses, had the authority though not the title of king. Princes and rulers of nations are as much obliged as the meanest of their subjects to serve God. Their example is of

great consequence, and whether they walk in the paths of virtue or of vice they induce others to walk after them. Observe also that the prince of Israel answers for himself and for his family: "I and my house will serve the Lord." He was a wise and a happy man; happy to be so fully assured of the good disposition of his household. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *An honourable servitude*.—There are words which will never be popular—as service, servant, master. They carry the idea of humiliation. Every man seeks independence; all aim for position to be at least equal to the highest, the best. Yet service is honourable, if the master is sufficiently honourable. All men are servants of some master. We are all under authority.

I. THE SERVICE OF GOD IS THE MOST HONOURABLE IN THE WORLD. II. THE HONOUR IS TO BE SEEN IN THE WORK THE CHRISTIAN IS CALLED UPON TO DO. III. OBSERVE THE TREATMENT RECEIVED BY THOSE WHO SERVE GOD. A servant wishes kind, generous, just treatment. The service of Satan is at first pleasant, then ends in shame and remorse. Where is the liberty of him who serves appetite, passion? Ask Lord Byron. Said he, "I have not had ten happy days." Lord Chesterfield declared, "I have been the whole round of pleasure, and I am disgusted; and for myself, I mean to sleep in my carriage for the rest of my journey." Sinners, you think you are free; loaded with shackles, yet know it not.

IV. The time will come when THE FINAL SETTLEMENT WILL BE MADE. (*G. E. Reed.*) *Betweenites*.—I can see where you are, you betweenites. The saints will be ashamed of you, because you did not join with Christ in the day of battle, and the adversary himself will despise you because you shrank away even from him. Be one thing or the other. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A fatal decision*.—A young soldier from Glasgow was talking to a comrade. In their ears was the muffled sound, the "Dead March in *Saul*," as a comrade was carried to his last resting-place; and this Glasgow soldier, converted up there at Maryhill, was talking to his friend, and pleading with him to come to Christ. The young Highlander there in the funeral march was terribly impressed, and he said, "Jack, I will be a Christian when I leave the service." He had just nine months to put in. He said, "I am determined to be a Christian when I leave the service." Ah! that was his decision. Next week there came orders for the 79th to embark for Egypt. The two friends were in the march across the sands to the Arab encampment of Tel-el-Kebir, marching side by side—the one with the acceptance of salvation in his heart, and the other putting it off till he should leave the service. Softly did they walk across these sands, silently did they steal through the darkness of midnight to the camp of the slumbering Arabs; but the sentinels were on the alert, and they saw a flash of light, and five hundred rifles from the Arab encampment poured their bullets on the advancing Highlanders; and there, dead and cold, was the body of the man who put off the acceptance till he should leave the service. Oh, comrade, what a fatal decision! (*J. Robertson.*)

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.—*Joshua's choice*.—I. If we attend to the writings of some, and the manners of more, in the present age, we SHALL BE LED TO THINK THAT WE ARE NOT TO SERVE EITHER GOD OR MAN; in a word, that we are born free and independent. Why, we should not live six hours after our birth in such a state. From the first moment in which we see light, we depend, for preservation and support on the good offices of those around us; they depend on others, and all on God. Man being thus dependent, it is but reasonable that he should acknowledge such dependence, and that he should serve. II. Whom he should serve. For, as the apostle has remarked, "there are gods many and lords many," who, in different ages, have obtained the homage of mankind. The oldest and first idolators worshipped the powers of nature instead of the God of nature. The world, with its fashions and its follies, its principles and its practices, has been proposed in form to Englishmen as the proper object of their attention and devotion. A late celebrated nobleman has avowed as much with respect to himself, and by his writings said in effect to it, "Save me, for thou art my god!" At the close of life, however, his god, he found, was about to forsake him, and therefore was forsaken by him. "I have run," says this man of the world, "the silly rounds of business and pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and, consequently, know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I think of nothing but killing time the best I can now he has become mine enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage during the remainder of the journey." When a Christian priest speaks slightly of the world he is supposed to do it in the way of his profession, and to decry, through envy, the pleasures he is forbidden to taste. But here, I think, you have the testimony of a witness every way competent. III. How we are to serve God. A concise way of coming

at this will be, to reflect upon the qualifications you require in a good servant, and to see that they be found in yourselves, considered as the servants of God. These qualifications may all be reduced to two—that he be careful to know the will of his master and diligent to do it. In our inquiries after the will of God we are often apt to be partial. We inquire after only such parts of it as may happen to coincide with our circumstances, our situation, our tempers, our constitutions, our interests. But there are no reserves in St. Paul's question: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Whatever it may be, whatever the difficulties, whatever the consequences, I am ready. There is yet a different error in the conduct of men. It is when they employ themselves to discover the obligations and the failings of others, entirely forgetful of their own. The last mistake that shall be mentioned, relative to our inquiries after the will of God, is, when we make those inquiries as matter of speculation only, as an amusement of the mind. (*Bp. Horne.*)

Decision for the Lord.—I. First, let me describe it. It means many things, all of which must be wrought in us by Divine grace, or we shall never possess them, though we may have their counterfeits. 1. Decision implies, first, that all hesitation is gone. You will make no journey, O traveller, if, now that the sun is in its zenith, you do not decide which way to walk! Mariner, your voyages will be scant if you much longer lie at anchor! The season of favourable winds is passing away, and yet your sail remains unfilled; will you never have solved the problem, "To what port shall I steer? With what cargo shall I load my ship?" Is our life to end in a constant repetition of the question, "What shall I be?" 2. This state of heart indicates superiority to the evil influence of others. Our own understandings should now be exercised, or else why are they given to us? God waits to guide us, but He would have us cry to Him, and not follow the trail of our fellows. 3. Right decision for God is deep, calm, clear, fixed, well grounded, and solemnly made. Joshua does not speak his determination lightly. He speaks with immovable resolve: his soul is anchored and defies all storms—"As for me and my house we will, despite crowds and customs, we will, despite temptations and trials, we will, despite idols or devils, to the end of the chapter serve Jehovah." 4. That resolve on the part of Joshua was openly avowed. That is sorry courage which skulks behind the bushes: that is poor loyalty which never utters the king's name; that is questionable decision which dares not own itself to be on the Lord's side. Are you not ashamed of being ashamed, and afraid to be any longer afraid? 5. In Joshua's case his resolve was not only openly avowed, but earnestly carried out. He was a soldier, and if any one had asked him, "Whose soldier are you, Joshua?" he would have answered, "I am God's soldier." "Whose battles do you fight?" "I fight the battles of Jehovah." "And what is your object in fighting?" "To glorify Jehovah." 6. Joshua's decision was adhered to throughout the whole of his life. He had begun early in the service of God, and he never repented of it. Blessed are they who have this abiding thoroughness in the cause of the Lord their God.

II. Let me now praise decision. In religion nothing is more desirable than to be out-and-out in it. 1. To enjoy religion you must plunge into it. To wade into it up to the ankles may make you shiver with anxieties, doubts, and questionings, till you resemble a trembling boy unwillingly entering a bath on a cold morning; but to plunge into its depths is to secure a glow of holy joy. The central position in religion is the sweetest. The nearer to God the sweeter the joy. 2. Decision for God enables a man to direct his way. David prayed, "Lead me in a plain path because of mine enemies," and the man who has made up his mind by Divine grace that he will serve the Lord has that prayer fulfilled. 3. This saves many men from temptation. As a giant walks along unconscious of the cobwebs across his path, so does a thoroughly consecrated man break through a thousand temptations, which indeed to him are no longer temptations at all. 4. Thorough-going men wield a mighty influence. Joshua was able to speak for his house as well as for himself. Many fathers cannot speak for themselves, and therefore you may guess the reason why they cannot speak for their families. III. I close by DEMANDING THIS DECISION FOR CHRIST which I have described and praised. Decision is required because the Lord deserves to have it. He who made us ought not to be served hesitatingly; He who gave His Son to die for us ought not to be trifled with. By the splendour of Deity, and the glory of the Cross, I claim your whole hearts for my Lord. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Joshua's resolution to serve the Lord*.—I. THE OCCASION OF THESE WORDS. II. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE RESOLUTION? 1. A solemn and exclusive worship of God from the heart. 2. In all the actions of our life to have respect to the will of God, to seek to please Him, to seek to glorify Him. 3. There are three

ingredients in the service of God that may be considered as giving vitality to it. (1) The first is sincerity. The servant of God makes an entire surrender of himself to the service of God, and keeps back nothing from Him. (2) Next, this obedience must be minute—His service must be universally adhered to. There is a harmony and consistency between all the parts of real practical religion, so that they cannot be separated one from another, and if we separate them we deceive ourselves and lose sight of God. (3) Another ingredient in the service of God, if it be true and genuine, is that, like the principle from which it proceeds, it is permanent and abiding. III. SOME OF THE REASONS WHY WE SHOULD CLOSE WITH THE RESOLUTION OF JOSHUA. 1. It is our duty to serve the Lord from the relation in which we stand to Him and the unspeakable benefits we derive from His goodness. 2. The grand distinction of man above the other creatures consists in such a constitution of our nature as appears to have no other end or object but that of qualifying us for the end of worshipping God. 3. Consider, next, the great rewards which hereafter necessarily accompany the service of God. 4. Recollect, again, the impossibility of neutrality and the danger of delay. 5. Recollect, in a very short time, if you are not employed in the service of God, you will have no portion, no employment beneficial or dignified or delightful to all eternity. (*R. Hall, M.A.*)

Concerning resolution and steadfastness in religion.—I. OF THE BRAVE RESOLUTION OF A GOOD MAN, THAT IF THERE WERE OCCASION, AND THINGS WERE BROUGHT TO THAT EXTREMITY, HE WOULD STAND ALONE IN THE PROFESSION AND PRACTICE OF GOD'S TRUE RELIGION. 1. The matter of this resolution. Joshua here resolves that, if need were, he would stand alone in the profession and practice of the true religion. And this is not a mere supposition of an impossible case, which can never happen; for it may, and hath really and in fact happened in several ages and places of the world. 2. The due limits and bounds of this peremptory resolution. In all matters of faith and practice which are plain and evident, either from natural reason or from Divine revelation, this resolution seems to be very reasonable; but in things doubtful, a modest man—and every man hath reason to be so—would be very apt to be staggered by the judgment of a very wise man; and much more of many such, and especially by the unanimous judgment of the generality of men, the general voice and opinion of mankind being next to the voice of God Himself. II. TO VINDICATE THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS RESOLUTION FROM THE OBJECTIONS TO WHICH THIS SINGULAR AND PEREMPTORY KIND OF RESOLUTION MAY SEEM LIABLE. 1. It may very speciously be said that this does not seem modest for a man to set up his own private judgment against the general suffrage and vote. And it is very true that about things indifferent a man should not be stiff and singular, and in things doubtful and obscure a man should not be over-confident of his own judgment; but in things that are plain, either from Scripture or reason, it is neither immodesty nor a culpable singularity for a man to stand alone in defence of the truth, because in such a case a man does not oppose his own single and private judgment to the judgment of many, but the common reason of mankind and the judgment of God plainly declared in His Word. 2. It is pretended that it is more prudent for private persons to err with the Church than to be so pertinacious in their own opinions. To which I answer, that it may indeed be pardonable in some cases to be led into mistake by the authority of those to whose judgment and instruction we ought to pay a great deference and submission, provided always it be in things which are not plain and necessary; but surely it can never be prudent to err with any number, how great soever, in matters of religion which are of moment, merely for numbers' sake; but to comply with the known errors and corruptions of any Church whatsoever is certainly damnable. 3. It is pretended yet further, that men shall sooner be excused in following the Church than any particular man or sect. To this I answer, that it is very true, if the matter be doubtful, and especially if the probabilities be equal, or near equal, on both sides; but if the error be gross and palpable, it will be no excuse to have followed any number of men, or any Church whatsoever. 4. It is objected, that as, on the one hand, there may be danger of error in following blindly the belief of the Church, so, on the other hand, there is as great a danger of schism in forsaking the communion of the Church, upon pretence of errors and corruptions. Very true; but where great errors and corruptions are not only pretended, but are real and evident, and where our compliance with those errors and corruptions is made a necessary condition of our communion with that Church, in that case the guilt of schism, how great a crime soever it be, doth not fall upon those who forsake the communion of that Church, but upon those who drive them out of it by the sinful conditions which they impose

upon them. (*Abp. Tillotson.*) *Concerning family religion*:—I. I SHALL SHOW WHEREIN THE PRACTICE OF THIS DUTY BOTH CONSIST. The principal parts of it are these following:—1. Setting up the constant worship of God in our families. 2. Instructing those committed to our charge in the fundamental principles and in the careful practice of the necessary duties of religion. 3. I add further, as a considerable part of the duty of parents and masters of families, if they be desirous to have their children and servants religious in good earnest, that they do not only allow time and opportunity, but that they do also earnestly charge them to retire every day, but more especially on the Lord's day, to pray to God for the forgiveness of their sins, and for His mercy and blessings upon them, and likewise to praise Him for all His favours conferred upon them from day to day. 4. One of the most effectual ways to make those who are under our authority good is to be good ourselves, and by our good example to show them the way to be so. Without this our best instructions will signify but very little, and the main efficacy of them will be lost. II. OUR OBLIGATION TO IT. 1. In point of duty. All authority over others is a talent entrusted with us by God for the benefit and good of others, and for which we are accountable, if we do not improve it and make use of it to that end. 2. We are hereto likewise obliged in point of interest; because it is really for our advantage that those that belong to us should serve and fear God, religion being the surest foundation of the duties of all relations and the best security for the true performance of them. Would we have dutiful and obedient children, diligent and faithful servants? Nothing will so effectually oblige them to be so as the fear of God and the principles of religion firmly settled in them. III. THE CAUSES OF THE SO COMMON AND SHAMEFUL NEGLECT OF THIS DUTY, TO THE EXCEEDING GREAT DECAY OF PIETY AMONG US. 1. This may in good part be ascribed to our civil confusions and distractions. 2. This great neglect and decay of religious order in families is chiefly owing to our dissensions and differences in religion, upon occasion whereof many, under the pretence of conscience, have broke loose into a boundless liberty. IV. THE VERY MISCHIEVOUS AND FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEGLECT OF THIS DUTY. 1. To the public. Families are the first seminaries of religion, and if care be not there taken to prepare persons, especially in their tender years, for public teaching and instruction, it is like to have but very little effect. 2. To ourselves. We can have no manner of security of the duty and fidelity of those of our family to us if they have no sense of religion, no fear of God before their eyes. If children were carefully educated, and families regularly and religiously ordered, what a happy and delightful place, what a paradise, would this world be in comparison of what now it is? (*Ibid.*) *Joshua's resolution*:—I. TRUE RELIGION CONSISTS IN THE SERVICE OF GOD. II. THEY WHO TRULY SERVE GOD MAKE HIS SERVICE A MATTER OF CHOICE. III. IF THE SERVICE OF GOD IS THE OBJECT OF OUR CHOICE, IT IS OUR DUTY TO ENGAGE OURSELVES TO IT BY OPEN PROFESSION AND SOLEMN COVENANT. IV. IF WE HAVE DEVOTED OURSELVES TO THE SERVICE OF GOD IT IS OUR DUTY TO USE EVERY MEANS TO ENGAGE OTHERS IN IT. (*Essex Congregational Remembrancer.*) *Historical and family religion*:—The valedictory charge of Joshua clearly shows that the Jewish religion was built upon a definite historical experience; was founded on the rocks of impregnable fact. Never in the whole course of their history had the Israelites found God unfaithful to His promises or forgetful of His threatenings; and as God had been from the beginning, so (said Joshua) will He continue to the end. What God has been He will ever be, what He has done He ever will do—therefore “choose ye,” said Joshua, “this day whom you will serve.” If history proves that the Lord Jehovah is God, then follow Him and faithfully obey His voice. This, then, is what we mean by an historical religion. An historical religion is an appeal to the witness of the past as a groundwork and reason for present allegiance to God. And as the Jewish religion was an historical religion, so also is the Christian religion. The Christian religion is not a doctrine of ideas, an untested philosophical theory: it is founded on the life of an historical Person, for Christ is no less historic than Divine. And as Jewish leaders and prophets appealed to the witness of history, so likewise have Christian guides and teachers, from the earliest times, made history a principal reason for faith. All true religion, however, and most notably the religion of the Bible, is much more than an historic faith. Its foundations lie deep and strong in history; but its superstructure is continuously and essentially practical. Historic religion, like historic knowledge, is useless unless it serves as the guide and inspiration of daily conduct. The use of history chiefly consists in its application of the experiences of the past to the circumstances and resolutions of the present. It was this use to

which Joshua applied the striking historical survey of his great valedictory charge. Upon the ground of their historical experiences he based his fervid appeal to the Jewish people to make choice of Jehovah as their national Deity, and to remain consistently faithful in their allegiance to Him. Whatever became of the national religion, his own family religion at least should be settled and unwavering in its loyalty to Jehovah. Family religion is the best beginning for all religious life. The Church in the house is the best temple for the education of righteousness and true holiness. As the sun is the centre of the earth's light and heat, so from the family radiates throughout the world the heat and light of religion. When families are religious, nations are religious; when families are religious, individuals also are religious. Even the very structure of the Bible seems to lend authority to the conviction of the primary importance of family religion. The three great divisions of the Old Testament—the law, the prophets, the psalms or hagiographa—broadly represent the three great spheres in which religion ought to work. The book of the law, the foundation of all revelation, was written during the patriarchal period. It describes the origin, the management, the sacred functions, of the family. In the New Testament, also, great stress is laid upon family religion. As nature makes families into little kingdoms, so Christianity makes families into little Churches. It was in the devotion of family life that Jesus nursed His faculty for worship and His character for holiness. It is impossible to conceive any institution hedged round with more firm and higher walls than the institution of the family. The New Testament regards the family as a Divine institution, and its relationships as sacred, heavenly, relationships. It cannot but be that an institution with an origin and sanctions so Divine, should be intended to work out great blessings for humanity. And all experience proves that family love and family religion are more fruitful of happiness and holiness than any other single source; and that family discords and family irreligion are the cause of endless miseries and countless iniquities. (*Canon Diggle.*) *The cluster of grapes; or, family prayer* :—Man, we all know, is not made to live alone. None of us could do so, even if we wished it. As no man can come into the world without a father or mother to bring him into it—as no child, when it has received the gift of life, could keep that gift for much more than a single round of the clock without some one to tend and feed it—in like manner, after we are grown up, and have gained strength to stand alone, we still need the help of our brethren in a thousand ways. Every worthy and reasonable and honourable work which man is permitted to perform can only be performed by him so far as he lives in union and communion with his brethren. Thus too is it with the highest and most precious of all the gifts which God has bestowed on mankind, the religion of Christ. This also is a gift which cannot be received alone, which cannot be enjoyed alone, which cannot be turned to any use alone. In giving it to man God did not give it to him as standing alone, but as living in communion with his brethren. He purposes that in spiritual things, as well as in temporal things, we should help and feed each other, that we should nourish each other with the bread of life, as well as with the bread that perishes. You remember our Lord's beautiful parable in which He compares Himself to the vine and His disciples to the branches. All the members of the same family, all the members of the same parish, should draw their spiritual life from the heavenly Vine, not singly, but together, joining heart and soul in the exercises and offices of devotion, and keeping in mind that it is when two or three are gathered together that our Lord has promised to be in the midst of them. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." This should be the plain, the avowed, the steadfast resolution of every one who bears rule in a house, of every master of a household, of every father, of every mother of a family. When God ordains that every one should be the master or the mistress of a household, He likewise ordains that they should take care of those who are under their authority, and should look upon them as committed to their special charge. In like manner when He is pleased to grant any one the blessing of being a father or a mother He links this blessing with the duty of taking care of the children, of bringing them up, of providing for them. We shall have to give account, not only for our own souls, but also, more or less, for the souls of those whom God has committed to our charge. Let this then be your watchword, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." It is not enough for you to say, "As for me, I will serve the Lord." A grape never stands alone: it is always part of a cluster. In truth no one can feel any hearty desire to serve the Lord himself, without being at the same time anxious that others also, that his friends and neighbours, above all, that the members of his own household, should bear their part in this

godly service. And one of the ways in which it behoves you to provide that your house shall serve the Lord is by setting up His worship in your house, by taking care that you and your whole house join day by day in serving Him with prayer and thanksgiving and praise. Most important, too, is it that every family should be perpetually reminded that, as a family, it is a Christian family—that the Church is not God's only house in the parish, but that every house in the parish ought to be a house of God. We have been led by our Lord's parable to liken a Christian family and a Christian congregation to a cluster of grapes. Such are they, if they hang from the true Vine, if the life which springs from the true Vine be ever flowing into them through prayer—through prayer offered up in brotherly communion one beside the other. And what can give a more beautiful image of the love, the neighbourly kindness, the peace, which ought to prevail in a brotherhood of Christians, than a cluster of grapes? None of them seems to have any desire of thrusting itself forward before the others, or of pushing them into the background, or of showing itself off at their cost. On the contrary each seems contented to stand just peeping out of its cell, half hidden by its neighbours, retiring behind them, and almost, as it were, in honour preferring them. Such are the grapes of the true Vine. Such are the families in the living Church of Christ. They hang from Him. Their love flows into them from Him; and therefore they love each other. (*J. C. Hare, M.A.*) *The Christian household* :—The household is not an accident of nature, but an ordinance of God. The household is a representation, on a small scale as regards numbers, but not as regards the interests concerned, of the great family in heaven and earth. The father of a household stands most immediately in God's place. Of all the influences which can be brought to bear on man, paternal influence may be made the strongest and most salutary, and whether so made or not is ever of immense weight one way or the other. For remember that paternal influence is not that which the father strives to exert merely, but that which in matter of fact he does exert. None so keen to see into a man's religion as his own household. He may deceive others without, he may deceive himself, he can hardly long succeed in deceiving them. But if, on the other hand, his religion is really a thing in his heart; if he moves about day by day as seeing One invisible; if the love of Christ is really warming the springs of his inner life, then, however inadequately this is shown in matter or in manner, it will be sure to be known and thoroughly appreciated by those who are ever living their lives around him. But in treating of a household ruled in the fear of God another most important influence comes to be considered—one which, without holding so paramount a place as the first, yet ever lies closer to the hearts of children, and is more wound about all their schemes and plans. From the very necessities of life the father is kept ordinarily at a distance from his family during a great portion of his time. He is that one of the household who goes forth into the external world and savours of it; and thus not only in continuity, but in character also, his influence is in some measure broken; lying at some little distance, not employed on the thoughts and schemes of his children till they have acquired some degree of consistency; not called in to mould and cherish their first openings of intention and desire. This necessary deficiency is, however, amply and most graciously supplied by the mother of a household. She is ever the ministering angel to her children; with the same hand guiding their infant steps, and smoothing the fevered pillow of after-life; with the same voice teaching them their infant prayers, and with quiet and loving admonition tempering the waywardness of the rising spirits of youth. And thus while she shares in many of the feelings of reverence and affection due to the father, she yet has a narrower circle of her own. To her is committed by God the training and forming of each individual character among her children; in her bosom will take root those finer fibres of personal feeling from which, after all, our strongest emotions are fed. Oh that every Christian mother were living and moving in her household in the full consciousness of this power and this responsibility! Much might be said on a mother's share in the after-training of her children, even when other help is requisite and necessary; but it is only one very short and simple thing which need be said on their earliest training—it is a matter to which a mother alone is competent, a sacred duty which she can never neglect, and ought never to delegate. (*Dean Alford.*) *The charities of the Christian household* :—I wish now to speak of the good works of the Christian household, its religious standing and progress within, and its beneficent employments without, for the good of man and the glory of God. Now we must lay the foundation of all such external duties in the religion of the household. Let the well-spring of the religion of the family be in

the closet and by the bedside of the father and mother. And not only this, but let the children, let the servants see that it is so, and learn to take not precept only, but pattern from them. And if the foundation be thus laid, let us go on to inquire what, and how raised, must be the building. First of all, it must be real, consistent with itself; raised for a dwelling, and not for a show. In a man's own religion reality is the first and most constant requisite; but where influence is to be exerted over others it is even doubly necessary. Hearts are not won by words, nor will knees ever so often bended prompt one syllable of prayer. And here is often a fault in Christian heads of families. Their own religion is real—felt in their hearts, and shown in their lives. But their way of putting it forth is unreal. They are perhaps the bondsmen of a rigid system, or they fall into the opposite extreme, and leave that on which they themselves feel so deeply to take its chance among those whom God has given them to train for Him. In the one case, that of rigid adherence to system, the force of their own example is marred, the attraction of their own faith and love disturbed; in the other they are bearing indeed good seed, but sow it not, letting human nature, which ever wants help from above and from around, get its good as it best may. How often do we see heads of families, whom we know to be earnest and genuine Christian men and women, yet attempting to guide their households by the merest and emptiest commonplaces, which never had, and never can have, life or power in them. Oh that we knew and remembered this—that nought unreal will ever stand God's test of time and trial. You may teach the child his theological lesson ever so well; he may be apt to distinguish, apt to retain, ready to profess; yet meantime, if you have not preoccupied it, the heart, which really guides the life, will have been learning from things themselves another and a surer lesson, and you will find, when the voyage of life begins, that voyage which you had expected would be so straight and so sure, that another hand than yours is on the helm. In promoting family religion let parents study the hearts of their children. Let them see what those cords really are which, according as they are drawn one way or the other, turn the course of life itself. Let them remember what it was in their own case which really influenced them for good, and reflect that their children are like themselves. Win the heart, and the victory is yours. Lose that, and you have lost all. Before I pass to the outward acts and fruits of family religion let me exemplify these remarks in two departments of the inner life of the household: in their use of the Bible and in family prayer. The Bibles of a household, if they could testify, would be no bad witnesses respecting its religion. And I fear their testimony would be often of a sad and a startling kind. The Bible in the chamber, how often is it taken down for genuine use? The contents of that Bible, how much is known of them? I do not believe there ever was an age when the Bible has been so much printed and so little read as in our own. And this is the book which is to be a light to our feet and a lamp to our paths. And therefore one of the very first cares in a Christian and Protestant household ought to be that the Bible may be known by all its members: known, I mean, by familiarity with its contents, and a habit of thinking and speaking intelligently on them, and a habit also—for this should never be forgotten—of their devotional use. It is plain that this subject might be pursued much further, but we must drop it now, to mention another nearly connected with it—I mean that of family prayer. Family prayer is an absolute necessity of the Christian household. It is indeed an affecting and solemn sight; and it might be a vast opportunity for good. Here is a priest of whose power we can never speak too highly, a teacher standing in the place of God Himself. But what are, for the most part, his ministrations—what his instructions? To judge from the books which have been printed for use at such times, for the most part, I fear, formal, disconnected, lifeless; or if earnest and fervent, then passing perhaps into another fault equally fatal to usefulness—lengthy and tedious. The effect of this must be mischievous. You cannot expect children, you cannot expect servants, to love and consult and study a work which you have accustomed them to loathe and to be weary over. Nor, to recur back to the other fault again, can you expect them really to feel wants which have been so long lifelessly and formally expressed; uttered perhaps in words far above their comprehension, and in a strain to which their simple minds never attained. Of all united acts of the family this one should most bear the impress of life and reality. Read no more than the ear, no more than the mind can retain—and that little with earnestness and solemnity. If explanation is given let it be short and to the point—neither dilating nor diluting. And with regard to prayer, the rule should be of the same kind. The simpler the better. And I may also say, without fear of

being misunderstood, the shorter the better. But from these counsels respecting the inner life of the family we must pass now to its outward fruits of its religion. And here at once let me say that such fruits ought always to be found. There never ought to be such a thing as a hidden family religion in any sense, and least of all in the sense of being without visible and sensible fruit for good. And in family charity, as in all other family duties, the spring must ever be found in the heads of the household. Let them be known by their children and dependents to be engaged in works of charity and mercy. And in their places and proportions let each, even the humblest member, be encouraged, as soon as self-control and responsibility begin, to bear a part in such works. And I cannot impress it too strongly on young persons that this duty is binding on them from the moment that they can call money or time their own. Whatever is allowed you by your parents for ordinary purposes, all of it belongs to God, and you are but His steward. On the beneficence due from every Christian household to the poor and needy around it I will not at present enlarge; it is a wide subject, and comes before us in the course of our teaching in various ways. I will only say no household can escape its claims or venture, from any excuse, to set them aside. But I would especially now speak of that other department of a Christian family's benevolence which should be spent in their work as disciples of Him who commanded us to enlighten all nations with the word of His truth. Every Christian is described in Scripture as holding forth the word of truth, shining as a light in the world. Every Christian is a missionary, and ought to be employed in the work of one—either in personal labour and influence, or by contribution to institutions established for the purpose. And as a family duty this possesses peculiar interest. In Christ are all families of the earth blessed. (*Ibid.*)

The mutual duties of the family:—From the tone of these words we see that they are not the voice of one man only. There is about them a concerted determination, they bear evidence of deliberation having been had, and a combined resolution come to. There is something even of triumphant union about them, something of a challenge to Israel to look and see whether they of whom they are said did not fulfil them by serving the Lord. Every member of a household, whether among children or domestics, has a place assigned by God and a solemn account to render to Him. I will touch on this portion of our subject—the duties of the members of a household, and their reflection on those who are set at the head of it. If I were to ask what is the first duty of a child to a parent the answer would be one and uniform. All would say, obedience. Yet is this quite understood? At all events, is it generally acted on? What I understand by obedience being the first duty of young persons to their parents is this—that, irrespective of all concurrence of their own individual approval with what is ordered, there is a sacredness about a parent's word, because it is so, which ensures prompt and ready compliance. I would say, then, to my young friends, guard carefully and with all diligence this your chief jewel and treasure—constant and scrupulous obedience. It is the bloom of your whole character. Nothing becomes you so well—nothing contains so great promise for your future days. It is a link which, between a loving and wise parent and a Christian child, is never dissolved; and I know of no sight so pleasing as to see men and women, moving in life and filling important posts which God has assigned them, and yet with reverence and affection retaining the pious habits of childhood and youth—observing the wishes and ruling themselves by the guidance of an aged parent. I am sure I need not remind ourselves who are parents how very solemn is the position of one who is thus to be obeyed—how necessary the wisdom which is from above to guide us in guiding them. I need not say how much love, how much consistency, how much temper is required to lead up and train this sacred principle of obedience, so that it be not relaxed on the one hand nor overstrained on the other. Before I pass on to the other great division of the members of a family, let me say a word to young persons as to the direct subject of the resolution in our text—the service of the Lord. You will some day know and feel, on looking back over these first years of life, that it is the memory of the service of God which constitutes the real charm of your recollections of home. And if it is but fitting to say something of those others who dwell under the roof of a household to minister to their wants, I would say to the servants in our households, Your gracious Father in heaven has called you out of your own country and from your own father's house, and He has caused you to be adopted into other families, of a rank and situation in life different from your own. If you are His servants your position is one full of interest, and full of honour. He has put you

in reach of many blessings, both temporal and spiritual, to which others of your family have not access. And more especially is this so if your lot is cast in a household where God is feared and served. But as the servant's life is one of much and undoubted privilege for good, so is it one of enormous temptation to evil. There is no class of persons in our days the contemplation of whom more fills the Christian mind with sadness, or suggests more forcibly the frightful account which the votaries of fashion and pleasure will one day have to give. How many souls have the ungodly heads of a household helped to ruin, or been the means of ruining altogether? God sent to them, to be kept and influenced for Him, dependents whose souls were as valuable as their own; whose account before Him will be as solemn, their condemnation or justification as final, as theirs. They came to them from the Sunday school and the village pastor's instructions; they came with the Bible which was to be the guide of their lives, with the prayer which had been the practice of their childhood, with the resolution which the last communion prompted and the mother's parting words urged forward. Where are those Bibles now? What is become of that daily prayer? Where, but under your roof, and with your sanction, was that resolution laughed to scorn? Who made it impossible for them to keep up those monthly communions? If you have in your family and before your dependents denied Christ, He also will deny you. And let servants themselves remember that no circumstances can excuse them in unfaithfulness to Him whom they have once learned to know and to serve; that on themselves the ultimate burden must rest, and the final condemnation come, if they allow themselves to be laughed or tempted out of Christian habits of life. I would willingly think, too, that I am speaking to some of this class whose lot God has mercifully cast in families such as that in our text, where their souls are cared for, and their moral and spiritual welfare attended to. Then I say to you, Blessed indeed is your lot, and great in proportion will be your accountableness. (*Ibid.*) *Hindrances to home religion*:—I. The want of a vivid sense of God, as personal and present. II. The loose manner in which the present home life is conducted. III. The diminished regard for the Sabbath. IV. The overlaying of the Bible and the family altar by the newspapers, and especially the Sunday papers. V. The dispersion of families among Churches having different views of Divine things. VI. The division of families on the line of Christian discipleship. VII. The lack in some homes of an expressive and impressive piety in such as do profess to be believers, such as will quietly control and at last convert the household. (*J. L. Withrow, D.D.*) *We should think about the religious welfare of others*:—A poor woman came into a village one dark night and asked her way to the house of a friend. It was three miles off yet, and the road was strange to her, and it was so dark. "If you make haste," some one said to her, "you will overtake the doctor. He has just gone down the road to go to the same place, and he carries a lantern." This was glad news to the timid woman, and off she started looking eagerly ahead in the hope of catching some glimmer of the lantern's light, but never a flash of it could she see. At length, after a weary trudge, she reached the house of her friend, and there she found the doctor newly arrived. "Oh, sir!" she said, "I have had such a weary run after you. They told me you had a lantern, but I saw nothing of its light." "Very true," said the doctor, showing a dark lantern fastened to his belt; "I had a lantern, but I did not think of drawing the slide so as to let the light shine, for I know the road very well myself." Now there are people in the world very like this doctor. They know the right way themselves, and don't trouble about others who may not know it. Make it very clear to others that you not only know the right road yourself, but that you have also a heart to think of them and influence them for good. (*W. Francis.*) *Decision for God*:—"I was the guest of Colonel —, a leading man in his county, Master of the Hounds for two counties, keeping the hounds at a cost of \$20,000 a year. He was a man of passionate character, and, when excited, very profane. He attended the meetings every evening. But he complained that he had a headache the next morning. One morning at breakfast he said, 'I don't think I shall go to the meetings any longer. My head aches with the bad air, and then I do not think you are quite fair. You make everybody out as no better than heathen. That may be true of the common people; but you will drive all the gentry away.' I said, 'Colonel, I am your guest, and I did not introduce this subject. But let me ask you, Are you a Christian?' 'What do you mean? I support a Church and two or three ministers.' I said, 'Unless you will take a stand as a Christian as plainly as you do as Master of the Hounds, I do not think you have any claim to be called a

Christian.' To my surprise, he was in church that night, with his wife, who was a Christian. I preached on the Pharisee and the Publican. At the close I said, 'If there is any man or woman who is ready, with the publican, to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," I invite him to rise.' To my surprise, up rose the Colonel, and folded his arms, and his wife by his side. I thought, 'Will it do to call the Colonel up here and ask him to go on his knees?' I did so. The Colonel moved right forward with his wife. And the next that came was the Irish servant, and he kneeled down by his master. Next morning, as I opened the Bible for prayers, the Colonel rose and said, 'Before the Doctor reads, I want to say that last night I went forward and took God as my Saviour. I ask you, my friends, to pray for me.' This in the presence of all the servants." (*Dr. Pentecost.*) *Who will volunteer?*—One night, in the army on the banks of the Potomac, the colonel came for volunteers to cross over the river in flat boats. "Who'll volunteer? I want so many men." "I'll go!" "I'll go!" Their decision made up the number; the colonel's heart was rejoiced. They went, and returned with 150 or 200 contrabands and other trophies of war. That was the result of decision. They took their lives in their hands and went on reckless of consequences. In order to spiritual success we need decision. How long would it take the Lord Jesus to do His part if you make the decision? There are a hundred strings whereby you are holding on to the interests of the world. You cut a string here and a knot there, but there are more left than you have cut off; come right to the central point where they all come to a focus, then you can cut them all at once. The work is all in a nutshell. Some are converted by piecemeal. The better way is to take it in a lump. How long does it take to give away a house and land? Only while you sign your name, that is all. When we go forth, a troop of decided souls, we can take the world for Christ. Take Christ fully, completely, that will give us inward power.

Vers. 19-28. **Ye cannot serve the Lord: for He is an holy God.**—*The covenant renewed:*—I. **THE DIFFICULTY OF SERVING GOD.** "Ye cannot serve the Lord." It was a staggering admonition. It embodied what theologians have called the doctrine of "moral inability." The seat of the disorder is in the will. There is the conflict. Till that is established in the choice of holiness it will still be true, as in the case before us, that one can not serve God. "Ye cannot" should still read for many, loath to abandon practices and ideas and hopes which He condemns, "Ye will not." II. **THE CONSCIOUS ABILITY TO SERVE GOD.** With much vehemence the people asserted that they would, and therefore could, be true to their promise. They realised that no more was demanded of them than was within the range of their powers to do. Their tribute to the righteousness of their Maker is the universal testimony as well. From the shrine of the most besotted savage to the latest Christian altar we see the multiplying tokens that each and all might have heeded and wrought that full measure of righteousness which their God prescribed. Everywhere, on all the recognised possibilities of a human soul, is plainly imprinted, and none can honestly exclaim against it, "This is your reasonable service." III. **THE SOLEMN PROMISE TO SERVE GOD.** The transfer of estates, the giving in marriage, the parting with a child—these chief acts of our lives are trivial and ordinary compared with that in which a heart yields itself for ever unto Him who has sought it from its first conscious moment. It is serious business we transact with Him. He hears, too, each voice among the myriads as though it were the only one, and receives each uplifted spirit as though no other had come. IV. **THE ADDING WITNESSES OF THE PLEDGE TO SERVE GOD.** As our memorials and statues are eloquent of former scenes and persons, to those who will pause a little to listen, so this column in the spot of sanctuary told to children's children that their fathers were given here and for ever to the Lord. Every individual, too, that stood near any who there uttered his "credo" had stamped upon his memory his neighbour's act, to be made to glow as secret tracings when heat is applied. But are men aware of the numerous objects which have heard and may testify to their former promises to do the will of God? It was in some severe sickness, when the spectre of death seemed to draw nigh, when, begging for reprieve, you said: "If I am spared I will dedicate myself to Him." And the walls of your chamber listened, and now and then repent it in the stillness of the night. They who watched heard it, and are wondering yet if you have forgotten. Or it was when some sudden horror of doom flashed on you, and you proffered all you had for your life, while billows or tempest or hurrying car or roadside fences heard your cry and occasionally remind you of the pledge! Or, as you sat under the moving influences of the Spirit, and you were sure the acceptable

time for turning to God had come, did you not say: "When I have made my fortune, or gained this office, or reached that age, I will"? And now the fortune is yours, the office has been held, the age has been passed, but your heart is not yet in the Lord's keeping. It is easy to mortgage the future, so unknown, so full of plausible chances and opportunities. Be as fair, friend, with the Lord as with your neighbour, whom you are proud always to have satisfied, for He has waited longer, till you shall pay your vows to the full. (*De Witt S. Clark.*) *The difficulty of serving God*:—I. SOME OF THEIR DIFFICULTY WOULD BE FOUND ON THE SIDE OF GOD. "He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins" so as to fail to punish them. "He will turn, and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good." 1. If Jehovah is to be served at all, He must be served alone. There can be no possible rivalry between Him and any other claimants to be gods. We may think of three things that are ever pressing in our day to be gods with God—the luxury of wealth; self-seeking pleasure; mere mind knowledge. 2. If God is served at all He must be served in righteousness. God will search through and through every form of service offered to Him, and it must be sincere, it must be "clean every whit," or it cannot be acceptable to Him. The service of a holy God must be the service of intention and resolve, not of mere accident. It should be thought about, resolved upon, prayed about, made the most earnest thing in the whole life. II. SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES WERE FOUND ON THE SIDE OF ISRAEL. "Ye cannot." "Ye are too frail. Ye are too much exposed to the power of temptation. Ye have too serious inclinations to evil. You do not know yourselves, or you would not promise too readily. You do not fully estimate the influences of the past, or you would fear for your future." They who know themselves learn to pray, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe, and I shall have respect unto Thy commandments." (*The Weekly Pulpit.*) *The holy character of God*:—I. ALTHOUGH THE LORD IS FULL OF COMPASSION AND MERCY, HE IS YET A HOLY AND A JEALOUS GOD. We must beware of attributing to our God any qualities which are inconsistent with those by which He is known to be guided. II. As a necessary consequence of the holy jealousy of God towards wilful sinners THERE ARE CERTAIN CONDITIONS OF MIND IN WHICH HE WILL NOT FORGIVE YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS NOR YOUR SINS, and in which, therefore, ye cannot serve the Lord. The impatient, the unbelieving, the careless, the presumptuous will be excluded from the blessing. The fact is, that one thing is indispensable to your acceptable service of God; and that is, that you should be in earnest. III. Ask yourselves the question, ARE YOU DESIROUS TO SERVE THE LORD YOUR GOD? (*E. G. Marshall, M.A.*) *God declining first offers of service*:—If there be any one thing true in the Bible, it is that God welcomes the first approach which man makes to Him. Yet here Joshua offers a repulse to men who wish to avow themselves on the side of God. Are we to conclude, then, that the people were insincere? We have no evidence of this, but the reverse, in their subsequent conduct. There must be some reason for the manner in which they are met, and we shall try to discover it. 1. First, however, we shall seek to show that this procedure on the part of God is not so unusual. You may recollect how the band of Gideon was chosen. When the wise men from the East came seeking Christ the star seemed to desert them, and they met with disappointment and perplexity from all their inquiries in Jerusalem. When the Jews, stirred up to expect the coming Messiah, sent messengers to John, in the hope that they had found their desire, "he confessed and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ." We cannot forget the strange treatment of the woman of Canaan by the Lord Himself; how she cried after Him, and was not answered, and met at length what appeared a contemptuous rejection. In the same way He acted to the scribe who came to Him with such an unconditional offer of discipleship, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." "This is no common pleasure-walk," was the reply; "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." There is another way of finding the same result in the Bible. Consider, for example, the view that is given of the character of God. He is presented to us not only as good, and ready to forgive, but as just and righteous—a God who cannot look on sin without displeasure. There are many terrible threatenings, many dreadful judgments against sin and sinners, which have all this language in them: "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is an holy God." When we leave Bible representations, and come to the experience of individuals, we meet with many similar illustrations. In regard to the general evidence of the divinity of the Bible, we can see that God has not constructed it on the plan of overpowering the conviction of

any man at first sight. And even when a man has come to the entire conviction that the gospel is Divine, that there is "none other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus Christ," he is not assured thereby of perfect peace. 2. Having sought to show that this procedure, on the part of God, is not so unusual, we may now attempt to find some reasons for it. (1) As a first reason we may assign this, that it sifts the true from the false seeker. The gospel comes into the world to be a touchstone of human nature—to be Ithuriel's spear among men. There is enough in it to attract and convince at last every man who has a sense of spiritual need and a desire of spiritual deliverance, but it is presented in such a form as to try whether the soul really possess this, and therefore we may have obstacles of various kinds at the very entrance. It may seem a strange and unworthy thing that such an obstacle should meet a man in the very commencement of such a journey; but, after all, let it be remembered that what makes it an obstacle is the state of heart of the man himself. This further may be said, that no one will be able to complain of any real wrong from such obstacles. The false seeker is not injured, because he never sincerely sought at all. There was no sense of sin's evil, no wish to be saved from it, and till this exists nothing can be sought, and nothing found. The true seeker is not injured, for never was such an one disappointed. (2) Next, it leads the true seeker to examine himself more thoroughly. If a man is accepted, or thinks he is accepted, at once, he takes many things for granted which it would be well for him to inquire into. Very specially is this the case in regard to the nature of sin and the light in which God regards it. The easy complacency with which some talk of pardon and their assurance of it, often springs more from dulness of conscience than strength of faith. The natural result of such a defective view is, that when a man enlists with it in God's service, he does so without any distinct idea of what he is to aim at. He does not see that the gospel binds us to the service of a God of truth and purity, and that only in this way can its blessings be enjoyed. (3) Further, it binds a man to his profession by a stronger sense of consistency. There is a paper of obligations put into our hands to sign, and, when we take the pen, we are bidden read it over again and ponder it, that we may subscribe with clear consciousness of the contents. God will beguile no man into His service by false pretences. (4) Lastly, it educates us to a higher growth and greater capacity of happiness. When we see the wind shaking a young tree, and bending it to the very earth, it may seem to be retarding its rise, but it is furthering it. In the intellectual world a strong man thrives on difficulties. There is no falsier method of education than to make all smooth and easy, and remove every stone before the foot touches it. God Himself has hidden the knowledge of His creation in the depths of the sky and the bosom of the earth. He has demanded toil and travail, keen and patient thought, till study has become a weariness to the flesh, in order that man's intellect may rise to its proper stature. It would have been a strange thing if the spiritual world had been an exception. Read the manner in which such men as Paul and Luther and Pascal passed through the gate of life, not easily and complacently, but with fears within and fightings without, and you will see how God made them grow such men as they became. And, though we are far distant from that mark, very humble plants in the garden of God beside those great trees of righteousness, yet, if we are to rise to anything, it must be in the same way, not by soft indulgent nurture, but by endurance of hardship, and pressing on against repulse. If there be some who have been seeking God, as they think, in vain, and have given up the search as fruitless, what can we do but urge them to renew the application? Come, as these Israelites did, with the words, "Nay; but we will serve the Lord." I can suppose a twofold class who have ceased to seek. There are some, perhaps, with a feeling of wounded pride or petulance. They say they have done their best, and it is useless. They have gone through a course of inquiry and search and prayer, and they have found neither comfort nor hope. Would it not be worth the while of such to reconsider this part of it, and to see whether some of the blame may not lie with themselves? There may, however, be another class who have left off seeking God, from very different motives, not in petulance, but in despondency, who have not so much turned their back on search, as sat down, wearied and hopeless, in the midst of it. Let them consider that they have to do with One who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax; that the heart of God is with them; that the darkness and death of Christ, now changed to the strength of intercession, are on their side, and all those heavenly promises which are yea and amen in Him, and which, as bright and as many as the stars in their courses, all fight for them. Let them

think of Jacob's wrestling, of David's tears, of Paul's threefold prayer, of the woman of Canaan, &c. (*John Ker, D.D.*) *Moral inability*:—I. THE CERTAINTY OF THE TRUTH THAT UNRENEWED MEN CANNOT SERVE GOD. 1. The nature of God renders perfect service impossible to depraved men. 2. The best they could render as unrenewed men would lack heart and intent, and therefore must be unacceptable. 3. The law of God is perfect, comprehensive, spiritual, far-reaching: who can hope to fulfil it? 4. The carnal mind is inclined to self-will, self-seeking, lust, enmity, pride, and all other evils. 5. Let men try to be perfectly obedient. They will not try it. They argue for their ability, but they are loth enough to exert it. II. THE DISCOURAGEMENT WHICH ARISES FROM THIS TRUTH. 1. It discourages men from an impossible task. 2. It discourages from a ruinous course. 3. It discourages reliance upon ceremonies or any other outward religiousness, by assuring men that these cannot suffice. 4. It discourages from every other way of self-salvation, and thus shuts men up to faith in the Lord Jesus. Nothing better can befall them (*Gal. ii. 22, 23*). III. THE NECESSITIES OF WHICH WE ARE REMINDED BY THIS TRUTH. 1. Unregenerate men, before you can serve God you need—(1) A new nature. (2) Reconciliation. (3) Acceptance. (4) Continual aid, to keep you in the way when once you are in it (*1 Sam. ii. 9*; *Jude 24, 25*). 2. If you cannot serve God as you are, yet trust Him as He manifests Himself in Christ Jesus; and do this just as you are. 3. This will enable you to serve Him on better principles. 4. This change of your nature will be effected by the Holy Spirit, who will come and dwell in you. 5. This will fit you for heaven, where "His servants shall serve Him." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Moral inability*:—Their inability was wholly of the moral kind. They could not do it because they were not disposed to do it, just as it is said of Joseph's brethren (*Gen. xxxvii. 4*) that they "could not speak peaceably unto him," so strong was their personal dislike to him. But an inability arising from this source was obviously inexcusable, on the same grounds that a drunkard's inability to master his propensity for strong drink is inexcusable. In like manner the "cannot" of the impenitent sinner, in regard to the performance of his duty, is equally inexcusable. (*George Bush.*) *Entire change needed*:—A man deeply exercised about his soul was conversing with a friend on the subject, when the friend said, "Come at once to Jesus, for He will take away all your sins from your back." "Yes, I am aware of that"; said the other; "but what about my back?" I find I have not only sins to take away, but there is myself; what is to be done with that? And there is not only my back, but hands and feet, and head and heart are such a mass of iniquity that it's myself I want to get rid of before I can get peace. (*British Evangelist.*) *Discouragement useful*:—Discouragements, rightly put, encourage. The best way to deepen and confirm good resolutions which have been too swiftly and inconsiderately formed is to state very plainly all the difficulty of keeping them. The hand that seems to repel often most powerfully attracts. There is no better way of turning a somewhat careless "we will" into a persistent "nay, but we will," than to interpose a "ye cannot." Many a boy has been made a sailor by the stories of hardships which his parents have meant as dissuaves. Joshua here is doing exactly what Jesus Christ did often. He refused glib vows because He desired whole hearts. "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest!" was answered by no recognition of the speaker's enthusiasm, and by no word of pleasure or invitation, but by the apparently cold repulse: "Foxes have holes, birds of the air roosting-places; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. That is what you are offering to share. Do you stand to your words?" He will have no soldiers enlisted under false pretences. They shall know the full difficulties and trials which they must meet; and if, knowing these, they still are willing to take His yoke upon them, then how exuberant and warm the welcome which He gives! There is a real danger that this side of the evangelist's work should be overlooked in the earnestness with which the other side is done. (*J. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Reasons why man will not serve God*:—Dr. Tucker, Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa, said: "In our journey we came to the country of Taita. The people of Taita are not a very interesting people, and are adverse to Christianity. I visited a chief there, and asked him why they were so unwilling for Christian people to settle in their midst, and I said, 'If I sent you a couple of missionaries would you not be glad to have them?' 'No.' 'Why?' I asked. The chief replied, 'If they come and settle among us they tell us that stealing cattle and fighting are not right.' 'Yes!' I replied. 'Well, that would never do; for we are very fond of stealing cattle, and also of fighting.' It was a most straightforward reason, and I think if many of the heathen at home would be as honest in giving

the reasons why they will not come to Christ they would say much the same. 'If I came to Christ I should require to quit getting drunk, and I am very fond of getting drunk,' &c.

Ver. 20. If ye forsake the Lord . . . He will turn.—*Mercies abused, the precursors of wrath*:—I. THE REASONABLENESS OF EXPECTING THAT ABUSED MERCIES MUST LEAD TO MORE AGGRAVATED PUNISHMENT. We see this clearly in the history of Israel. Their career as a nation was marked by perfidy and ingratitude; at almost every step of their progress we find them in rebellion against the Most High—"forsaking the Lord, and serving strange gods." And how did God deal with them when they thus acted? Is it not the case that He scourged them, and caused them to suffer punishment? Look at the plagues that befel them in the desert; look at the slaughters which God permitted them to experience in warfare with their enemies. And who can survey the subsequent history of the Jews, and not read a fulfilment of the threatening contained in our text? And what we are desirous you should gather from the foregoing observations is mainly this, that no experience of good at the hands of the Almighty affords warrant to expect that future disobedience will not be visited with righteous severity. "If ye forsake the Lord and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt and consume you, after that He hath done you good." II. THE JUSTICE OF THE DEALING WHICH IS REFERRED TO IN THE THREATENING BEFORE US. Now it will be admitted that every reason was given Israel to expect the continuance of the Divine favour and protection. We think it easily to be perceived that one main purpose of the Almighty in the calling of Israel as a nation was to maintain upon earth, through means of that race, the pure knowledge of Himself; to afford a witness to the unity of Jehovah, and against idolatry; to secure glory to Himself by the exhibition, on the part of this people, of a consistent obedience. Surely, then, if this purpose was, through the nation's profligacy and disobedience, altogether thwarted, if all the resources which God gave them of national strength were abused and corrupted, indeed it were strange not to perceive that their conduct in this respect released every presumed obligation "to do them good," and in short vindicates to the letter the justice of the warning, "If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good." And now, to take a more comprehensive range, from looking at the case of the Jewish people let us turn to that of mankind in general. Does it appear that God can be just in the apportionment of unmitigated wrath to mankind, notwithstanding all the manifestations of His determination to do them good? There are two grand exhibitions to be met with of God's merciful intention towards mankind at large, to do them good. The first of these is furnished by creation, and the second by redemption. Our object of inquiry is simply this: whether the display of God's love in creating or redeeming mankind offers any reason to conclude that, in harmony with His justice, He cannot "turn and do them hurt, and consume them." To begin with creation: no man can doubt that his creation is the proof of a purpose on God's part to "do him good." Beyond all question this purpose was man's happiness, but then his happiness was to consist in assimilation to the Godhead; and if upon man devolve the guilt of having voluntarily destroyed and renounced that similitude, where is the inconsistency of the dealing, should God "turn and do him hurt, and consume him"? The nobler the faculties wherewith he was endowed the brighter the evidence of God's purpose to "do him good," the stronger then seem to me the reasons wherefore wrath should be executed upon those by whom the faculties are abused and the evidence slighted. We turn, lastly, to the manifestation of God's goodness as displayed in redemption. There have been those who have argued—redemption is the evidence of a love so surpassing, they can never believe God will sentence to destruction those whom He has redeemed at such cost. "The method of our atonement involves an expenditure of such wisdom and mercy, that how can we conceive of the Almighty as permitting its objects finally to perish?" Alas! to reason thus is equally, as in the former instances we have adduced, to overlook one main purpose of God in the scheme of human redemption. Is it not strange that men who have been made the objects of a sacrifice so costly should regard it so lightly and requite it so coldly? We may wonder that redeemed sinners should perish, but is it not more wonderful that redeemed sinners should refuse to be saved? Again, let us revert to the purpose of God in redemption. Indeed it was to bless the whole earth; it was to ransom humanity from the bondage of evil, and to exalt it to transcendent felicity. But

after all, throughout every dealing of God with His intelligent creatures, we may discover the purpose to treat them as responsible beings, free to reject the overtures of His mercy. Now, redemption is offered upon certain terms; man is required to repent and to believe in order to be saved. It is no part of redemption to offer him an entrance into heaven irrespective of a moral fitness, to render him meet for heaven's enjoyments; and in the acquisition of this moral fitness man is required to co-operate with the Divine Spirit. He can refuse to profit by what God hath done for him, and thus prove himself a despiser of the love which is so unsearchably great. He can resolutely withstand the design of the Almighty in redemption, namely, that he should glorify God, both in his body and soul; and, I ask, if it be possible for Him to act thus, is there not justice in the sentence which awards him to suffer in spite of all the declared willingness of God to do him good? (*Bp. R. Bickersteth.*) *Christians solemnly reminded of their obligations:—*I. THAT WE ARE UNDER OBLIGATIONS TO SERVE THE LORD FROM OUR OWN CHOICE, OR VOLUNTARY ENGAGEMENTS. Here I would premise that though voluntary obligations, taken upon ourselves by our own act, have something of a peculiar force in them, yet they are not the only obligations we are under to serve the Lord. We are bound to be His servants whether we will or not. His character as our creator, our preserver, and benefactor, and as a being of supreme excellency, give Him the most firm and indisputable right to our obedience. But though we are all under obligations to God, independent upon, and prior to, our own consent, yet there are a class of obligations which we have personally, and by our own act, taken upon ourselves; and in the breach of these we are guilty of more direct and aggravated perjury. II. To INQUIRE HOW AND WHEN, OR IN WHAT RESPECTS, AND AT WHAT PERIODS OF TIME, WE ARE WITNESSES AGAINST OURSELVES THAT WE HAVE CHOSEN THE LORD TO SERVE HIM. 1. You yourselves are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord to be your God. You know and confess that you have been dedicated to God in baptism; and some of you know it was your own act and deed when capable of choosing for yourselves. You also know in your own consciences that you are often present at the table of the Lord, and there you renew your covenant with God afresh. 2. You are witnesses against one another that you have chosen the Lord to serve Him. You have seen the transactions that have passed between God and you in His house; you have seen some baptized themselves, some presenting their children to baptism, and so renewing their own covenant with God; some sealing their religious engagements at the Lord's table. (*President Davies.*)

Ver. 25. **Joshua made a covenant.**—*The covenant of Joshua:—*"That day" was a very notable day in the annals of the children of Israel; its transactions might well be recorded in the volume of the book and engraven on the monumental stone. All the favours which God had promised to their fathers while yet they languished in bondage in Egypt had been now fulfilled; the promised land was theirs. God had given them rest in all their borders. In the meantime their captain, who had so often led them to victory, waxed helpless and old; he felt that there gathered around him the mists and crept over him the shadow of the coming change. He summoned the tribes of Israel, therefore, to meet him in Shechem; and they mustered largely, for they feel it to be a great day, and suspect they are about to listen to their leader's parting charge. He recounts God's providential dealings with them, and seeks by the memory of the past to inspire their vows of fidelity and allegiance. The warrior heart is still in the old man eloquent, but he wars not now against advancing hosts, but against rebellious minds. There is yet fire in his battle-cry, but it summons to self-conquest. There is glory yet upon his brow, but it is not the lustre of his former achievements, but the radiance of the nearing heaven already gathering to crown its hero. He has often led the people to victory; he will confirm them in piety now, that he may but briefly precede them into the recompense of the reward. He knew full well that their only danger sprang from themselves, that there was no danger to them, if they were but obedient and faithful, from the shock even of an embattled world; and with earnest love to God, and with deep knowledge of the human heart, he delivers his final and his impressive appeal. He warns them to count the cost, in order that there may be a more solemn and decided consecration of themselves to God. Then, receiving their reiterated vows, he makes a covenant with them, and stamps it with a sacramental and with an authoritative value, and sets it up for a statute and for an ordinance in Shechem. This seems to have been the last public act of his life, and

then, weary for the rest of which Canaan was but the significant shadow, he went serenely into heaven. First, as to the nature of this covenant. I need not remind you that the Israelites were the chosen people of God—chosen to be the recipients of His bounty—chosen to be the witnesses of His unity—chosen to enter solemn protests against the abominable idolatries of the nations around. For the fulfilment of these ends Jehovah had interposed for His Israel in many signal deliverances and blessings. They were not a people, and He had given them a great name; He had broken for them the yoke of the oppressor; He had made them heir to an inheritance which they knew not, neither did their fathers know; He made the ocean a pavement for them, the heavens a storehouse, and the rock a fountain of waters; He had successively overthrown all their enemies in their sight, and by many a convincing illustration had stamped the seal of faithfulness upon every promise He had made. And yet they had very frequently rebelled. When trials came they turned recreant from faith and hope; when they were summoned to hazardous duty they shrank, like cowards, from its discharge; and they even formed unholy leagues with the people whom they were sent to overthrow, and adopted their idolatries with an enthusiasm the more reckless because of its perversion from a purer faith and worship. There was need, therefore, that they should be reminded of their duty, and that they should be urged, by all the solemnity of statute and of ordinance, to give themselves afresh unto God. Are not their circumstances yours? The burden of the summons which Joshua made unto the people was that they should serve the Lord. This was also the essence of the covenant, that they should serve the Lord. And, allowing for the differences of mission and local circumstances, there is an identity in the covenant which I want to make with you to-day. I just mention two points. In the first place, then, Joshua could not have served the Lord if he had neglected the Divinely-appointed institution of sacrifice. Although the Mosaic and the Christian economy differ in many things, they are alike in this, that the foundation of each of them is a recognition of sin. The only other part of the covenant which it is necessary for me to bring before you is that Joshua could not have served the Lord, nor any Israelite in the camp, if he had not strictly obeyed the ten commandments of the law. The great principles of morality are the same in every age, and these precepts of the former time, with a new spirit put into them by the exposition of Jesus on the mount, are binding on our consciences to-day. In entire union with Christ I have obtained power to obey—that is the first thing. We cannot obey until we have got a new heart put into us; we have no strength in human nature's old heart to obey the commandments of God; but having by our union with Christ obtained power to obey, that obedience should be sincerely and heartily rendered. A sincere seeker after the will of God will not choose among the commandments, will not obey them just so far as they chime in with corrupt desire and contravene no darling and yet vicious inclination of the soul; he will seek to obey them in the universality of their behests, in the breadth and grandeur of their deep design. I do not think it necessary to go further. If these points of the covenant are granted me, that is all I ask. Come to Christ, and keep His law, and you will be Christians fit for earth, and Christians fit for heaven. I cannot at large mention the arguments by which this covenant was commended. I rather, therefore, prefer to confine my thoughts to the faculty to which the minister makes his appeal. Joshua evidently regarded every man among the Israelites around him as invested with the royal attribute of personal freedom. Beneath each kindling eye and swarthy brow he sees an active reason and a manly soul. He speaks not to those who are of necessity impelled—who are circumscribed by a despotism of surroundings—from whose shackles there is no liberation; he speaks to men, to freemen, to freemen with power to choose the right—with power to prefer the wrong: "Choose you this day." You can choose your service. Oh! I would remind you of the many blessings which God has heaped upon you from the beginning—how your life has sparkled in the light of His loving-kindness. It was He who kindled for you all the endearments of affection and lit up all the joyfulness of home; it was He that warded off peril and environed you with the restraints that have preserved you from the grosser vices and inspired you with the impulse of every good desire. His Son died to redeem you, and lives to intercede that the benefits of His redemption may be yours. His Spirit fans the faint impression and kindles the holy desire, and takes of the precious things of Christ—those precious, those holy motives, and inspiring hopes—and shows them unto you. There is not a temporal mercy, there is not an intellectual enjoyment,

there is not a spiritual mercy, for which you are not indebted to Him. And even now He comes, not forcing you to love Him, but inviting, entreating, imploring, adjuring, "My son, My daughter, give Me thy heart." (*W. M. Punshon, D.D.*)

Vers. 26, 27. Joshua . . . took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.—*The devout soul and nature*:—Solemnity of occasion. Joshua, dying, calls upon the nation to "choose whom you will serve." Here we have—1. A wise effort to impress and perpetuate religious resolutions. 2. A fine impersonation of material nature. I. THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS RESOLUTIONS. They are worthy of perpetual remembrance. The world has monuments of earthquakes, wars, deaths; but how few of devout resolutions! II. THE HIGHEST USE OF MATERIAL OBJECTS. Without actually setting up material objects, nature might be appropriated in her different manifestations as types of God's character, and as mementos of events in the religious history of an individual or a family. III. THE MOST SOLEMN ASPECTS OF NATURE. Who dares to say that nature cannot hear or speak? Who shall say, at the last, what nature, after her long silence, shall reveal? Take heed what you do and say: stones may hear without a Joshua's invocation. (*Homilist.*) *The Christian use of churches*:—We can easily conceive the association of thought with which Joshua and Israel contemplated the stone which they set up in Shechem. However rough it might be and shapeless, it had for them a solemn character; it had something approaching to personality and the power of testimony. "It," said Joshua, "hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us"; not, of course, literally, but in the minds and recollections of those who regarded it as a pledge and token of the vow and covenant made betwixt them and God. And we may well conceive that such a silent, unchangeable witness retained for years, and perhaps for generations, its effect on the people of Israel, even in their downward course which, we too well know, shortly followed. To it the servants of God, struggling against the idolatry and pollution of their age, would bring their little ones, and teach them the words which it heard, and of which it was a testimony, and repeat each for himself their dying captain's confession, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Many a tender hand, laid on its cool surface, may have throbbed with generous emotion and holy zeal; many a thoughtful youth and maiden of Israel may have heard from it a sermon, which issued in holy endurance and heroic resolve. And we, have not we too set up our stone of testimony? have not these walls, dead materials gathered from the slime of the earth and the bosom of the rock, within these few days assumed for us a solemnity of which, in the laws of our thought, they can never be divested? Have they not heard all the words which the Lord our God hath spoken to us, and all that we have spoken to Him? Have we not begun a new course, entered on a fresh iteration of our covenant with God, of which these stones are a witness, a silent but ineffaceable witness—a witness through the ages of time—a witness at the solemn day of judgment? If this pillar of testimony, set up in the midst of our homes, raised with so much self-denying effort, inaugurated with so many tears of joy, is to witness only cold hearts and feeble hands, and formal Sundays, and ungodly weeks, oh shame unto us henceforward—nay, woe unto us, for God will look upon it and judge; and as we have received, so will He at last require of us. These latter words—as a note of passage—lead me on to speak of not only the similarity, but the difference also, between Joshua's stone of witness and ours. I deeply feel that this your church is, as the stone in Shechem was, a witness between you and God. But it is so in a far more solemn sense, in a far wider and deeper meaning, than that could ever be. That stone was a mere passive witness; by standing where it did, it gave a permanence to the fact of the covenant there made. It was merely, as our Nelson's pillar or our Wellington statues, a memorial. And this our church is likewise; a memorial of His great mercies and of our feeble gratitude; a memorial that a Christian congregation has in it anew entered into covenant with Him. But it is also far more than this. It is an active witness between you and God. The sermons which it preaches are not merely those which associations of thought might suggest; they are active, positive, spoken declarations of God's will, ever renewed and energising. Its testimony is not only that of a memorial of the past; it is an ever-welling fountain of Divine knowledge, telling of Christ and His salvation. Thus considered, then, what is the use, what is the office, of this our Church? Briefly (but how much is contained in these words) to provide those who dwell in this thickly-peopled neighbourhood with the public means of grace. Undoubtedly, the first means of grace are, prayer and

praise. But there are others, standing in the very first rank of importance, viz., the Word and the Sacraments. Nor should I omit, in speaking of our new church as a witness for God, the important testimony which is borne by every church in the succession of her services throughout the Christian year. Here you will each year accompany our blessed Lord "from His poor cradle to His bitter cross"; here you will witness His burial, and His glorious resurrection and ascension, and the fulfilment of the promise of the Father in the descent of the Spirit, and will adore with holy joy on that crowning festival of Trinity the whole Three Persons in the One Godhead, covenanted in the work of our salvation. Such are some few of the blessings which you may expect from your church; such some few of the testimonies which it will lift up among you for God and His work. Can I pass on without a word of exhortation to you that you thwart not such blessings—that you let not such testimonies be given against yourselves? Oh, love your church! Throng its aisles from week to week, as to-day. (*Dean Alford.*)

Vers. 29–33. *Joshua . . . died.*—*The burials of distinguished saints:*—Within the compass of the five last verses of this book three deaths are recorded and three burial-places signalled by the deposited remains of the most distinguished saints. After all we have seen in Canaan, let us visit the sepulchre of Joshua. The short record given may be viewed as a simple, unvarnished memento, or monumental inscription (vers. 29, 30). The place of his interment was in the lot of his inheritance, and may remind us how soon the seat of life becomes the repository of death. Short had been the date of his settlement: an hundred years before he obtained rest, and then but ten before he must lie down in his grave, not again to rise till the heavens be no more. What can be a greater or more convincing proof of still higher and nobler ends of Providence than any contained within the limits of this life, when even the most distinguished of God's family, the most exemplary and useful of His children, are not suffered to continue by reason of death, but are early removed from the happiest scenes on earth! It bespeaks the greatness of man, and the more exalted provisions of glory the infinite goodness of God has secured in another world. The designs of His grace are too exalted, and the displays of His power too wondrous, to centre in any earthly lot, though equal in beauty and richness to Eden, when as yet the seat of innocence, perfection, and love. Timnath-serah was still the portion of his lot, even in death. Where he lived in possession, there he lay in possession, nor left any commandment, as Jacob and Joseph, for removal. It is remarkable how much this was the desire of the faithful, and of what moment, though not in itself, yet in its typical regards, they viewed a burying-place in the promised land. It was as if they thought upon the interests of their sleeping dust as well as the felicity of their undying spirits, and in still retaining their inheritance, even in a state of death, would claim for their bodies a share in the life to come; for He who had so richly provided for the one as well as for the other, in an inheritance entirely typical, would not have so essential a part of our redeemed nature for ever the prey of worms. Where the believer now rests, in what bed matters little, for Jesus is the resurrection and the life of all His people. A short inscription, which, as a plain monumental record of his character and age, claims in the solemn reflections here excited a moment's pause: "Servant of the Lord died, being an hundred and ten years old." What an important connection of age and dignity! What an honour to lie down at last under this character! This is the highest style of man. What he had done, and all which this book recorded of the mighty conquests achieved, was not here to be named; for in everything he had been but a servant, and only the willing instrument of Omnipotence. The title was all that need appear, or that any who know their own insignificance would desire. It is enough that "they rest from their labours, and their works do follow." Joshua and all the saints, from infancy to age, through the long lapse of time, shall retain the record of truth, and in the character in which they died rise the servants of God. As now in the end of life it is said, "The servant of the Lord died, being an hundred and ten years old," so then shall commence the history of eternity. The servant of the Lord arose the beginning, the first day, of immortality. From the tomb of Joshua let us go to the burying-place of Joseph: it is in the same inheritance, and not far distant. It is remarkable in the connected record of these burials that Joshua should have lived just the same number of years as this his distinguished ancestor, and that though not buried in the same spot, yet in the same inheritance, and not far distant from the same period. Never was there so singular a funeral: two hundred years dead before interment. Many, we may

think, crowded to see it, and if the Church in heaven could have been witnesses, the sight must have yielded pleasure; for it was the burial of faith. And did it reach the glorified saint, the spirit long made perfect, or could he have looked down upon the purchased spot of his father, the desired resting-place of his bones, he would have known the fidelity of his brethren, and have rejoiced in the end of his faith. It became the inheritance of the children of Joseph, though he had stood a stranger in the land, when, in obedience to the dying request of his father, he buried him in the grave which himself was said to have digged (Gen. l. 5). How remarkable that the place where Joseph obtained interment, and where at length he was gathered to his fathers, should turn out the inheritance of his sons; and that, though separated many years from his father in life, he should, as he, rest in Canaan, and find a grave even in his own inheritance. Oh! it was a sweet privilege to be entombed in his own inheritance, and to hold a place with both his sons and his fathers in what bespoke the common hope and claim of all the faithful. It was a choice spot, and where any saint would have wished to have been laid, and there to have rested in the hope of all that was, in the perfection of the Church and close of time, to open in the grandeur of the resurrection, when, as the heirs of promise, and the sons of immortality, they would rise to claim a fairer, brighter, and more lasting inheritance above the skies. The ground was a purchase (Gen. xxiii. 16, 17). And now the purchase of Jacob became the burying-place of Joseph. The heavenly land is spoken of as a purchased possession, and that in no part ever to become a burying-place, but the seat of endless life and felicity to the whole Church of God. But, oh! what has been the purchase, what paid for it, by the eternal Son of God! One more burying-place within this inheritance is pointed out: "And Eleazar the son of Aaron died," &c. As situated near Shiloh, this was, probably for its convenience, assigned as the residence of the high priest. We see the inheritances of Israel fast changing into the burying-places of the dead. It was not the land of immortality, not that state of being of which it is said, "There shall be no more death," &c. In Canaan all must die, as well princes, priests, and rulers, as others; but in heaven none die: there natural evils and moral pollutions are for ever removed. (*W. Seaton.*) **Israel served the Lord.**—*Faithful adherence to engagements*.—The men of that generation remained faithful to their engagements. These men, who had themselves "known all the works of the Lord that He had done for Israel," in bringing them into Canaan and in subduing the hostile nations, never forsook His worship for the worship of the idols of the land, of whose boasted power they had witnessed so signal a discomfiture. The character and admonitions of Joshua were not forgotten. His disinterestedness, his energy, his singleness of purpose, his faith, had left a track of glory behind, as the sun, after he has sunk below the horizon, flings glorious hues and golden light over all the western sky. The men who had themselves seen the conquests of Joshua would have been doubly inexcusable if they had forsaken the worship of Jehovah. Like the disciple Thomas, because they had seen they had believed. How, indeed, could it have been otherwise? How could they, standing there in Shechem, —the site of Abraham's altar, of Jacob's well, of Joseph's tomb, of Joshua's victories—refuse to believe in the Divine calling of the people Israel? (*L. H. Wiseman, M.A.*)

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